



Further Planning and Concluding Comments

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Meeting SAFETEA-LU Requirements

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Transportation Equity Act—A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law in August 2005, reauthorizing the Federal surface transportation programs. SAFETEA-LU maintains the basic structure of Federal programs and planning requirements established in the landmark Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and continued under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) of 1998, but does make some changes in both.

SAFETEA-LU includes some additional requirements for regional or metropolitan transportation plans. It is anticipated that final regulations detailing the new metropolitan planning requirements will be adopted in early 2007. In the meantime, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has issued interim guidance on the new planning requirements.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) such as the Madison Area MPO that had already initiated development of their regional transportation plans at the time SAFETEA-LU was adopted have the option of completing their plans under TEA-21 requirements. However, a plan amendment would need to be completed prior to adoption of the 2008 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) in the fall of 2007 in order to make the plan fully compliant with SAFETEA-LU.

It is anticipated that the Madison Area MPO will need to complete an amendment of this plan to make it SAFETEA-LU compliant. SAFETEA-LU identifies the following six elements that must be included in metropolitan plans:

- Identification of transportation facilities
- Mitigation activities
- Financial plan
- Operational and management strategies
- Capital investment and other strategies to preserve existing and future transportation infrastructure
- Transportation and transit enhancement activities

In formulating these elements, the impacts on eight planning factors are to be considered. The eight planning factors are listed on pages 9-10 of this plan. It is expected that some additional work will be needed to address the mitigation activities and financial plan elements and more fully consider the security of the transportation system, one of the eight planning factors.

The environmental mitigation activities identified in the plan are to be developed in consultation with Federal, state, and tribal wildlife, land management, and regulatory agencies. MPO staff plan to meet with representatives of such agencies to review the plan and discuss environmental issues with them. It is not anticipated that any major environmental issues will be identified. With one exception, the western end of the proposed North Mendota Parkway project, all proposed major roadway and transit capacity expansion projects are located within or adjacent to existing rights of way. An environmental study is going to be conducted to determine the route for the North Mendota Parkway that has the least environmental impact. The purpose and need for the project is well documented in the North Mendota Parkway Alternatives Study (2003) and this plan.

As noted in the Financial Analysis section of the plan, further work is needed to identify the costs of projects for maintenance and preservation of the existing transportation system. MPO staff was relatively successful in putting together data on overall pavement conditions of the area's arterial and collector roadways. Data was also collected on local street expenses. However, the percent of expenses used for operation and management versus construction and for arterials and collectors versus local streets is unknown except for the City of Madison. In addition, MPO staff were unable to develop a good methodology for using the pavement condition data to project future maintenance and reconstruction needs and costs.

Security of the transportation system will also likely need to be further addressed with a discussion of emergency planning, alternate routes, and other issues.

Plan Update Following Completion of Ongoing Major Corridor Studies

Transportation planning is a continuous process with regional plans refined through more detailed subarea or corridor plans, the results of which are then incorporated into the next update of the regional plan. This plan recommends continuing or initiating a number of corridor studies. These include studies of the Beltline, Verona Road, and USH 51 and the Transport 2020 (East-West Transit Corridor) Study. Further more detailed operations and corridor level analyses are needed from these studies before specific recommended projects can be included in the regional transportation plan. Funding sources for the recommended projects must also be identified in order for them to be included in the fiscally constrained plan. When these studies are completed and regional agreement is reached on the recommended long-term transportation improvement projects and funding is identified, the plan will be amended to add the project(s).

Projects Beyond Financial Constraint

Section 5 of Table 24 beginning on page 135 of the plan identifies several potential arterial roadway capacity expansion projects, which will be needed, but for which funding has not been identified. Among these projects is the North Mendota Parkway. These “illustrative” projects are not part of financial constrained plan at this time because their inclusion would result in total costs exceeding the projected federal funding amounts that will be available. It is possible that some may proceed with local funding.

It is also possible, however, that this list may grow as the financial analysis is refined. The MPO will be attempting to come up with a methodology for better estimating future roadway preservation needs and available funding to address those needs. The list of future needed arterial roadway preservation projects in Section 4 of Table 24 is clearly not complete. In fact, there are no projects identified in the last time period from 2021 to 2030. Once the likely future projects and available funding have been identified, there may be less funding available for capacity expansion projects. Table 30 on page 168 of the plan shows that projected revenues for roadway related projects exceeds projected expenses by \$318 million. While funding levels appear to match, it is unknown if this is enough to cover the as yet identified roadway preservation project needs.

In the case of public transit, implementing many of the service improvements recommended in the plan, including those resulting from the Transport 2020 (East-West Transit Corridor) Study, will require development of an alternative means of operations funding to ease the burden on local governments. The current funding structure relies too heavily on the local property tax. In 2005, around 25% of Metro Transit operating revenue came from local property taxes. With costs rising on average around 3% just to maintain the same service levels, federal funding maximized, and little or no recent state funding increases, local governments have been squeezed and the overall number of service hours has declined for the past several years. A new dedicated funding source will be necessary to allow any major expansion of service.

Regional Indicators: Measuring Progress Towards the Region’s Transportation Goals

The Regional Transportation Plan 2030 identifies transportation improvements and strategies/implementation actions designed to bring the region closer to achieving the overall goal of an integrated and balanced land use and transportation system. The plan includes goals and policy objectives related to the overall transportation system, land use and transportation system coordination, and the different elements of the transportation system. MPO staff plan to develop a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators that can be used to periodically assess progress in meeting these plan goals and policy objectives.

The objective will be to develop indicators that are: outcome-based; regional in geographic scope to the extent possible; measurable over the long term; and based on publicly available data sources due to the high cost of data collection and the need for consistent and continuing reporting. Data needs will be identified and MPO staff will work with WisDOT and FHWA staff to address existing data deficiencies. Qualitative indicators and analysis will be used to supplement the more quantitative indicators.

Development and application of the regional indicators will allow the region to see where progress is being made towards the goals, where efforts need to be strengthened, and where we may need to rethink goals or the approaches to meeting them. The picture provided by such assessments will serve as an important foundation for future plan updates.

Critical Role of Land Use in Transportation Planning

Land use development and redevelopment, in terms of its type, intensity, design, and location, has a profound effect on our transportation system. While the transportation projects and strategies recommended in this plan will play an important role in addressing future transportation needs and improving the performance of the transportation system, achieving the land use policy objectives on page 129 will play an even greater role. Of the land use policy objectives, perhaps the most important is planning for concentrated, higher density, mixed-use employment/activity centers (particularly along transit corridors) and redevelopment of existing such centers to improve pedestrian/bicyclist accessibility and support transit service. The concentration of development in such areas and other smaller neighborhood centers, when properly designed, can reduce overall region-wide congestion and provide convenient mode choice options, while at the same time accommodating growth and expanded economic development opportunities.

Land use planning and development decisions are made at the local level. It is important that local communities carefully consider the transportation impacts of their land use plans and development decisions and coordinate such decision making with the MPO. This is particularly the case where those decisions involve changes to adopted land use plans upon which this transportation plan is based. The MPO can provide assistance to local communities, for example by reviewing traffic impact analyses prepared by developers or in some cases providing traffic forecasts using the MPO's regional travel forecast model. In the past, MPO staff has prepared multi-modal transportation impact analyses for urban service area (USA) amendment requests approved by the regional planning commission (RPC). With the creation of the new Capital Area RPC, there is an opportunity for the MPO to once again play a role in identifying important transportation issues as part of the USA amendment process. Once the new Capital Area RPC is established and its regional planning responsibilities are clarified, the MPO can work out with the new RPC arrangements for ensuring coordinated planning efforts.