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## Chapter 3: RTP Goals and Objectives

### 3.1 Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to define a set of goals and objectives for the development of the Birmingham region's transportation system reflective of the values of the Birmingham region while noting the challenges of providing quality transportation infrastructure and transportation services for current and future residents. It is also the intent of this section to preliminarily identify a set of policies that will guide the implementation the Birmingham Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) in a manner that achieves the goals and objectives. The goals are the basic building blocks for developing the RTP.

To develop these goals, federal, state, and local guidelines were reviewed to assure consistency. A peer review of goals adopted by the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) and other state DOTs, other metropolitan planning organizations, regional transportation authorities, and local transportation agencies were also examined.

To promote consistency with local preferences, the goals and objectives were presented through forums such as the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) committee meetings, outside agency meetings, one on one stakeholder interviews, and in various public forums such as community meetings and the RTP project website. Responses from participants in these forums were used to inform the RTP's Technical Advisory Work Committee (TAWG), the group primarily responsible for crafting the semantics of the goals. Membership of the TAWG was composed primarily of MPO Transportation Technical Committee members and transportation planning engineering professionals.

In addition, establishing goals, objectives, and policies is important because they express the relationship between the regional vision for the development of the transportation system to the metropolitan planning area's long-term transportation challenges and opportunities. As such, the goals, objectives, and policies form the road map to achieve the region's vision, given the anticipated changes in population, employment, socio-economic conditions, and the natural and built environment over the next 25 years. This report describes how each of the goals, objectives, and policies respond to identified challenges or opportunities.

In addition to this multimodal RTP, functional plans specific to the modal needs and transportation services (such as freight movement, transit and bicycle and pedestrian) have been or are currently being created for the Birmingham MPO. During the needs identification process, which is discussed in Chapter 4, goals and objectives specific to each transportation mode were identified. This chapter summarizes the similarities between the regional goals, objectives, and policies, and those embodied in the modal plans.

*This report discusses the general themes and principles represented in the regional goals that address all transportation modes.*

Finally, for the successful long-term implementation of the RTP's recommended programs and policies, an evaluation and continuous monitoring process must be established. The next steps in the RTP development process will be to identify performance measures that will both recognize those programs having the desired impact on meeting the metropolitan planning area's long-term vision and those programs where new or modified approaches may be necessary to achieve that vision. Policies that describe how the region invests its resources and how the Birmingham MPO conducts its business are also discussed in this chapter.

The first steps in the RTP process brought the Birmingham MPO and its stakeholders to an understanding of the key principles that will help guide the MPO's actions over the long term, provided specific intermediate objectives that mark progress in meeting the long-term goals, and established policies that define how programs and activities are conducted to achieve identified goals. Ultimately, these policies will guide the metropolitan planning area's future transportation investments in the short-range (1-7 years – includes the 4-year Transportation Improvement Program), intermediate-range (8-15-years), and long-range (16-25-years) programs.

The RTP vision emphasizes linkages among transportation choices and other economic and social goals of the region, such as fostering a robust economy linked to global markets, providing affordable housing, revitalizing Alabama's urban and rural areas, promoting a sense of community, and preserving natural areas and open space.

The proposed Key Principles are designed to describe the foundation for the Greater Birmingham region's transportation system (to include both the metropolitan and rural planning areas). The goals are broad concepts that, when realized, will create the regional transportation system embodied in the RTP. The objectives nested within each goal are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound improvements that advance a particular goal. When linked with performance monitoring systems, they will form the basis for evaluating progress in implementing the plan and moving Birmingham metropolitan planning area toward achieving its "Big Idea." The Birmingham RTP must be responsive to both federal guidelines and state regulations as both of these serve to form a framework for the plan and to define the basic plan content.

### **3.2 Federal Guidelines**

In providing mobility for people and goods, all levels of government are confronted with a rapidly changing environment and constraints. The Safe Affordable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), coupled with the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) of 1990, provide an impetus for change in transportation planning and project implementation. This legislation, building on its predecessors the -- Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act (ISTEA) and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) -- directed the focus of transportation planning away from blindly providing capacity for vehicles, and directed that transportation planning seek to improve the overall efficiency of the transportation system. This would include planning for and placing support behind strategies that:

- Address the multimodal movement of people and goods;
- Use management systems in decision making;
- Enhance the role for Metropolitan Planning Organizations;
- Improve air quality; and
- Avoid, minimize, or mitigate negative environmental and socio-economic impacts.

Statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes are required if federal highway or transit funds are used for transportation investments, and are specified by federal law (23 USC 134 and 135). These federal planning regulations are codified in 23 CFR 450.

Metropolitan transportation plans integrate planning for multiple transportation modes to balance the mobility needs of the metropolitan planning area with future revenue sources. To support this requirement, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have issued statewide transportation planning guidelines. These guidelines identify eight factors that should be addressed in both statewide and metropolitan plans. These factors are shown in Figure 3-1.

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 for 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
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system

Figure 3.1 Federal Planning Factors

The Federal Planning Factors have been incorporated into the RTP, most notably in the development of performance indicators and project evaluation and prioritization criteria, as well as the RTP monitoring and evaluation process.

The federal guidelines provide latitude to accommodate the needs of the metropolitan planning area based on their individual experiences. In creating its own set of Key Principles, the Birmingham MPO has adopted these guidelines and adapted the federal planning factors to suit its own unique circumstances. This convergence is described in this report.

### 3.3 The Starting Point: Understanding the Issues and Challenges

In their book, *Urban Transportation Planning: A Decision-Oriented Approach*, Professors Michael D. Meyer and Eric J. Miller describe the urban transportation planning as the process of:

1. Establishing a vision of what a community wants to be and how the transportation system fits into this vision.
2. Understanding the types of decisions that need to be made to achieve this vision.
3. Assessing opportunities and limitations of the future in relationship to goals and desired system performance measures.
4. Identifying the near and long-term consequences to the community and to transportation system users of alternative choices designed to take advantage of these opportunities or respond to these limitations.
5. Relating alternative decisions to the goals, objectives, or system performance measures established for an urban area, agency, or firm.
6. Presenting this information to decision-makers in an understandable and useful form.
7. Helping decision-makers establish priorities and develop an investment program.

Further, they describe multimodal transportation planning as “a planning process that considers all of the modes of transportation that are feasible in a given situation.” It is the intent of the Birmingham 2035 RTP to provide a multimodal planning process in order to achieve a balanced transportation system and thereby meet regional travel needs. In order to accomplish this, however, an understanding of the region’s transportation issues and mobility challenges is needed. Through assessing issues and challenges on the front end, subsequent steps of the planning process will be informed. Figure 3.2, which is taken from Drs. Meyer’s and Miller’s work illustrates the major steps of a transportation planning process, and shows how they might be applied at varying scales.

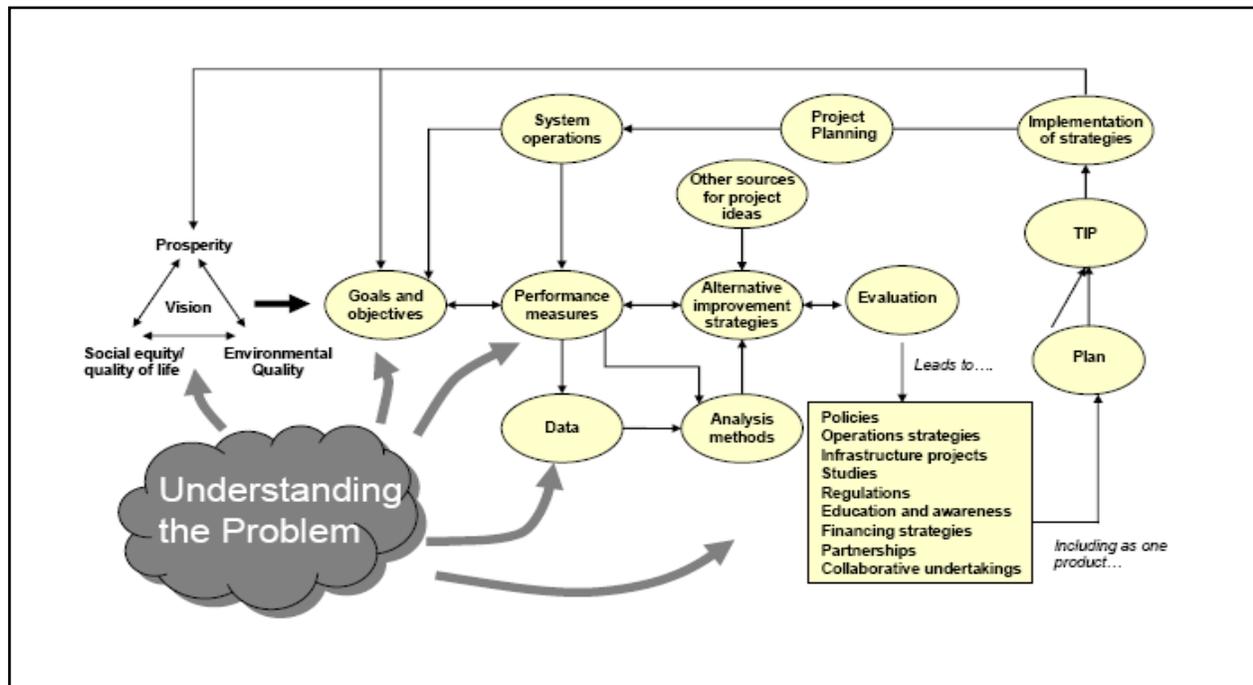


Figure 3.2: Steps in the Transportation Planning Process

Source: Professional Transportation Planner Certification Program Study Guide, Institute of Transportation Engineers

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### **3.4 Key Principles**

Reflecting both federal and state guidance, the Birmingham MPO has identified a set of Key Principles, which the MPO has come to view as the basic building blocks of the RTP. From these Key Principles, goals, objectives, and policies have been derived. Each of these reflects perceived trends and the resulting challenges. The Key Principles also help to shape performance measures and the investment scenarios that shape the RTP across its 25-Year horizon. Key Principles of the Birmingham RTP are presented in Figure 3.3.

To create a context for the development of RTP goals and objectives, and to reflect the Key Principles defined below, it is helpful to draw on the work of other metropolitan planning organizations that have recently completed their long range planning process. Similarly, the goals should reflect the transportation challenges facing the Birmingham metropolitan planning area, and to the extent practical, should reflect and build upon the work done by local and state planning agencies, and by the Birmingham MPO itself.

In preparing the draft goals and objectives, RTPs for five peer regions were reviewed. Several elements of those plans (relating to efficiency, mobility, and safety) are highlighted, and several applicable strategies were incorporated into the Birmingham RTP. Other significant planning documents from other states' DOTs and regional planning organizations were also reviewed to further understand the state of transportation planning practices as it relates to planning for multimodal transportation systems. These documents included mode-specific plans, operational plans, policy plans, financial plans and implementation strategies. Finally, the Birmingham MPO's own transportation planning documents were reviewed to make certain that the MPO initiatives were consistent with federal policies and guidance.

**Vision Statement**

Transportation has become the connective tissue of the region. By foot, by bike, by car, or by public transportation, residents experience reduced congestion and higher mobility, both of which are the result of four important strategic decisions:

1. Preserving and improving both the existing local and interstate highways
2. Developing a responsive, efficient, and highly effective public transportation system
3. Supporting the use of alternative transportation modes, and
4. Encouraging sustainable development patterns

**Principles**

The Birmingham MPO believes the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Area's interests in developing a quality transportation system are best served when:

**Principle 1:** Transportation facilities and services are well maintained

**Principle 2:** Transportation facilities and services enhance mobility within and between areas, making services and opportunities more accessible

**Principle 3:** Transportation facilities and services support the metropolitan area's existing and future economy

**Principle 4:** Transportation facilities and services promote safe travel

**Principle 5:** Transportation facilities and services support local, regional, state, and national security

**Principle 6:** Transportation decisions and resource impacts are integrated

**Principle 7:** Travelers are provided multiple mobility options

**Principle 8:** Transportation infrastructure and service development, system expansion, system maintenance, and system operations are adequately provided

Figure 3.3 A Vision for Regional Travel and Key Principles

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### **3.5 Peer Agency Plan Review**

The Birmingham MPO identified long range transportation plans and/or regional transportation plans from five peer agencies to compare their long-range planning processes. Peer agencies included state departments of transportation, metropolitan planning organizations, and regional authorities having significant transportation responsibilities. Most agencies were selected primarily because of their traditional and/or demonstrated commitment to the long-range planning process. However, some were chosen because of their innovations in planning processes that include consideration/integration of land use, strategies to address transportation system maintenance and operations, approaches to financing improvements, and implementation strategies. These agencies' long-range plans were reviewed with an eye to the content of their goals and objectives, policies, and strategies for addressing financial challenges. Plans were also reviewed to see how these agencies approached the implementation of recommended projects, programs, and strategies.

**Tennessee Department of Transportation: PlanGo** - Recently completed, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) LRTP goals are centered on a set of "Guiding Principles" that provide the basis of the state's plan. The goals address such areas as safety, management of the existing transportation system, economic competitiveness, and quality of life. Goals also address multimodal transportation aspirations specific to different travel modes, such as air and water. They also recognize challenges associated with freight mobility and public transportation. Tennessee's LRTP placed a lot of emphasis on modal plans. That is, emphasis is placed on the use of mode specific plans and strategies. Finally, the Tennessee LRTP emphasizes a performance based planning approach where the performance of the transportation system is continuously evaluated in order to determine how well investment strategies are working to accomplish the plan's goals. Periodic modifications to investment priorities are made based on the results of the performance criteria.

**Indiana Department of Transportation: 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan** - Completed in 2007, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) developed its 2030 LRTP as the third supplement to its 1995 LRTP. The 2007 supplement to the LRTP admittedly focuses on identifying capacity expansion projects in order to inform Major Moves, a major construction initiative. Major Moves is a state-wide construction program resulting from windfall profits expected from the sale of the state's toll road system to private investors. The INDOT LRTP is comprised of several modal plans, some developed internally and some developed externally. These include:

- State Aviation System Plan
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Planning and Development Plan
- Highway System Plan
- Port Commission Strategic Plan and Business Plan
- Railroad Planning Program
- State Public Transportation System Plan

In addition, the LRTP incorporates strategy recommendations resulting from corridor specific studies and focuses on meeting air quality conformity standards. The LRTP also places strong emphasis on system maintenance strategies to improve system efficiency through operations. Finally, the LRTP emphasizes the development of closer relationships and improved coordination with planning partners. The LRTP does not contain specific transportation system goals, but stated objectives closely align with federal planning standards.

**Transportation Planning Board: Metropolitan Washington Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan** - The Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Washington D.C. area, is housed within the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The Fiscally Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRTP) is built around mode specific and functional area specific plans. Each of these plans has goals and objectives developed expressly for them. These are in addition to an overarching vision and goals which are reflective of federal planning factors. The regional goals address the vision for the metropolitan Washington area's land development pattern, as well as the overall operations, management, and maintenance of the transportation system. A preferred land development scenario informs transportation investment decisions.

The cornerstone of TPB's CLRTP is its Congestion Management Process (CMP). The CMP informs the development of new infrastructure and guides the activities of the region's transportation system operations.

**Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission: 2035 Transportation and Development Plan for Southwestern Pennsylvania** – the 2035 Transportation and Development Plan for Southwest Pennsylvania is an integrated land use and transportation plan that addresses the future growth of the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. The 2035 Plan is billed as “the mechanism for connecting the region's vision to an official, coordinated implementation program of projects and actions.” Its development was innovative in that it was created through an extensive community engagement process called Project Region. The 2035 Plan itself is innovative in that the projects, programs, and strategies included within it are almost entirely centered on a regional vision scenario that addresses land development, connections, and activities. This vision scenario is informed by traditional transportation tools such as the travel demand model. However, it was also informed by the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy; traditional transportation tools and strategies such as corridor, mode specific, and functional area plans; land use and environmental indicators based on detailed modeling of alternative development scenarios; and public input.

The plan places heavy emphasis on land use strategies that address transportation. It also focuses on transportation system operations, management, and maintenance over new capacity projects. Finally, the plan:

- Emphasizes developing the transportation system so that it provides multimodal connections to revitalized urban communities and existing suburban places versus chasing after new development
- Supports activities within these places versus accommodating vehicle movement
- Encourages strategic upgrades to the transportation system in support of targeted and informed economic development objectives versus speculative development

**Atlanta Regional Commission: Envision 6** – adopted in 2007, the Atlanta Region's RTP, Envision 6, integrates land use, transportation, and water availability considerations. The Atlanta region's plan was selected for peer review primarily because of the similarities in the challenges that the Atlanta region faces with those that the Birmingham metropolitan planning area is currently facing or expected to face. Particularly, the rapid deterioration of funding capacity, the growth of congestion along major travel corridors, and the growing demand for public transportation services for both choice travelers and the transportation disadvantaged are challenges that both Atlanta and Birmingham have in common. Additionally, the Atlanta region was selected as a peer because of its use of the CMP in the transportation planning process, particularly in its approach to identifying and staging the implementation of

transportation strategies. The Envision 6 goals are specific to functional areas and speak to the desired outcomes of these areas in relationship to achieving a regional vision.

Plan innovations include the linkage of transportation and land use, specifically the development and integration of a Unified Growth Policy Map to inform transportation investments. This land use strategy is innovative in that it is informed largely by the availability (or unavailability) of water resources. Other innovations include consideration strategies to improve transportation system efficiency, including proposals for the use of intelligent transportation systems and managed lanes; truck only interstate travel facilities; and expansions to the region's public transportation network. Finally, the plan broaches ideas for funding, primarily the consideration of tolling new lanes on existing facilities using pricing management strategies based on congested conditions. Plans for the next update to the RTP will include the results of an extensive corridor planning process to inform the plan's development.

**Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization: Nashville Area 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan** - The Nashville Area 2030 LRTP was adopted in 2005. It has five (5) goals that speak to the region's desire to link transportation and land use, develop a multimodal transportation system, reduce congestion, better address air quality, environmental, and energy consumption concerns, and manage finances more effectively. The LRTP also contains a separate set of goals that address bicycle and pedestrian travel. The Nashville Area 2030 LRTP is most like the current Birmingham 2030 LRTP in structure and content. However, Nashville's was chosen for review primarily because of the activities that are currently occurring to inform its update.

Since the 2030 LRTP adoption, the Nashville Area MPO has undertaken activities to better address the linkage of the transportation and land use. Several transit corridor studies have been undertaken, and are similar to those of the Birmingham MPO. However, the Nashville Area MPO has gone a step further and conducted several integrated land use and transportation planning efforts at both the corridor and sub-area geographies to inform transportation planning. Through this effort, they have developed new tools to evaluate the impact of land use changes on transportation and vice-versa. The Nashville Area MPO also commissioned a detailed study to evaluate strategies for funding transportation system improvements in the face of imminent funding short-falls. It is expected that ongoing and forthcoming conversations will seek to focus on one or two potential funding sources and identify a methodology to capture revenues from these sources.

**The Greater Toronto Transportation Authority aka Metrolinx: Big Moves** - although located in Canada's Ontario Province, the Metrolinx developed a RTP centered on a vision for the overall development of the region. Metrolinx was chosen as a peer primarily because of its innovation in development of Big Moves, their LRTP. Big Moves, by far, has the most extensive and detailed goals of any of the plan documents reviewed, having thirteen (13) stated goals. Each of the goals is distributed across three (3) differing aspects of the vision statement that speaks to quality of life, the built and natural environment, and the economy. In addition to these goals, there are thirty-seven (37) objectives of the vision statement. Big Moves speaks to the:

- Quality of transportation facilities and services
- Equitable distribution and provision of transportation system investments
- Public transportations roles in travel
- Land development, particularly as it relates to the development of life-cycle communities

The innovation of Big Moves is that it looks beyond the traditional 25-year planning horizon, and sets its sights an additional 25-years into the future, making it a 50-year plan. Other innovations of Big Moves

are its deliberate consideration of transportation's role in improving (or degrading) community health and access to opportunities across socio-economic boundaries. Big Moves considers the impacts of transportation investments made within its planning area on adjacent communities outside of the planning area. Finally, Big Moves links the transportation system's financial investments directly to regional performance indicators, providing a policy that requires projects seeking funding from the agency to "make their case." In short, this policy all but declares that transportation projects submitted for funding will not automatically be included in the plan.

## **3.6 Transportation System Development Vision, Goals and Objectives**

The Principles presented in Table 3.1, Guiding Principles, Goals and Objectives, are designed to provide the bedrock foundation for the Birmingham metropolitan planning area's transportation system. The goals are broad concepts that, when realized, will create the state transportation system embodied in the RTP. The objectives nested within each goal are specific, achievable improvements that advance a particular goal. When linked with performance monitoring systems, they will be the basis for evaluating progress in implementing the plan and moving the Birmingham metropolitan planning area toward achieving its long term vision and goals for the development of the regional transportation system. The Principles, Goals and Objectives are shown in Table 3.1.

### **3.6.1 A Vision for Regional Travel**

Beginning in 1997, the Birmingham metropolitan planning area participated in an extensive regional visioning exercise led by Region 2020. This visioning exercise concluded in 2000 and resulted in the development of 30 action plans. Each of the action plans addressed a different aspect of the region's development, laying out broad goals and strategies for accomplishing these goals. As part of this process, a vision for the development of the regional transportation system emerged. Out of this vision were three (3) distinct transportation goals regarding the development of specific modal aspects of the region's surface transportation system and addressed concerns about roadways, freight and goods movement, public transportation, and non-motorized travel.

Region 2020 is no longer active as an organization, however the process started by Region 2020 and the vision that it developed has been used as a starting point for the development of the RTP. To that end, the RTP development process began with a reaffirmation of the Region 2020 transportation vision statement. Additionally, the previous Birmingham LRTP goals were also evaluated. The outcome of the reaffirmation exercise resulted in the creation of a modified vision for the development of the regional transportation system. The modified vision simplifies the Region 2020 vision statements, builds on the multiple vision statements, and reaffirms these statements' emphasis on physical connections, integrating land use and transportation, and providing additional travel choices. Additionally, the RTP vision reflects the metropolitan planning area's improved understanding multimodal transportation and as well as the relationship between transportation and the environment.

### **3.6.2 RTP Goals and Objectives**

Every regional transportation planning effort traditionally includes goals and objectives. The Birmingham 2035 RTP is no different. Based on input from the Birmingham MPO's stakeholders and the public, three distinctive goals were identified. These goals are consistent with the Key Principles and represent the long-term end toward which programs and activities are ultimately directed. SMART (specific measurable attainable realistic and time-bound) Objectives have also been developed. These objectives provide intermediate ends that mark progress towards meeting the goals. Finally, policies derived from the goals and objectives have been developed to guide the MPO's future transportation investments. Mode specific policies are included within functional plan documents.

The establishment of goals, objectives, and policies is important because they provide a regional response to identified long-term challenges and opportunities. Recognizing that the Birmingham region is changing, and that there are many challenges anticipated over the 25-years that are included in the RTP's plan horizon, the goals, objectives, and policies will serve as a "road map" to achieve the region's vision. The three overarching Regional Transportation Plan goals are shown below in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1 Guiding Principles, Goals, and Objectives**

<p><b>Goal</b></p>	<p><b>Goal 1: Transportation System Sustainability</b>          Manage, maintain, and enhance the transportation system to ensure efficient, safe, convenient, and economical movement of people and goods</p>
<p><b>Key Principles</b></p>	<p><b>Principle 1:</b> Transportation facilities and services are well maintained</p> <p><b>Principle 8:</b> Transportation infrastructure and service development, system expansion, system maintenance, and system operations are adequately provided</p>
<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<p>Specific objectives that will enable this goal to be achieved include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a financial management system to guide the MPO’s federal funding investments.</li> <li>• Encouraging local governments to provide additional funding for projects.</li> <li>• Supporting continuous transportation infrastructure preservation activities, including those that pursue permanent solutions and improve both facility and service operations.</li> <li>• Improving the ability to monitor the region’s roadways and public transit system for greater security.</li> <li>• Pursuing congesting mitigation strategies according to severity.</li> <li>• Maintaining and improving the existing levels of service for all modes of travel by using operational strategies to optimize system efficiencies.</li> <li>• Pursuing transportation infrastructure improvements according to documented safety concerns.</li> <li>• Developing alternative travel modes and redundant ways to access areas.</li> </ul>

<b>Goal</b>	<p><b>Goal 2: Transportation System Integration and Connectivity</b>          Develop and maintain a regional transportation system that integrates land use and transportation, improving the traveler’s ability to move around the region and provide access to services and opportunities.</p>
<b>Key Principles</b>	<p><b>Principle 2:</b> Transportation facilities and services enhance mobility within and between areas, making services and opportunities more accessible</p> <p><b>Principle 3:</b> Transportation facilities and services support the metropolitan area’s existing and future economy</p> <p><b>Principle 4:</b> Transportation facilities and services support local, regional, state, and national security</p> <p><b>Principle 5:</b> Travelers are provided multiple mobility options</p> <p><b>Principle 7:</b> Transportation facilities and services promote safe travel</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Specific objectives that will enable this goal to be achieved include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing an interconnected network of roadways, sidewalks and transit services that connect with other transportation facilities, important land uses, and activity centers.</li> <li>• Improving access to intermodal freight facilities, the Birmingham airports and in-land ports.</li> <li>• Building additional roadways to provide increased access and cross-regional mobility.</li> <li>• Developing public transit services that serve more of the region.</li> <li>• Developing public transit services that provide a variety of different services.</li> <li>• Supporting programs that encourage travelers to use alternative commuting programs and strategies such as those offered by CommuteSmart.</li> <li>• Developing a network of bike paths and trails to establish a regional system.</li> </ul>

<b>Goal</b>	<p><b>Goal 3: Community Driven Transportation Planning Process</b>          Develop an open and transparent transportation planning process that is based on involving the community in the transportation decision-making process, and is built upon locally developed and adopted plans.</p>
<b>Key Principles</b>	<p><b>Principle 6:</b> Transportation decisions and resource impacts are integrated</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Specific objectives that will enable this goal to be achieved include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving preference to transportation infrastructure projects that originate from and/or are identified either specifically or in concept within locally developed and adopted planning documents.</li> <li>• Improving the consideration and inclusion of low-income, minority, elderly, disable and traditionally underserved (Environmental Justice) populations in the planning and decision-making process.</li> <li>• Giving preference to projects that avoid and/or minimize negative environmental impacts, historical and cultural impacts, and are sensitive to the local character.</li> <li>• Encouraging state and local transportation agencies and local elected officials to provide written support for transportation infrastructure projects.</li> <li>• Giving higher consideration to transportation infrastructure projects that are identified in locally endorsed regional or agency developed plan documents.</li> <li>• Eliminating and/or minimizing physical barriers, such as rail crossings, for motorized and non-motorized travel.</li> </ul>

**Goal 1 - Transportation System Sustainability** expresses a regional desire for a transportation system that is well maintained, and sustains long-term economic viability and growth. The objectives developed for this goal recognize that regional transportation facilities and services are also important community assets that need to be well maintained and enhanced. The objectives also recognize that there is a level of financial accountability and oversight that is needed to ensure that transportation facilities and services are maintained. This includes consideration of life-cycle costs associated with operating and maintaining RTP projects in the RTP. It also includes strategies to optimize travel choices within the transportation system in order to maximize the associated benefits for all users while minimizing costs for the region’s residents and businesses. Other secondary costs associated with the development of a complete transportation system as envisioned will also ensure that Goal 1 aids in the achievement of the desired changes in the regional transportation system.

**Goal 2 - Transportation System Integration and Connectivity** addresses three primary elements:

1. Mobility - the ability of people to move from place to place  
 This element of Goal 2 expresses the need to develop a transportation system that moves people and goods safely, conveniently, and economically. It also recognizes that stronger regional collaborative mechanisms will be needed to address regional travel issues and improvements by speaking to congestion and travel delay, particularly as it relates to the region’s economic vitality.

2. Accessibility - the ease of reaching destinations

This element of Goal 2 speaks mostly to the assurance of reasonable access to all types of land uses (residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, etc.) as well as schools, recreational and natural areas, and community facilities. It also speaks to the accessibility of opportunities such as jobs, education, and healthcare. In all, this element stresses the need for solutions to achieve a balanced transportation system, and encourages transportation connections that support community values, health, and safety.

3. Transportation Choices - multiple travel mode options that make travel convenient and affordable

This element of Goal 2 stresses the importance of developing a safe network of non-motorized travel facilities, public transportation services, and ride-sharing options. The Goal 2 objectives that specifically speak to transportation choices also emphasize the need to reduce the Birmingham area's dependency on the automobile. It recognizes the need for accessible, attractive, and competitive walking, cycling, and transit travel options in order to be viable alternatives to travel by automobile.

Although awkwardly stated, **Goal 3 - Community Driven Transportation Planning Process** emphasizes the desire to involve the community in an open and transparent transportation planning process. The community in question is not comprised of only planners, engineers, and elected officials, but includes community residents, businesses, special interest groups, and special populations such as the elderly, low-income, and minorities. In addition to including the voices of the community in the transportation planning process, Goal 3 also expresses the region's desire that transportation infrastructure investment decisions result from a rational planning process and that transportation supports and complements land use decisions versus competing with, precluding, or harming them. To that end, the objectives developed for this goal place importance on not only the development of plans, but their adoption. The adoption of plan documents is a demonstration of the community's commitment to implement their vision for how their community should address challenges of growth, economic development, transportation, and quality of life issues.

The RTP goals and objectives will advance the region towards its vision of providing a transportation system that is well maintained and offers users choices about how they can travel. They will help to achieve the regional vision by guiding the development of policies and strategies that encourage and support both output and outcome based changes to the transportation system. That is, they will help to guide the development of policies and strategies that speak to the actions (outputs) that are needed to effectuate changes in the way the transportation system is developed and operates, as well as measures to address behavior (outcomes).

Performance measures that are developed to evaluate the objectives associated with each of the goals identified above may also be used to assist in the assessment projects and programs. In doing so, performance measure results will inform project/program priority relative to how well they achieve the desired outcomes of the RTP.

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## **3.7 System Performance Indicators**

### **3.7.1 Measuring Success**

Given the political tendencies of elected officials, appointed decision-makers, and the public to focus on short-term accomplishments, the Birmingham RTP purposely attempts to provide a clear understanding of both the short-term gains and long-term impacts of the projects, programs, and policies included in the plan. It also seeks to provide a clear understanding of the tradeoffs that the plan makes in order to achieve its goals. As such, the RTP establishes a “framework” for evaluating its successes and failures. This framework identifies a number of performance indicators that enable the Birmingham MPO to evaluate how well the projects, programs, and policies accomplish regional objectives. The more objectives that are accomplished indicate that the goal is being met or exceeded. The more goals that are met are an indication that the regional vision is being achieved.

Performance indicators are critical tools that can be used to:

- **Gauge how well the Birmingham MPO is meeting its RTP goals**  
Performance is the accomplishment of a promise or a claim and therefore must be measured relative to a set of goals and objectives. The Birmingham MPO has adopted goals and objectives in the RTP that address issues related to mobility, accessibility, safety, economic development, environmental stewardship, financial responsibility, transportation system preservation, and community partnerships. The objectives inform specific strategies that lead to the accomplishment of the goals. Performance indicators can be qualitative or quantitative and are developed to determine whether improvements are being made over time or whether or not the goals and objectives are being met. Objectives may also reflect both outcome based desires for the development of the regional transportation system, as well as output based actions. That is, the objectives may speak to desired changes in behavior resulting in ultimate effect i.e. outcomes. Likewise specific outputs of transportation system infrastructure and service improvement might also be targeted and measured. Output measures include such things as maintained lane miles of roadways, constructed lane miles of roadways, revenue hours provided, etc. Ultimately, the performance indicators provide the link between goals and eventual outcomes of policy decisions. They provide the measure by which the MPO can determine whether the goals are being met through policies and the execution of those policies.
- **Rate transportation system performance against established benchmarks**  
These benchmarks define a set of expected performance standards. Standards are a pre-set threshold level of a given measure. The measured condition is the actual performance measure, while the numerical value is the desired standard for that particular system element. Measures are used to compare established benchmarks and desired targets. Performance standards have not yet been defined for the Birmingham RTP, but are expected to be identified as part of the ongoing metropolitan planning process. When defined, the performance indicators will be closely linked with the performance standards.
- **Identify system deficiencies and opportunities for improvement**  
Performance indicators are diagnostic and can alert decision makers that a major change has occurred in some primary transportation service. They do not provide remedies but rather act as a trigger for a closer analysis of the problem. As indicators, they allow decision makers to focus on specific areas where performance must be improved for specific objectives.

First of all, the number of transportation system performance indicators should be kept manageable. The performance measures should maintain a clear purpose (i.e., reflect identified objectives). They should be periodically reviewed for relevance and be refined or modified as appropriate to reflect changing economic conditions, new technologies, additional resources, and similar external factors.

Secondly, stakeholders should be involved in developing transportation system performance indicators. Stakeholders might include consumers, private sector companies and transportation service providers, and local or regional government agencies.

Finally, performance indicators should focus on gauging progress on achieving specific goals and objectives and on improvement measured against established benchmarks.

When the Birmingham MPO implements the recommended transportation system performance indicator framework, it will be able to produce periodic report cards. The transportation system performance results demonstrated by the report cards may then be used by the MPO to revise and update the RTP, the TIP, functional plans, or the agency's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Performance indicators may even be used to inform investment decisions and guide project implementation when funding shortfalls occur.

Performance measures can guide allocation of resources and help to determine the level of investment necessary for a particular mode, program, or project. Annual or quarterly status reports can indicate whether resources are being allocated to identify priority needs. This indication is provided through annual or quarterly status reports

The RTP is structured to include a combination of projects, programs, policies, and strategies. With the exception of roadway capacity projects, few specific projects and programs are identified in the RTP. Instead, express projects, programs, policies, and strategies are identified in functional plans specific to a travel mode or concept area. Examples of this include the Birmingham Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (currently being developed); the Regional Transit Improvement Strategy and the BJCTA's Transit Development Program; the Regional Intermodal Facilities, Freight and Goods Movement Plan; and the Regional Transportation System Operations Plan. Each of these plan documents contains goals and objectives that are specific to their functions. However, they should also demonstrate how they address regional goals and objectives.

The RTP performance indicators will provide the Birmingham MPO with the feedback it needs to make informed decisions about transportation system development strategies and investments. They will enable the MPO staff to provide guidance and support for ongoing monitoring processes. The information gathered through these processes will be used to help update future RTPs.

The performance indicators identified within the RTP are meant to provide a common and consistent set of measures that transcend modal differences. As such, the RTP performance indicators are intended to enable the comparative analysis of transportation system development scenarios versus the analysis of individual projects. The RTP performance indicators are constructed in a way that can inform modal evaluation criteria. However, analysis of an individual project's merit is done so within the functional plan that speaks to the specific mode or operational strategy. In this way, like projects will be evaluated against one another and the best of these will be identified. Ideally, projects that rise to the top within their modal category are the types of projects that are also best in helping to achieve the regional goals and objectives.

This approach to measuring the success of the RTP enables the debate over the merits of specific projects to occur elsewhere in the planning process. In doing so, the justification for pursuing specific projects might be made clearer along with any dissensions to them. Additionally, the political discussions that occur in regards to advancing and/or impeding the development of specific projects might be made transparent. This approach also allows the RTP to focus more intently on evaluating the regional benefits and costs of alternative transportation system development scenarios. It also enables the Birmingham MPO to better focus its attention on the meaningful allocation of fiscal resources to projects having regional significance, both for the short term through the TIP, and for the long term through the RTP.

A well-structured performance indicator can also serve to “alert” the Birmingham MPO about an impending issue before it gets too bad, helping to recognize problems early on. Additionally, performance indicators enable the MPO to identify fixes to identified problems.

### 3.7.2 System Performance Indicators

A number of performance indicators were identified to provide information about the overall transportation system. This information will be used to evaluate the expected progress of the RTP over baseline conditions. Assessment of progress is determined by considering the achievement of RTP goals and objectives. Table 3.2 presents the performance indicators that will be used to evaluate different RTP scenarios and the success of the RTP itself.

There are two primary indicators that will be used to evaluate the RTP’s success. The first is mobility, the ease with which people and goods move throughout their communities. Mobility measures will be used to evaluate how well the transportation system development scenario advocated by the RTP improves the mobility of people and goods. In the case of the RTP, the mobility measure considers the ease with which people and goods move throughout the metropolitan planning area. Mobility indicators consider such things as the provision of access to jobs, services and markets. Additionally, mobility performance indicators are used in the metropolitan planning function to identify the location, scale and nature of problems and needs across the transportation system. They are also used to identify possible solutions to these problems. Transportation’s most essential function is to provide mobility for people and goods. By measuring the performance of mobility, the Birmingham MPO can better understand how to improve it.

Mobility performance indicators are included in the larger mix of indicators that have been identified for use in evaluating the RTP scenarios, and are used to characterize the overall functionality of the transportation system. Generalized mobility measures used in the RTP assess:

- **Quantity of service** (number of people served) – This is the collective user perspective, and measure of a program’s success.
- **Quality of service** (degree of traveler satisfaction with the service provided) – Quality of service is usually related to travel time.
- **Accessibility of service** (ease of engaging in activities) – Accessibility is related to the existence of service, and difficulty of using it.
- **Utilization** (how much of the available capacity is used) – Utilization is an indication of whether the system is properly sized, matching supply to demand.

The second primary indicator that will be used to evaluate the RTP’s success is accessibility. In transportation, accessibility refers to the ease of reaching destinations. People who are in places that are

highly accessible can reach many other activities or destinations quickly; people in inaccessible places can reach many fewer places in the same amount of time.

Accessibility measures, as used in the RTP, are intended to provide an indication of the collective performance of land use and transportation systems as well as determine how well the system serves its residents. Measures will consider the number of opportunities i.e. jobs, retail services, personal services, education, etc. that travelers can get to in a fixed period of time.

Additionally, accessibility indicators are also intended to assist the Birmingham MPO in better understanding transportation system vulnerabilities. That is, they are intended to help the MPO better understand where the weak points in the transportation network are located and consequences in case of a failure, recognizing that the loss of transportation network in one location will have different consequences from the loss of or degradation of the transportation network in a different location. In achieving this understanding, the MPO might identify and act upon strategies to improve the overall reliability of travel across the metropolitan planning area.

Finally, accessibility indicators are intended to aid the Birmingham MPO in the planning process by providing a better understanding of transportation system reliability. Reliability is more concerned with the probability of the transportation system to maintain consistent connectivity, capacity, and travel times. This is especially important for regional economic development as it pertains to freight and goods movement. Network reliability is a cornerstone of the logistics industry, and areas that have highly reliable transportation networks stand a better chance of attracting and retaining industries that have time sensitive processes.

Both mobility and accessibility performance indicators, as well as a number of other performance indicators are presented in Table 3.2. Combined, these indicators paint a comprehensive picture of how the transportation system is operating. When applied to the RTP transportation system development scenario, it provides a portrait of how the transportation system could be expected to operate.

**Table 3.2 Performance Indicators**

<b>Goal 1: Transportation System Sustainability</b> Manage, maintain, and enhance the transportation system to ensure efficient, safe, convenient, and economical movement of people and goods	
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>
Establishing a financial management system to guide the MPO's federal funding investments.	Benefit/Cost Analysis of Scenario
Encouraging local governments to provide additional funding for projects.	Percent Local Funding vs. Total Project Funding
Supporting continuous transportation infrastructure preservation activities, including those that pursue permanent solutions and improve both facility and service operations.	Percentage of O&M Funding vs. Total Funding
Improving the ability to monitor the region's roadways and public transit system for greater security.	Miles of Interstate Monitored by Camera Miles of Arterials Monitored by Cameras Miles of Interstates Patrolled by ASAP ASAP Service Hour Total Percent of Transit Fleet with On-Board Cameras Percent of Transit Stops Monitored by Cameras
Pursuing congesting mitigation strategies according to severity.	Duration of Congestion Peak Hour Congested Travel Times Person Delay
Maintaining and improving the existing levels of service for all modes of travel by using operational strategies to optimize system efficiencies.	Composite Modal Level of Service Average Level of Service by Facility Type
Pursuing transportation infrastructure improvements according to documented safety concerns	Percent Bridges Rated as Deficient Percent Miles of Deficient Pavement by Roadway Type
Developing alternative travel modes and redundant ways to access areas.	Transportation System Reliability Transportation System Vulnerability Index Accessibility Index

**Goal 2: Transportation System Integration and Connectivity**

Develop and maintain a regional transportation system that integrates land use and transportation, improving the traveler's ability to move around the region and provide access to services and opportunities.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>
Developing an interconnected network of roadways, sidewalks and transit services that connect with other transportation facilities, important land uses, and activity centers.	Composite Connectivity Index Activity Center Connectivity Index
Improving access to intermodal freight facilities, the Birmingham airports and in-land ports.	Transportation System Reliability Accessibility Index
Building additional roadways to provide increased access and cross-regional mobility.	Miles of New Roadway
Developing public transit services that serve more of the region.	Fixed Route Transit Service Area (Sq/Miles) Percent Population within ¼ mile of Fixed Route Service Percent Disabled Population within Transit Service Area Total Revenue Hours of Service
Developing public transit services that provide a variety of different service types.	Transit Mode Availability Transit Service Diversity by Service Type
Supporting programs that encourage travelers to use alternative commuting programs and strategies such as those offered by CommuteSmart.	Total New Carpools/Vanpools Total Annual Transit Ridership Increase Total New Daily Transit Riders by Service Type
Developing a network of bike paths and trails to establish a regional system	Miles of New Bike Lanes Miles of New Paths

<b>Goal 3: Community Driven Transportation Planning Process</b>	
Develop an open and transparent transportation planning process that is based on involving the community in the transportation decision-making process, and is built upon locally developed and adopted plans.	
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>
Giving preference to transportation infrastructure projects that originate from and/or are identified either specifically or in concept within locally developed and adopted planning documents.	RTP Projects Identified/Listed in Adopted Local Plans
Improving the consideration and inclusion of low-income, minority, elderly, disable and traditionally underserved (Environmental Justice) populations in the planning and decision-making process.	Opportunity Index i.e. jobs, services, education, located within ¼ mile of transit Transportation Vulnerability Index
Giving preference to projects that avoid and/or minimize negative environmental impacts, historical and cultural impacts, and are sensitive to the local character.	Total Expected Environmental Document Types
Encouraging state and local transportation agencies and local elected officials to provide written support for transportation infrastructure projects.	Local Support Documentation
Giving higher consideration to transportation infrastructure projects that are identified in locally endorsed regional or agency developed plan documents.	RTP Projects Identified/Listed in Agency or Functional Plans
Eliminating and/or minimizing physical barriers, such as rail crossings, for motorized and non-motorized travel.	Total Barriers Eliminated

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### **3.8 Linking Performance Indicators and Evaluation**

Since both are derived from the RTP's goals and objectives, performance indicators are closely linked to evaluation criteria for future system investment strategies. Evaluation criteria are typically inclusive of other elements beyond the identified performance indicators, such as environmental readiness and constructability. It should be noted that evaluation criteria are part of the decision-making process on individual transportation projects, while performance indicators are focused on system-level standards and objectives. Moreover, as indicated in many of the peer documents reviewed to determine the state of the practice, a cautionary note was reiterated on using performance measures to supplant the project decision-making process.

#### **3.8.1 Performance Measures and Evaluation Criteria Distinction**

As part of their statewide and metropolitan planning functions, state and regional planning agencies have been collecting extensive data and information on system performance measures for many years. They continue to improve performance measurement systems based on new information, new technology, and updated evaluation methodologies. Many states and regions consider their performance measurement systems to be iterative and regularly include address revisions to performance indicators through Delphi approaches and/or public input. While some agencies (not including the Birmingham MPO) may currently have measures that number in the hundreds, they all started with a small set of key measures, as is recommended for the RTP. In the end, the MPO's transportation system performance measures may also number in the hundreds; however, evaluation criteria must remain focused on small number of strategic measures.

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### **3.9 Policy Development**

Policies are the principles and procedures established by an agency, institution, or government, generally with the intent of reaching a long-term goal. The final element of this chapter is to develop and recommend a set of policies by which the Birmingham MPO can act to implement its adopted goals and objectives.

Building upon the Key Principles, goals, and objectives, policy statements that define how the Birmingham MPO invests its funds in transportation infrastructure and service and how it operates to encourage the development of those infrastructure projects and services have been developed. These proposed policies are shown below. Many of these policies have existed for some time as “unwritten, but known” policies. Others are policies that have emerged as part of this RTP’s planning process, while others are policies that came forward in response to growing regional issues. These policies were reviewed by the RTP Transit Advisory Work Group (TAWG) as part of the plan’s development process. They have been reviewed further during the public involvement process. The statements are written to reflect the Birmingham MPO’s intent and strategy to ensure implementation as it moves to pursue RTP goals and objectives over the coming years.

#### **Policy 1**

#### **RTP projects shall be based on adopted and/or approved planning documents.**

The first step of the process to program projects into the RTP consists of identifying the pool of projects that are candidates for evaluation and prioritization for inclusion within the RTP. This would include:

- Committed projects already in the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP);
- Projects identified and prioritized in the existing RTP;
- Projects identified through the ongoing MPO planning process and local and state government transportation studies;

In an effort to link the metropolitan transportation planning process to a rational planning process, the RTP includes as a policy the following:

***Projects to be included in the Birmingham Regional Transportation Plan should be based on the results of projects identified and/or proposed in an adopted and/or approved planning document.***

Planning documents may include:

- County/Community Comprehensive Plans
- Transportation (Thoroughfare) Plans
- Area Plans, and
- Corridor Plans

Ideally, each of these plan documents will include projects that address areas such as:

- Community focused accessibility and mobility issues
- Facility maintenance and operations (includes signals and ITS)
- Congestion management
- Roadway capacity
- Public transit
- Human service transportation

- Airport and intermodal facility access
- Freight movement, and
- Non-motorized transportation

Additionally, projects might also be identified through:

- Approved state or regional transportation studies (area-wide and project specific) ex. Regional Greenway Plan, Interchange Justification Report(s), Congestion Management Process, etc.
- The RTP's scenario planning process, and/or;
- An ongoing public involvement process.

**Policy  
2**

**The RTP and TIP shall be amended only as necessary to ensure continuous air quality conformity and maintenance of fiscal constraint.**

The LRTP and the TIP shall only be modified as necessary to ensure that the Birmingham region maintains continuous air quality conformity and to maintain fiscal constraint. New Congressional earmarks, small-scale projects and locally funded projects can be amended into the RTP and the TIP at any time provided that they are classified as air quality exempt. Projects which have conformity implications, either in terms of financial balancing or air quality modeling, will only be added in conjunction with a major update of the RTP.

**Policy  
3**

**Projects will have completed an Advanced Planning Report prior to entry into the TIP**

Project sponsors who believe they may be using Birmingham attributable (STP-BH and CMAQ) federal funds must complete an Advanced Planning Report (APR). Historically, projects have failed to advance to implementation in a timely fashion, and have languished within the TIP for multiple cycles. This is an issue cited by the Federal Highway Administration. The development of an APR is meant to assist project sponsors by providing them with information in order that they might make educated decisions about (a) a project's feasibility, and (b) whether or not they should seek federal funding for their project. APRs are also meant to provide the Birmingham MPO staff and the MPO's advisory committees with information in order that they might make educated recommendations for action to the MPO's voting membership.

Criteria for the APR documents are included within separate guidance for project development.

Waivers from having to complete an APR may be granted for any of the following reasons:

- The project is not federally funded
- The project is included in the adopted TIP and has already expended federal funds for Preliminary Engineering

Project sponsors are strongly encouraged to meet with Birmingham MPO staff early in the project development process in order to receive additional guidance. Project sponsors should submit completed APR documents to the Birmingham MPO, and request that the MPO accept the document in order that MPO controlled federal transportation funding might be considered.

**Non-Birmingham MPO Controlled Project Funding** - Project sponsors who do not intend to use Birmingham Attributable funds are not required to complete an Advanced Planning Report. However, because of a growing trend that decreases the availability of federal funding and increasing requirements to ensure fiscal constraint, project sponsors are strongly encouraged, to consider completing an APR.

**Policy  
4**

**TIP project requests must meet minimum funding criteria**

Project sponsors must have committed local/state financial support for the match identified for each funding request submitted for consideration. To minimize the administrative burden of managing numerous small projects, sponsors must request at least the following amount of federal funds in any funding request submitted as a candidate for inclusion in the TIP:

- \$250,000 for non-roadway capacity projects
- \$500,000 for roadway capacity projects

**Policy  
5**

**TIP projects in excess of \$5 million shall provide a financial plan**

All projects in the Regional Transportation Plan that expect to use Birmingham MPO controlled funds that have an estimated total cost of \$5 million or more must have a financial plan prior to being programmed into the TIP. Project sponsors, in coordination with RPCGB staff, will develop a draft financial plan. The financial plan will be reviewed by the MPO's TIP Subcommittee. The purpose is to review the planned project with respect to the project sponsor's fiscal capacity, available federal and/or state funds, and other financing and funds available.

The TIP Subcommittee reviews projects with an estimated cost of \$5 million or more in relationship to current Birmingham MPO financial commitments. The following may be recommended to the full MPO prior to programming the project(s) into the TIP:

- For preservation or efficiency projects on regionally significant transportation facilities the Birmingham MPO share can be up to 80 percent of eligible costs;
- For capacity projects, the Birmingham MPO share can be up to 50 percent of eligible costs. The TIP Subcommittee may recommend a share greater than 50 percent for employment activity centers and/or activity corridors identified in the Regional Transportation Plan's scenario development strategy, depending on the review criteria noted above;
- For projects that are a combination of preservation, efficiency and capacity, the appropriate Birmingham MPO financial commitment will be determined based upon the percentage of the project devoted to capacity and the percentage devoted to preservation and efficiency. The appropriate percentage share will be determined by the TIP Subcommittee, upon recommendation of staff. However, the Birmingham MPO share of eligible costs shall not exceed 50 percent for capacity elements of the project(s), and not exceed 80 percent for preservation and efficiency elements; or
- No Birmingham MPO controlled federal funds.

**Policy  
6**

**Project Cost Overruns**

**Policy to be Developed Later** - The Birmingham MPO will develop a policy for addressing project cost overruns as part of its continuing project development process.

**Policy  
7**

**TIP projects shall make “Reasonable Progress” towards implementation**

The lack of progress in developing and implementing projects using federal funds sub-allocated to the Birmingham region has led to significant project delays and created financial risks for both local and state transportation programs. Because of this, the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization shall, upon approval of the MPO, implement the following policies and guidance related to reasonable progress:

1. All projects in the current fiscal year must have had programmed funding obligated, regardless of funding source and work phase, by the last day of the federal fiscal year (September 30) in order to demonstrate reasonable progress.
2. Projects in the current fiscal year that will not have programmed funding obligated by September 30 will forfeit funding. Forfeited funding will be returned to the funding program of origin, be reassigned to the next highest ranking project which is ready to be advanced, or being returned to the regional funding pot.
3. Forfeited projects will be removed from the TIP and the project sponsor will be required to repay all federal funds associated which have already been expended. No additional requests by the project sponsor to add projects to the TIP will be considered until all federal funds are repaid.
4. Project sponsors will be allowed one 1-year extension of time to obligate programmed funding to a project after it has been included in the TIP. As part of this 1-year extension, projects will be rescheduled to the next fiscal year, and all programmed funding must be obligated by September 30 of that fiscal year. Projects whose funding has not been obligated by the September 30 deadline will be removed from the TIP and projects will need to be reevaluated with other TIP requests in order to be returned.

Once all funding has been obligated for the project, the project sponsor shall have six months to develop and execute a contract with ALDOT, the RPCGB or the BJCTA. Upon approval and acceptance of the contract, the project sponsor will have six months to begin work on the project either with project sponsored resources or with 3<sup>rd</sup> party assistance.

If a project’s start is delayed in such a way that funding is at risk for being forfeited, the project sponsor may request a 1-year extension and be rescheduled from the current fiscal year to the next fiscal year. The extension request must demonstrate that the project delay is beyond project sponsor’s control and provide a realistic strategy to advance the project towards implementation. The final decision regarding the outlook of each project will be made by the MPO.

**Policy  
8**

**TIP projects shall be compliant with the Regional Congestion Management Process (CMP)**

Every project that is programmed into the Birmingham region’s TIP to receive federal funding must qualify as “CMP compliant.” In order to qualify, the project must be a stand-alone congestion strategy, identify a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and/or Transportation System Management (TSM) strategy(s) that will be implemented along with the project, or have received a waiver.

Waivers may be granted for any of the following reasons:

- The project is not federally funded
- The project is a safety improvement only
- The project is a bottleneck elimination project only
- The project will continue/include previously implemented congestion management strategies
- The project is included in the adopted TIP and is the process of completing Preliminary Engineering
- The project has not been obligated to receive federal funding on or by the effective date of adoption of the TIP
- The project does not consist of a new general-purpose facility in a new location or the addition of general-purpose lanes to an existing facility

Requests for waivers will be reviewed by the Congestion Management Task Force who will make a recommendation to the MPO for action.

The CMP compliance requirement is a particularly important mechanism to ensure that projects are selected to help manage congestion. The Birmingham MPO submits very few projects to the TIP, and it is the local governments and sponsoring transportation agencies that are responsible for building projects and/or projects that physically alter existing roadway facilities. As such, project sponsors are ultimately responsible for the implementation of the CMP and keeping the region compliant with federal congestion management regulations. Projects advancing in the TIP, especially projects seeking to add capacity to an existing roadway or new capacity to the region's transportation system therefore will need to demonstrate CMP compliance.

Project sponsors can demonstrate compliance by providing evidence that they have considered and/or implemented TDM/TSM alternatives in addition to and/or prior to their request to add capacity (see the federal congestion management regulations). This might include, but not be limited to:

- Active participation in the MPO sponsored CommuteSmart Program
- Corridor studies
- Adopted thoroughfare and/or area plans
- Commitment to implement complementary/supporting non-capacity projects i.e. sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, transit, complete streets, etc

**Policy  
9**

**Capacity expansion projects shall include access management strategies (if applicable)**

Projects sponsors proposing capacity expansions projects, particularly if they are located on designated Regionally Significant Transportation Facilities (excluding interstates) and non-designated urban minor arterial roadways shall:

1. Develop access management plans
2. Adopt the access management plan (all appropriate governing entities)
3. Identify and make preparations to put into place appropriate enforcement mechanisms in order to be eligible to receive Birmingham attributable surfaced transportation program funding (STP-BH) and to be programmed into the TIP, regardless of its federal funding source

Additionally:

- The capacity project's scope shall include the access management plan's recommended improvement strategies;

- Recommended physical modifications to facilitate access management improvements shall be included in the 60% design review (Plan in Hand);
- Proposed capacity expansions projects located on designated Regionally Significant Transportation Facilities (excluding interstates) and non-designated urban minor arterial roadways that have:
  1. Previously completed capacity expansions with non-federal funding sources; and,
  2. Failed to develop and adopt an access management plan for the facility

shall develop and adopt an access management plan for the corridor in order to be eligible to receive STP-BH funding and to be programmed into the TIP.

Note: STP-BH funding for applicable capacity projects not completing an access management plan that have been added to the TIP after November 2009 shall be limited to 50% of the total project's cost.

Additionally, project sponsors' whose proposed capacity projects fail to include access management strategies in their scope and/or in their design must demonstrate that the access management strategy cannot be reasonably implemented in order to maintain the project's eligibility to receive STP-BH funding.

**Policy  
10**

**Complete streets and routine accommodation: Project sponsors shall give due consideration to the accommodation of bicycles, pedestrians, citizens with disabilities, and transit supportive infrastructure in project planning and design.**

Title 23 U.S.C. §217 states that "Bicyclists and pedestrians shall be given due consideration in the comprehensive transportation plans developed by each metropolitan planning organization and State." Due consideration includes but is not limited to facilities such as sidewalks, shared use paths, pedestrian crossings (including at, above and below grade crossings), signals, signage, markings, street furniture, transit stops, bike lanes, paved shoulders, and all connecting pathways. Such facilities should be designed, constructed, operated and maintained so that all modes can travel safely and independently. The inclusion of the appropriate multimodal transportation facilities should be the norm as opposed to the exception. The MPO reserves the right to remove projects from the RTP and/or withdraw funding for projects in the TIP that do not comply with the expressed intent of this policy.

***This Complete Streets Policy is a statement of intent for project development. Design guidelines are to be developed as an implementation step and are not included as part of the 2035 RTP.***

Project sponsors should consider the following planning and design guidelines:

- Bicycle and pedestrian ways shall be established in new construction and reconstruction of all transportation projects unless exceptional circumstances exist. Waivers of this consideration may be granted if one or more of the following five conditions are met:

1. Cyclists and pedestrians are prohibited by law from using the roadway (e.g. grade separated interstates, expressways, and highways). In this instance, a greater effort may be necessary to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians elsewhere within the right of way or within the same transportation corridor.
2. The cost of establishing bikeways or walkways would be excessively disproportioned to the need or probable use. Excessively disproportionate is defined as exceeding twenty percent of the cost of the larger transportation project. In this case, the project sponsor shall propose an alternate design or spend 20 percent of the project cost of the larger project for new and/or improved existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities adjacent to the project (e.g. a parallel multi-use trail or sidewalk improvements along adjacent local streets).
3. The project is within a sparsely populated rural (non-urban) area where there is no present or future demand expected throughout the larger project's useful life. Projects located anywhere defined as "urban" by the U.S. Census Bureau. This includes both the urbanized area (UA) and smaller urban clusters (UCs) are not eligible for this waiver. Based on the US Census 2000, the boundaries of the UA and UCs encompass densely settled territory consisting of:
  - core census block groups or blocks that have a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile and
  - surrounding census blocks that have an overall density of at least 500 people per square mile
  - In addition, under certain conditions, less densely settled territory may be part of the UA or UCs

The Census Bureau's classification of "rural" consists of all territory, population, and housing units located outside of UAs and UCs. The rural component contains both place and nonplace territory. Geographic entities, such as census tracts, counties, metropolitan areas, and the territory outside metropolitan areas, often are "split" between urban and rural territory, and the population and housing units they contain often are partly classified as urban and partly classified as rural. Visit the Census Bureau's website for more information the Census 2000 urban and rural classification system: [http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/ua\\_2k.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/ua_2k.html)

4. Where other existing or future land use factors indicate an absence of demand (e.g. special use districts for heavy industrial uses such as mining, manufacturing and/or freight transport).
5. There are severe and unavoidable physical constraints associated with the built or natural environment (e.g. topography, geology, hydrology, historic and cultural resources).

- The design and development of the transportation infrastructure shall improve conditions for bicycling and walking by:
  1. Planning projects for the long-term. The design and construction of new facilities should anticipate likely future demand for bicycling and walking facilities and not preclude the provision of future improvements.
  2. Designing context-appropriate facilities to the best currently available standards and guidelines. Specifically, project sponsors and designers should consider the context of the project setting such as the presences of neighborhoods, shopping, schools, transit or other facilities and land use associated with the needs of cyclists and pedestrians. The design of facilities for cyclists and pedestrians should follow commonly used design guidelines and standards such as the *AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, *AASHTO's A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*, the *ITE Recommended Practice: Design and Safety of Pedestrian Facilities*, and the *Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*.
  3. Considering any evidence of existing or informal bicycle and pedestrian circulation within the project area (e.g. a worn dirt path along an existing road).
  4. Considering any and all comments from local citizens, stakeholders, or other public agencies requesting non-motorized facilities and transit-supportive infrastructure.
  5. Addressing the need for cyclists and pedestrians to cross-corridors as well as travel along them, even where cyclists and pedestrians may not commonly travel. In corridors that are being improved or constructed, cyclists and pedestrians often need to be able to cross the corridor safely and conveniently. Therefore, as a matter of routine practice, the design of intersections and interchanges should accommodate cyclists and pedestrians.

Considerations for the inclusion of transit facilities include:

- Proximity of a proposed project (roadway, bikeway, enhancement, etc) to transit rail and bus routes
- Inclusion of bus pads at bus stops
- Improvements to bus shelter waiting areas
- Inclusion of sidewalks for pedestrian access to transit stops
- Sufficient curb radii at intersections with buses making turns
- Potential to move transit stops to improve transit operations
- Potential for transit oriented development
- Transit operation improvements such as peak hour parking restrictions

**Policy  
11**

**Projects will be programmed based on realistic and practical schedules and budgets**

As project sponsors prepare their TIP requests, they will be asked to provide realistic and practical schedules as well as realistic budgets for each of the project's components. In order to accomplish this, project sponsors shall be required to also provide advanced planning reports (APR) documents. APRs are to be submitted to the MPO by project sponsors in advance of a TIP request in order that the APRs can be utilized in the overall project evaluation and prioritization process. In addition to the requirements of this policy as laid out above, other specific policy requirements include:

1. Two or more phases of a project (PE, ROW, Utilities, and/or CST) will not be programmed in the

same year unless the project sponsor can demonstrate that such programming is realistic and necessary.

2. If the project sponsor moves forward with the initial phases of a project and desires to move later phases into an earlier fiscal year, the RPCGB will consider undertaking a TIP amendment. The determination of this will be based on the overall RTP/TIP update schedule, its associated issues, and the availability of funds. Under no circumstances will an amendment be made which impacts the TIP's conformity determination unless the TIP request is processed in conjunction with a major update of the RTP.
3. Any project with at least one phase programmed in the conforming TIP (first 3-years) must have funds defined to cover the complete cost of implementation and construction.
4. In the TIP development cycle, funding in the first two years of the conforming TIP shall be considered to be 100% dedicated to the projects in those years. New projects or phases requested for inclusion in the conforming TIP will only be added to the last year (3<sup>rd</sup> year) of the TIP, unless the project sponsor simultaneously identifies an equivalent or greater amount of funds from the same funding category to be removed from an earlier fiscal year. "Replacement projects must still be evaluated, scored, and selected through the regular TIP development process.

All funds are assigned based on regional need, and a sponsor should not presume that a project can be removed and replaced with another using the funds allocated for the removed project at the sponsor's discretion. The RPCGB will work with project sponsors to determine if regional needs, equity, or some other factor will necessitate allowing federal funds to be moved between projects.

RPCGB discourages sponsors to plan and develop projects based solely on the availability of a specific category of federal transportation funds. Many projects are eligible for multiple federal-aid categories. The final selection of an appropriate funding source is the result of many factors. Sponsors are strongly encouraged to plan and develop projects based on sound planning principles and not on the assumed availability of a certain category of federal funds.

**Policy  
12**

**Funding priorities will be reassessed continuously to reflect project progress and sponsor commitment**

RPCGB staff, working the MPO's TIP Subcommittee, provides continuous monitoring of the progress of projects programmed into the TIP. The TIP Subcommittee routinely requests status updates on projects having one or more phases in the current fiscal year. Project sponsors must provide information that tells if their project(s) are proceeding towards implementation as anticipated, or if delays and/or significant cost increases have been experienced such that the project will be unable to maintain/meet its implementation schedule. If this be the case, project sponsors should seek an extension for obligating funds in order that funds might be reprogrammed to the following fiscal year, or that the project be removed from the TIP altogether. Information gathered during this process will be used to develop regular TIP status report documents.

Sponsors with programming authority of other funding categories may reprogram those funds at their discretion provided that appropriate coordination and outreach efforts with the RPCGB and other affected agencies and jurisdictions have been conducted.

**Policy  
13**

**The TIP shall be consistent with the policies, priorities, goals, and objectives of the RTP as well as conform to all applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations**

Project sponsors are strongly discouraged against making requests to incorporate projects into the TIP that are not already included in the adopted RTP. As described in Policy 2, new Congressional earmarks, small-scale projects and locally funded projects can be amended into the RTP and the TIP at any time provided that they are classified as air quality exempt. Projects which have conformity implications, either in terms of financial balancing or air quality modeling, will only be added in conjunction with a major update of the RTP.

Projects in the near-term conformity years of the RTP will receive first consideration for inclusion in the TIP over those in long-term conformity years. In addition, project sponsors requesting projects to be advanced into the TIP shall be required to document consistency between the RTP and the TIP by identifying which of the RTP policies, goals, and objectives the project meets. This will complement the project evaluation measures which will be calculated in order to document the demonstrated degree to which the RTP policies, goals, and objectives are being achieved along with the degree of consistency between the RTP and the TIP.

**Policy  
14**

**All projects shall demonstrate adequate public involvement**

Projects advancing through the TIP for funding, especially capacity expansion projects, must demonstrate that the public has had (or will have) adequate opportunity to participate in the development, review, revision, and/or approval/adoption process for the project. Projects identified and included in an adopted planning document will have demonstrated adequate public involvement provided that documentation of the plan process shows that public involvement was integral throughout the plan's development.

**Policy  
15**

**Plan documentation will be presented in a user-friendly and informative manner**

The standard platform for both RTP and TIP documentation shall be a multimedia CD or other electronic media. The RPCGB shall continue to develop innovate and proactive ways to make documents, project maps, and other information available in an interactive format via the internet and other outlets. Increased emphasis shall be given to making key information from both the RTP and the TIP more accessible to visually impaired individuals, non-English speakers, and others with special communication needs.

Hard copies of key sections of the RTP and TIP as well as the RTP's executive summary and the TIP summary project list shall be produced and made available, upon request, to anyone who requests such information. Hard copies of the complete RTP document (plan narrative and technical appendixes) shall be limited to a maximum of two per planning agency. Requests from other organizations and individuals shall be limited to 1 copy. Production of additional copies of the any documentation shall be the responsibility of the agency, organization, or individual.

The RPCGB will continuously seek opportunities to educate planning partners, elected officials, civic organizations, non-profits, other stakeholders, and the general public on how to access, interpret, and use information in both the RTP and the TIP.

**Policy  
16**

**Projects on state highways and ALDOT controlled roadways must be submitted by ALDOT**

Funding requests for any projects on State Highways must be submitted by, or with the concurrence of the ALDOT.