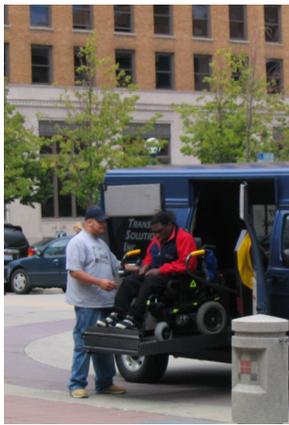


Part 1: Introduction and Background



Background to the Regional Transportation Plan

Introduction

Transportation is one of the key contributors to the Madison metropolitan area's quality of life and economic vitality. The need for transportation stems from our need to access goods, services, and other people within and beyond the region. The ease by which we are able to get from home to school, work, medical services, shopping and back again is dependent upon both the location and densities of land use developments and the efficiency and effectiveness of the region's transportation system in serving these developments.

The *Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) 2030 for the Madison Metropolitan Area and Dane County* is based upon and supports the regional land use plan and local comprehensive plans of communities in the county. It is an overall system-level plan that serves as a guide for transportation system planning and development in the region. It establishes the framework upon which public agencies can make consistent and coordinated planning decisions regarding both inter- and intra-jurisdictional transportation. The plan makes recommendations for land use and transportation system coordination and the different elements of the transportation system. These elements include:

- Streets/Roadways
- Public Transit
- Paratransit/Specialized Transportation
- Transportation Demand Management/Ridesharing
- Bicycle Transportation
- Pedestrian Transportation
- Inter-regional Travel
- Freight Transportation
- Rail Transportation
- Air Transportation
- Parking
- Corridor Preservation

The plan recognizes the role that the automobile will continue to play in meeting travel needs. However, it also recognizes the need to continue diversifying our transportation choices, providing convenient transportation alternatives wherever possible. This is particularly true for trips to and within the central Madison area where future roadway capacity expansions are neither feasible nor desirable. The plan includes a balanced and integrated set of strategies for meeting the travel demand of residents and businesses over the next 25 years.

The plan doesn't start from a clean slate. It builds upon the existing transportation system in place today, major projects in progress or with funding commitments included in the Madison Area MPO's *2006-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*, and prior and ongoing planning efforts. This plan updates and supersedes the most recent regional transportation plan, the *Dane County Land Use & Transportation Plan (Vision 2020)*, adopted in 1997 and reaffirmed in 2000 with no changes. The plan also builds upon recent and ongoing area and corridor transportation studies.

The regional transportation plan is reviewed on a continuing basis. Federal law requires that the plan be officially updated every five years for areas such as Dane County that are in attainment of Federal air quality standards. However, typically a major update of the plan has been conducted every ten years following the release of decennial U.S. Bureau of Census data on population, households, and place-of-work employment, and the preparation of a countywide land use inventory. It is important that such a major re-evaluation occur to account for recent land use, socioeconomic, and travel trends, changes in land use plans, and to review regional objectives and policies to ensure they are still valid.

This major plan update is timely because many of the communities in the Madison metropolitan area, including the City of Madison, have either recently completed or are nearing completion of work on their local comprehensive plans under the state's Smart Growth law. Dane County is also in the process of completing a Smart Growth plan. MPO staff have provided assistance on and monitored these planning processes to ensure consistency with the regional transportation plan.

The Madison Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The Madison Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the policy body responsible for cooperative, comprehensive regional transportation planning and decision making for the Madison Metropolitan Planning Area as designated by the Governor of the State of Wisconsin under Federal law and regulations. Federal law and regulations require the designation of MPOs in urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population as a condition of spending Federal highway and transit funds. The goal of the MPO planning process is to build regional agreement on transportation investments that balance roadway, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and other transportation needs and support regional land use, economic, and environmental goals and plans.

The Madison Area MPO was created through an agreement between the Governor and the City of Madison, effective November 29, 1999, redesignating the MPO for the Madison Urbanized Area in accordance with Federal law. The Madison Area MPO assumed the responsibility to conduct transportation planning and programming for the metropolitan area from the previous MPO, the Dane County Regional Planning Commission (DCRPC) following the DCRPC's reorganization. The DCRPC had served as the designated MPO for the Madison Urbanized Area since 1973. Areawide transportation planning in the Madison area dates back to 1961.

Madison Area MPO Urban and Planning Areas

The Madison Metropolitan Planning Area consists of the City of Madison and the Madison Urban Area, including all or portions of 27 cities, villages, and towns that are or are likely to become urbanized within the next 25-year planning period (See Figure 1). In addition to areas likely to become urbanized, the planning boundary also includes other areas that are important from a transportation planning perspective such as corridors where potential or planned roadway improvements are located that may have significant impacts on regional travel patterns. The planning area covers approximately 343 square miles. The 2000 Census population within the planning area was 350,247, 82% of the countywide total of 426,526.

Within the Madison Metropolitan Planning Area lies the Madison Urban Area (also shown in Figure 1). The urban area is based upon the urbanized area, which is a statistical geographic entity defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and consists of a central core and adjacent densely settled territory that together contain at least 50,000 people, generally with an overall population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile.

Following the delineation of the urbanized area after each decennial Census, MPOs and State and local officials are required by Federal law to cooperatively fix new urban area and planning area boundaries. The urban area must include the Census-defined urbanized area, but the boundaries can be adjusted outward in order to smooth out irregularities, maintain continuity of peripheral transportation routes, and encompass employment areas and fringe areas having or soon to have (i.e., within five years) residential, commercial, or industrial development. Both the urban area and planning area boundaries must be approved by the State and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The Madison Urban Area and Metropolitan Planning Area boundaries were last updated in 2002 following the 2000 Census. The Census-defined Madison Urbanized Area was expanded considerably with the Cities of Sun Prairie, Verona, and Stoughton and the Villages of Cottage Grove and Waunakee all being added. This resulted in a substantial expansion of the Madison Urban and Metropolitan Planning Areas.

While the application of the Federal metropolitan transportation planning and programming requirements only applies to the Metropolitan Planning Area, the MPO plans for the Madison area have always covered the entire county. This plan also extends to the County boundary.

Governance Structure

The Madison Area MPO is currently governed by an 11-member Policy Board. The City of Madison Mayor appoints five (5) members, the Dane County Executive appoints three (3) members, one member is appointed to represent other cities and villages, one member is appointed to represent towns, and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Secretary appoints one member.

The governance structure of the Policy Board is in the process of being revised to respond to the expansion of the Madison Urban and Metropolitan Planning Areas following the 2000 Census. The Madison Area MPO approved the change in the governance structure and the agreement, which has to be ratified, has been circulated to communities within the planning area for signature. Following the signature of communities making up 75% of the population within the planning area, the agreement will be sent to the Governor for signature at which time it will become effective. The new governance structure provides for a 14-member Policy Board with two additional appointments by the smaller cities and villages and one additional appointment by the City of Madison Mayor.

Madison Area MPO Responsibilities

MPOs were created to ensure that expenditures of Federal funds for transportation projects and programs were based upon a “continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive” (3-C) planning process. MPOs have four essential functions:

1. Establish and maintain a neutral setting for regional cooperation and decision-making through the 3-C transportation planning process.
2. Evaluate transportation alternatives and strategies through studies and plans outlined in the annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).
3. Develop and maintain a long-range multi-modal regional transportation plan (RTP) for the metropolitan area covering a planning horizon of at least twenty years.
4. Develop a short-range transportation improvement program (TIP) that is based on the RTP to provide for transportation investments to meet identified needs.

A fifth function or responsibility is to involve the general public and all significantly affected sub-groups in carrying out the four essential functions listed above. The Madison Area MPO has a separate document, the Public Participation Plan, which specifically addresses public participation activities.

One of the MPO’s most important responsibilities is to make decisions about Federal transportation funding. As an urban area over 200,000 in population, the Madison Area MPO receives a direct allocation of funding under the Surface Transportation Program – Urban (STP-U). In 2006, this allocation was \$6.2 million. This funding can be used for improvements to arterial and collector roadways and other transportation improvements such as transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. The Madison Area MPO prioritizes use of these funds. Other than these funds, the MPO does not have direct control over other Federal transportation funding. However, the MPO does set priorities for regional transportation projects and identifies funding sources of proposed projects through the RTP and TIP development processes, conducted in consultation with WisDOT, Metro Transit, and local units of government in the metropolitan area. In this way, the MPO is responsible for the coordination of the allocation of Federal transportation funds.

Intergovernmental Coordination and Public Involvement

In accordance with Federal law and regulations, the Madison Area MPO is responsible for carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning in cooperation with WisDOT, the City of Madison owned public transit agency Metro Transit, and local units of government in the metropolitan area. The process is designed to be cooperative such that no single agency or organization is given complete responsibility for the planning, construction, operation, or maintenance of the region’s transportation system. The Madison Area MPO, WisDOT, and Metro Transit function under a Memorandum of Agreement, which sets out the planning responsibilities of each agency.

The Madison Area MPO Policy Board includes a representative from WisDOT and five representatives appointed by the City of Madison Mayor. The Board also includes members representing other communities in the MPO planning area. As noted above, the governance structure is in the process of being changed to increase representation of the smaller cities and villages within the metropolitan area. The new structure will also require Policy Board members to be either local elected officials or persons with a significant role in operating a major mode of transportation.

The Policy Board has established an advisory intergovernmental technical coordinating committee (TCC) to assist in carrying out its responsibilities. The MPO Board also utilizes a number of other local and county committees and commissions as part of its role in serving as a forum for cooperative decision making on transportation planning issues. The TCC is composed of persons representing various agencies or facets of transportation planning. The TCC reviews and advises on all transportation planning matters, including preparation of the RTP, and makes recommendations to the MPO Policy Board.

The Policy Board has also established a citizen advisory committee (CAC), which includes representatives from community organizations, interest groups, businesses, and other citizens. The CAC meets regularly and assists in reaching out and informing others of the planning process.

The MPO has a Public Participation Plan, which details the agency's public involvement activities, including the advisory committee structure and the provision of information and opportunities for public comment and review. The MPO has used this plan as a guide for the public involvement process for the RTP.

Public meetings have been held during the beginning of the process and toward the end of the process, including a public hearing on the draft plan. The public involvement process has also included participation in and coordination with WisDOT on its statewide long-range transportation plan, which is currently being developed, and local "Smart Growth" comprehensive plans prepared or being prepared by Dane County, the City of Madison, and other local units of government within the MPO planning boundary. Such coordination included assistance with and use of public surveys conducted by the City of Madison and Dane County on transportation and land use issues as part of their comprehensive planning processes.

In accordance with Title VI and Environmental Justice (EJ) requirements, the MPO took steps to ensure that all persons, including those with a disability or language barrier, had opportunities to participate in the planning process. This included holding meetings in or near neighborhoods with significant concentrations of EJ populations, posting notices of these meetings in both English and Spanish at community centers and other locations, and including representatives of minority and disability groups on the citizen advisory committee.

Requirements for the Regional Transportation Plan

Federal law and regulations require that the regional transportation plan:

- Identify transportation policies, strategies, and projects for the future;
- Determine demand for transportation facilities and services for at least a 20-year period;
- Identify congestion management strategies to address future demand;
- Maintain a multi-modal focus;
- Concentrate on the systems level, including streets/roadways, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and inter-modal connections;
- Estimate costs and identify reasonably available financial sources for operation, maintenance, and capital investments; and
- Determine ways to preserve existing roads and facilities and make efficient use of the existing system.

Metropolitan Planning Factors

The following eight (8) planning factors are to be used to guide development of the plan. The planning factors are outlined in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Transportation Equity Act—A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), approved in August 2005. They slightly modify the planning factors of the preceding transportation legislation, the Transportation Equity

Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The seven factors under TEA-21 were expanded to eight by separating out safety and security components (factors #2 and #3) and revising the scope of environmental concerns (planning factor #5) to include a specific requirement to “promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.”

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, and improve 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.

Congestion Management System

As a metropolitan area with a population over 200,000, the Madison area is designated under federal law as a “transportation management area (TMA).” TMAs must have a congestion management system (CMS) that identifies actions and strategies to reduce congestion and increase mobility.

Environmental Justice

The goal of “environmental justice” is to ensure that services and benefits are distributed fairly to all people, regardless of race, national origin, or income and that they have access to meaningful participation. The legal foundation for environmental justice is the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in any program receiving federal assistance.

The Madison Area MPO must ensure that all segments of the population have been given an opportunity to participate in the planning process. The MPO must also ensure that the impact of proposed transportation investments on environmental justice population groups is part of the RTP’s evaluation process.

It should be noted that this plan is being completed according to the requirements of TEA-21 as allowed under the recently adopted SAFETEA-LU Legislation. The plan will be amended in 2007 to fully address the new requirements under SAFETEA-LU. Federal rules on the new metropolitan planning requirements under SAFETEA-LU are expected to be finalized in early 2007. (See page 189 for a discussion of expected changes or additions to be made to the plan in order to meet the SAFETEA-LU requirements.)