

# Introduction

The Rockingham Planning Commission region's vitality and the quality of life for its residents depend greatly on the mobility of people and goods, the accessibility of destinations by multiple modes of travel, and the safe accommodation of all users of the transportation system. The region enjoys a strong interregional backbone transportation system, with an excellent highway network, airport, deep water port and intercity bus and rail access. Public transit and human service transportation are more readily accessible in the region than in many parts of the state, between the COAST and CART public transit systems and non-profit providers. The region has seen improvement in travel options in the past decade, with expansion of transit service and greater attention to bicycle and pedestrian accommodation.

At the same time the region, and the state as a whole, face significant challenges in maintaining, modernizing and improving the safety of our transportation system. Among these are changing travel demand patterns associated with economic change and demographic shifts; and perennial funding constraints. New Hampshire suffers from a lack of funding for the transportation system in general, including system maintenance and operation, and there is a particular lack of funding for modes other than highways. Public transportation availability varies significantly across the region by community, with major gaps in access in the middle of Rockingham County. Total traffic volume, which had leveled off and in fact declined during the economic downturn, has again begun to climb with potential implications for congestion and capacity. Observed and projected patterns of more severe coastal flooding related to storm events and sea level rise will increasingly impact transportation infrastructure along the coastline. Lastly, the aging of the Baby Boom generation will result in a near doubling of the senior population in the coming 25 years, creating demands for new transit options and other changes to the build environment to support aging in place.

These existing conditions, system needs and challenges are set out in greater detail in the following pages, together with regional goals and strategies to improve mobility, accessibility, and safety, and otherwise maintain and enhance the region's economic vitality and quality of life.

## Purpose and Scope

This Transportation Plan serves as the short and long-range transportation planning document for the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC), which is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the area and includes 27 Communities in Southeastern New Hampshire (**Map 1**). The plan examines current regional conditions, takes into account updated socioeconomic projections and changing growth patterns, and describes the financial resources available through current law and policy and how well those meet the identified transportation needs for the region.

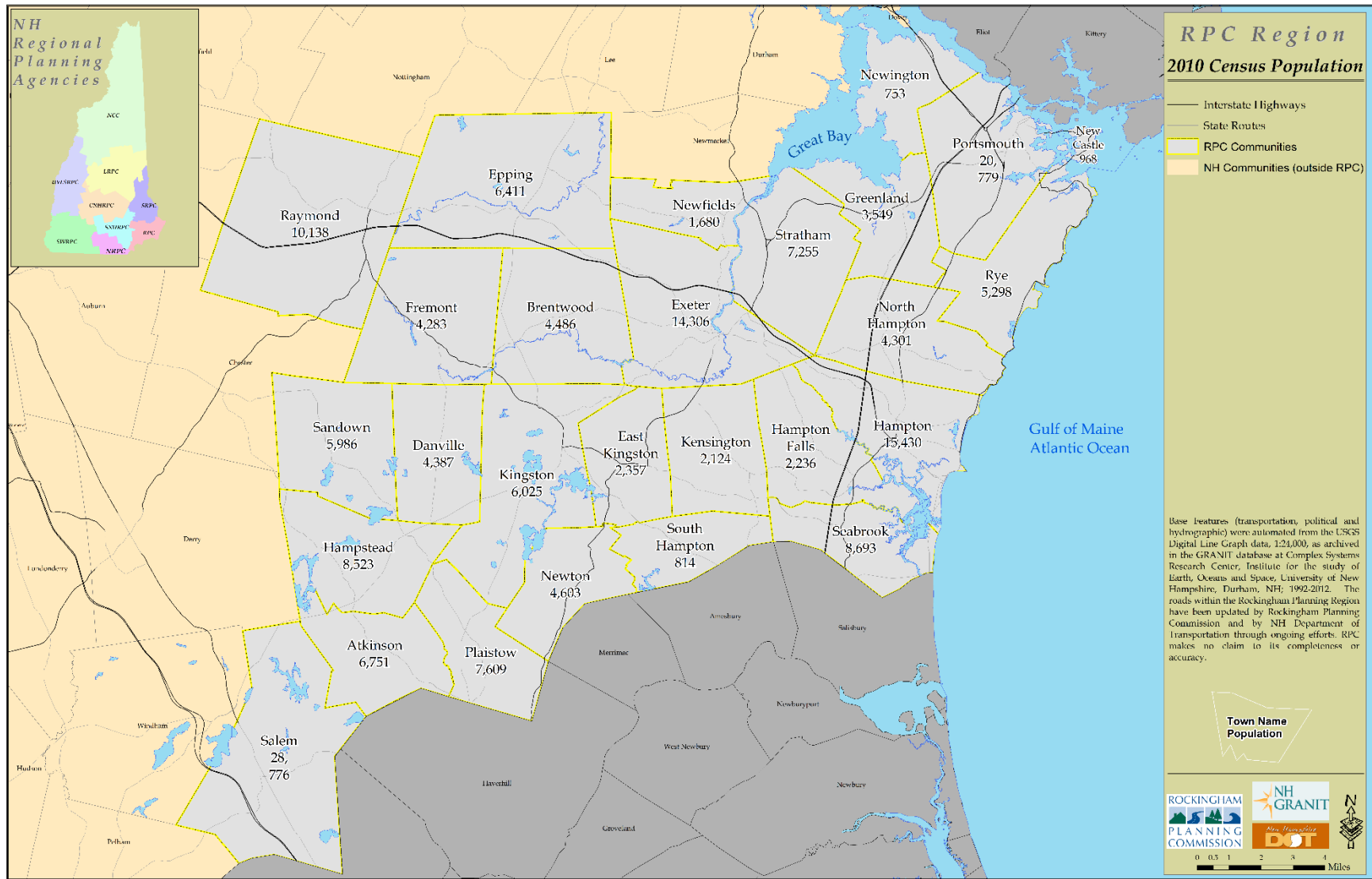
Shaped by these factors, the plan sets out the region's adopted goals, strategies for achieving those goals, performance metrics for measuring progress in implementation, and specific project proposals to improve the transportation system through the year 2040. It is in compliance with the ***Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act*** (FAST Act), and addresses a minimum twenty-year planning horizon (22 years at adoption) as directed by the FAST Act's planning standards.

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### ***RPC Communities covered by this Plan:***

Atkinson  
Brentwood  
Danville  
East Kingston  
Epping  
Exeter  
Fremont  
Greenland  
Hampstead  
Hampton  
Hampton Falls  
Kensington  
Kingston  
New Castle  
Newfields  
Newington  
Newton  
North Hampton  
Plaistow  
Portsmouth  
Raymond  
Rye  
Salem  
Sandown  
Seabrook  
South Hampton  
Stratham

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**Map 1 – Rockingham Planning Commission Region**

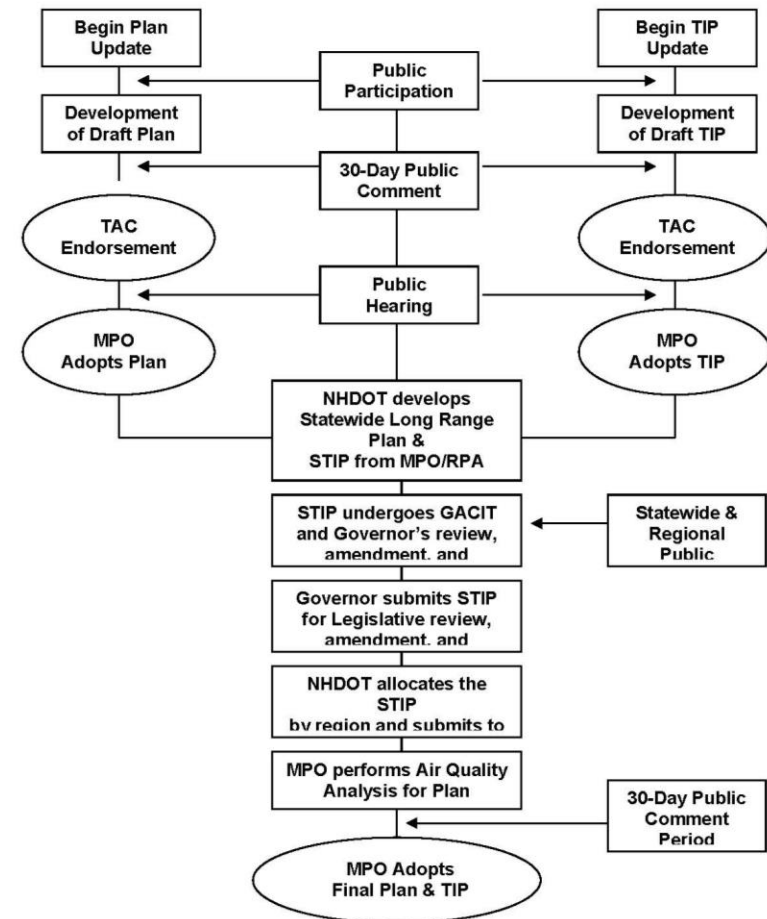
The plan has been developed as part of the region's continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process, which considers all transportation modes and supports metropolitan community development. It reflects the goals and objectives of member communities in their own master plans and policies, of the NH Department of Transportation in its Long Range Transportation Plan, as well as those established by the Rockingham Planning Commission via the Regional Master Plan and the MPO process.

The responsibilities for carrying out transportation planning are specified in a Memorandum of Understanding between the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT), Rockingham Planning Commission and the three transit agencies serving the region: the Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST), the Greater Derry-Salem Cooperative Alliance for Regional Transportation (CART), and the University of New Hampshire Wildcat Transit system.

## The Planning Process

The Long Range Plan is generally developed by the RPC as illustrated in Figure 1.1. In accordance with FAST Act, the MPO must review and update the transportation plan at least every five (5) years in air quality attainment areas. Updates must, at a minimum confirm the validity and consistency of the Plan's major assumptions regarding forecasted land use and transportation assumptions for the region. To maintain consistency with the State's two-year update cycle of the New Hampshire Ten Year Transportation Plan, the MPO will update the project-specific aspects of the Plan every two years as needed. Such shorter term updates will be timed so as to occur concurrently with the biennial TIP development process

**FIGURE 1.1  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANSPORTATION PLAN &  
TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)**



Acronym Glossary: MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization;  
NHDOT = NH Department of Transportation; TAC = Technical Advisory Committee;  
TIP = Transportation Improvement Program; STIP = State Transportation Improvement Program;  
GACIT = Governor's Advisory Committee on Intermodal Transportation; RPA = Regional Planning

The goals, needs and strategies identified in this Plan have been developed based on extensive public input gathered as part of the most recent update to the RPC's Regional Master Plan and other public engagement efforts over the past three years. These efforts have included outreach to stakeholders already active in the transportation planning process, but also input from the community at large that may not otherwise attend a transportation planning forum. As part of the MPO's Environmental Justice and transit coordination work, there has also been targeted outreach to groups particularly likely to have unmet transportation needs, and from specific sectors such as senior citizens and individuals with disabilities and low income populations. These outreach efforts have included:

- A telephone survey of 2,935 randomly-selected households across New Hampshire, including 400 in the MPO region, conducted by the UNH Survey Center;
- A non-random-sample on-line survey of key MPO stakeholders and other members of the public using the same survey instrument;
- Three public forums around the region focused on transportation needs as well as broader regional issues;
- Focus groups with professional planners, senior citizens and individuals with disabilities in the MPO region;
- Surveys of local welfare officers, non-profit human service agencies, and populations likely to have unmet transportation needs (seniors, individuals with disabilities, low income individuals);
- Collaborative work with the other New Hampshire MPOs to evaluate potential performance metrics, including an extensive set of stakeholder interviews;
- Several working sessions with the MPO Technical Advisory Committee regarding plan structure as well as goals and strategies.
- Public comment period for review of the Draft Long Range Plan documents.

A full description of findings from the public participation process is included in Appendix A – Public Participation Summary.

The plan is ultimately adopted by the MPO Policy Committee, made up of representatives from the twenty-seven member communities as well as agency representatives from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Air Resources Division of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Resources (NHDES). Also involved in the MPO planning process are representatives from three regional transit providers: the Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) and the Cooperative Alliance for Regional Transportation (CART), University of New Hampshire Wildcat Transit; and the Pease Development Authority (PDA). A full list of the current Commissioners is included in the MPO Prospectus which is available at the RPC website (<http://www.rpc-nh.org/docs.htm>).

## Plan Structure & Contents

The Long Range Plan is composed of both FAST Act required elements as well as other components that, while not required, help provide a more complete picture of the transportation system and future needs. The plan is organized into seven chapters. The intent is that the structure enables readers to more quickly find the information that they are seeking by simplifying the organization and developing chapters that can each be considered a standalone document, or all taken together. The seven chapters are:

**Chapter 1: Introduction.** This chapter summarizes the MPO's responsibilities under the Federal transportation planning process, the scope and structure of the plan, the extensive public input process that has shaped the plan.

**Chapter 2: Planning Framework.** This chapter sets out the MPO's Goals for the regional transportation system and the transportation planning process, and describes the broader planning context in which the MPO works, including Federal requirements, the New Hampshire Livability Principles, and the Regional Vision for the RPC region as defined in the Regional Master Plan.

**Chapter 3: Existing Conditions.** This chapter provides the background information on the region. This includes a description of land use patterns, demographic data and commuting travel patterns, as well as overviews of the modal components of the transportation system, including Highways, Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities, Public Transportation, Transportation Demand Management, and Freight Transportation facilities and programs.

**Chapter 4: Trends & Anticipated Future Conditions.** This chapter provides a context for future transportation system needs based on regional growth and forecasting. A needs assessment is structured around the Plan's nine goal areas. Scenarios for various growth patterns demonstrate alternative plans for future development. The region's needs are projected based on these scenarios.

**Chapter 5: The Constrained Transportation Plan.** This chapter lists those projects that are feasible given existing and expected financial resources as well as other limitations as required by the FAST Act. The project listing is organized into the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which lists the first four years of projects (2018-2021) and the Plan projects which are the remaining years of 2022 to 2040.

**Chapter 6: Mitigating & Monitoring Resource Impacts.** This section discusses the impacts of the plan concerning Environmental Mitigation, Historic and Cultural Resources, Environmental Justice, Safety, and Security.

**Chapter 7: Implementation Strategies.** This chapter sets out a range of actions for the MPO, member municipalities and other stakeholders to move the region toward attaining the Plan's stated goals. Implementation strategies are organized by goal area, including Mobility, Transportation Choices, Integrated Planning for Transportation & Land Use, System Preservation & Modernization, Energy & Environment, Safety, Economic Vitality, Resiliency, Public Health, Efficient Planning Process, and Resource Availability. Certain strategies are cross cutting and will help in attaining multiple goals, and these are identified accordingly.