

This 2003-2022 Long Range Transportation Plan (with the incorporation of the FY 2003-2005 TIP) fulfills two components of the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration's requirements for receiving federal transportation funding in the urbanized portion of the Study Area. (Other required components include the *Unified Planning Work Program* (UPWP), Congestion Management System (CMS), Interagency Agreements and Public Involvement Process). Section A of this appendix provides a history of federal requirements, as well as a summary of the history of transportation planning in the Study Area, Section B provides a description of the current framework for transportation planning under the Transportation Equity Act of 1998 (TEA 21) and the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA), Section C describes the process used to guide the development of this Plan.

A. History of Transportation Planning in the Region

The need for a specialized transportation planning process in the nation's urban centers was first recognized by the 1962 Federal Aid Highway Act. From this act, and subsequent amendments, the "3Cs" transportation planning process developed. Within urbanized areas (areas determined by the U.S. Census Bureau to have a population exceeding 50,000), the transportation planning process must include the development of a transportation plan which is consistent with the planned development of the area. According to the 1962 Act, the 3C process is intended to:

- ◆ **Comprehensively** consider social, economic, land use and environmental effects on all modes of transportation;
- ◆ Assure **coordination** among the states and all affected local governments, and provide for participation in the planning process by citizens and all other entities affecting and affected by transportation improvements, and;
- ◆ **Continually** update the resulting regional transportation plans considering growth of the metropolitan area, changes in land use and other factors which affect transportation needs, and performance of transportation facilities. The continuing program also includes working with transportation implementing agencies to facilitate project development.

Within each urbanized area in New Hampshire, the staff of a designated Regional Planning Agency (RPA), in cooperation with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), administers the urban transportation planning process. New Hampshire's RPAs are independent public planning agencies established by state

law (RSA 36:45-58) and in accordance with federal and state policies. In New Hampshire, RPAs were designated by Governor Meldrim Thomson in December, 1973 as the administrators of the urban transportation planning process and thus act as the Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

The 1973 directive recognized that decisions about the local and regional transportation network are most appropriately made by those governments and organizations found within the urbanized area. Through the creation and maintenance of locally represented MPOs, the federal government sought to increase local participation and coordination in the transportation planning process, shifting the responsibility for policy making, planning and project development to the local and regional levels. Once established, the designated planning staff of each MPO (a Regional Planning Commission in the case in New Hampshire), receives federal funding to carry out planning activities. The amount of funding received by each MPO is based on the size of the urbanized area and amount of state-level transportation funding received.

In 1973, the Southern Rockingham Regional Planning District Commission (SRRPDC) was named by the Governor as the designated MPO for the Salem/Plaistow urbanized area. Subsequently, in July, 1975, the Strafford Rockingham Regional Council replaced the commission as the MPO for the Salem/Plaistow urbanized area when the SRRPDC became a sub-district planning agency of the Council. On June 16, 1982 the SRRC was split into the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) and the Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC), with the RPC becoming the designated MPO for the Salem/Plaistow urbanized area.

As a result of the 1990 U.S. Census, a portion of Windham was classified as "urbanized", and became incorporated into the Salem/Plaistow MPO.

B. Transportation Planning Under the Transportation Equity Act of 1998 (TEA 21) and the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA)

Transportation planning has been greatly affected by two pieces of federal legislation--the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA) and the federal transportation bill under which this plan was developed, entitled the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). Most ISTEA provisions regarding metropolitan transportation planning were retained by its successor, the Transportation Equity Act of 1998 (TEA 21).

1. ISTEA

The purpose of ISTEA was "to develop a National Intermodal Transportation System that is economically efficient, environmentally sound, provides the foundation for the Nation to compete in the global economy and will move people and goods in an energy efficient manner." The authorization of ISTEA signaled a change in public policy from past transportation bills, in that it

provided an enhanced transportation planning role for MPOs, increased their funding and level of responsibility, and thus significantly altered the nature of planning and programming processes traditionally used in MPO decision making. Changes are evident in the requirement that transportation planning more broadly account for environmental, multimodal and intermodal considerations.

Another change directed by ISTEA was the designation of any urbanized area over 200,000 population as a Transportation Management Area (TMA). Because of Salem-Plaistow-Windham's connection to the Lawrence/ Haverhill urbanized area, the MPO was designated as a TMA. This makes the MPO subject to special requirements regarding congestion management systems, project selection and certification. A summary of the specific TMA requirements identified in the Metropolitan Planning Rules can be found in the *Salem/Plaistow/Windham MPO Prospectus* (see below).

2. TEA 21

TEA 21 maintains the purpose of ISTEA, and the funding categories and planning requirements are by and large the same.

Under ISTEA the long range plan was required to consider 16 explicitly defined factors. In TEA 21, these factors have been streamlined into 7 issue areas. They are:

- supporting economic vitality
- increasing safety and security
- increasing accessibility and mobility
- protecting the environment
- integrating the transportation system
- promoting efficiency
- preserving existing facilities

The MPO goals and objectives outlined in Chapter II of the plan address these issues areas.

As FHWA guidelines are issued on TEA 21, the MPO will monitor and respond to changes to the planning process.

3. Clean Air Act Amendments

The CAAA requires that all areas of the country meet federal standards for air quality. Those areas that fail to meet these standards are designated as "non-attainment" areas. If a region is so designated, it is expected to make continuous, forward progress in controlling air pollution emissions within its boundaries until air quality standards are met. Because motor vehicles (termed mobile sources) are the single largest emitters of ozone emissions in the United States,

MPOs have been directed by the CAAA to focus transportation planning on air quality as well as mobility. The CAAA specifies that transportation plans, programs and projects: 1) not worsen existing air quality; 2) not create any additional violations, and; 3) not delay attainment of standards. The MPO must determine that transportation plans and programs are in conformity before approving them. The air quality conformity analysis of this Transportation Plan is included as Appendix B.

The CAAA led to the designation of the entirety of the SPW region as nonattainment in regards to National Ambient Air Quality Standards regarding ground level ozone. All communities in the Salem-Plaistow-Windham MPO study area are classified as "serious" non-attainment.

ISTEA and TEA 21 acknowledge the CAAA in requiring new strategies to reduce mobile source emissions. Traditional strategies which reduce congestion by expanding roadway capacity may lead to short term improvement in air quality, but may contribute to long term air quality degradation by stimulating urban sprawl and increased automotive travel. A new strategic focus is needed to ensure long term attainment and maintenance of healthful air quality. This emphasizes efforts to limit growth in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and trips, through alternative transportation and travel demand management.

In 1996 the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in accordance with CAAA guidelines, announced revised national air pollution attainment standards for ozone and particulate matter in order to reflect new data on how these pollutants affect public health. Although this will likely increase the overall number of ozone non-attainment area in the country, the attainment status of Salem-Plaistow-Windham region is not expected to change.

C. Description of the Transportation Plan/TIP and Its Development

As required by ISTEA, the Rockingham Planning Commission developed and incorporated a process for soliciting public involvement during the development of this Plan. This procedure forms the basis for public involvement in all MPO transportation planning efforts, and will be further expanded and improved in the future to obtain input from a broader spectrum of individuals, groups and agencies.

MPO staff solicited public input early on in the process through the development of project selection criteria, as well as through the solicitation of local communities' project proposals. It also held a public involvement meeting to solicit input as the long range plan was being updated. Appendix D contains the results of this meeting.

Prior to final approval of this Plan and TIP, the MPO conducted a 30-day public comment period on the draft document. The purpose of this public review and comment was two-fold: first, to serve as a tool for educating the public about the

transportation planning process and various issues involved; and second, to solicit input from the public regarding transportation policies and issues to be addressed in the Plan, as well as recommended long-range transportation projects. Modifications have been made to this Plan, as appropriate, based on public comments received.

As part of the development of this Plan, MPO staff performed a quantitative air quality conformity determination on the Plan. (Appendix B). This determination was reviewed for consistency with the State Implementation Plan (SIP), and it was found that the implementation of this Plan does conform to the SIP. Following MPO approval, the document will be forwarded to the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In addition to the Transportation Plan, the TIP and the UPWP, the MPO has adopted a document entitled the Salem-Plaistow-Windham MPO *Prospectus*, which serves three important functions in the transportation planning process. First, it provides an overview of the Federally mandated "3C" (comprehensive, continuing, cooperative) transportation planning process as redefined by ISTEA. Second, it defines the roles and responsibilities of the various federal, state and local agencies and entities involved in the MPO transportation planning process. Third, it documents the interagency agreements that have been or will be entered into between the MPO, the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT), the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA), the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC), and the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services - Air Resources Division (NHDES). These agreements further define the specific responsibilities and obligations of each agency.

The Prospectus is designed to serve as a common reference for all parties interested and involved in the regional transportation planning process in the Salem-Plaistow-Windham area of New Hampshire, and it details how that process will be implemented by the MPO. Information contained in the Prospectus augments much of the text contained in this Transportation Plan and it is recommended that the reader refer to that document for additional background on the MPO transportation planning process and the roles of the various agencies and entities.

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