

Chapter 8: Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is a comprehensive, multimodal “blueprint” for transportation systems and services aimed at covering; for one, the mobility and access for people and goods; secondly, efficient system performance and preservation, and last but not least, good quality of life of the metropolitan area of Hidalgo County. The MTP, which was adopted in December 2004, guides the implementation of multimodal transportation improvements, policies, and programs through the year 2030. The MTP represents the long-range planning vision for the metropolitan area and must meet the conformity requirements. This includes all projects that are expected to be funded or that will require an approval by FHWA/FTA at any point during the life of the plan. The MTP, which is a 25-year

The 2010-2035 MTP will be updated and adopted by December 2009.

planning horizon, must include a financial plan that estimates how much funding will be needed to implement recommended improvements, as well as operate and maintain the system as a whole, over the life of the plan. This includes information on how the MPO reasonably expects to fund the projects included in the plan, including anticipated revenues from FHWA and FTA, state government, regional or local sources, the private sector, and user charges. The MTP must demonstrate that there is a balance between the expected revenue sources for transportation investments and the estimated costs of the projects and programs described in the plan. In other words, a metropolitan plan must be fiscally constrained.

One of the strengths of the Hidalgo County MPO is the fact that the urbanized area consists of 22 individual cities with distinct goals plus the unincorporated area of Hidalgo County. The major transportation corridors connect and bisect these

22 Cities in Hidalgo County: Alamo, Alton, Donna, Edcouch, Edinburg, Elsa, Granjeno, Hidalgo, La Villa, La Joya, McAllen, Mercedes, Mission, Palmhurst, Palmview, Peñitas, Pharr, Progreso, Progreso Lakes, San Juan, Sullivan City, and Weslaco

cities. Considering limited funding and virtually unlimited need, construction projects must be developed and implemented for addressing the flow and demands of the entire corridor and in turn, the transportation network, while also addressing the individual needs of the cities.

The demands placed on the existing transportation facilities are exceeding the current capacity, and these demands are expected to increase in the future. The need to develop an improved transportation system (to deal with limited capacity and increasing growth through the year 2030) led to the development of the following goals. SAFETEA-LU preserves most aspects of ISTEA and TEA-21. However, certain important changes to the MPO planning process are required by law. Per SAFETEA-LU, these changes must be reflected in new MTPs and TIPs adopted after the deadline of July 1, 2007. After this date, all new MTPs, TIPs and amendments to these documents must be compliant with SAFETEA-LU.

Upon the development of the 2005-2030 MTP, these goals and objectives are to determine the development and implementation of the Hidalgo County Transportation Plan, and the HCMPO will begin the process to update the MTP and it must be adopted in December 2009.

GOAL NUMBER 1: REHABILITATE AND PRESERVE THE EXISTING NETWORK.

An primary emphasis of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991(ISTEA), and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century of 1998(TEA21), is the preservation and maximum efficient usage of the existing transportation network. In 2008, the MTP was amended to be SAFETEA-LU compliant. Maximum efficiency of the transportation system can only be attained through proper maintenance. The following objectives will allow achievement of this goal.

Objective 1: Identify immediate problems and their solutions

Use the existing management systems developed under ISTEA to identify immediate problems. The Three Management systems still operational in the year 2000 are the Bridge Management System (B.M.S.), the Pavement Management System (PMS), and Congestion Management System (CMS). The regional

transportation model which has been in operational stage since 1999 will allow the MPO to prioritize solutions.

Objective 2: Increase the safety of the network.

Determine high crash locations in the urbanized area; coordinate with the Texas Department of Transportation and HCMPO member cities to reduce the number of incidents.

Objective 3: Improve efficiency of the existing network.

Using the existing Pavement Management System, and Bridge Management System, determine the rehabilitation cycles for the existing surface network and allocate MPO Transportation Management Area (TMA) funding towards resurfacing and rehabilitating the regional significant internal network of the cities. Based on the Congestion Management System, determine where transportation demand management tools, such as access management and traffic signal timing synchronization, can be utilized.

Objective 4: Facilitate the efficient movement of freight.

Support the development of the existing and proposed international crossings in Hidalgo County; work with airports to provide sufficient land access to meet their freight movement needs; work with the railroad companies to maintain a presence in the urbanized area; determine if existing truck routes are sufficient to address projected truck borne freight to and through Hidalgo County.

Objective 5: Ensure Title VI*

Increase solicitation of public involvement throughout the urbanized area by continuing to employ innovative and effective awareness techniques; work with the local planning and community development departments to incorporate transportation into the big picture; take an aggressive role in welfare to work goals and implementation; coordinate with area housing goals and strategies, environmental resource plans, and energy conservation goals and objectives.

Objective 6: Serve existing and projected needs.

Maintain current or increased levels of service to the existing population by determining the projected growth and allocation and ensuring that the MPO is eligible to continue analyzing the transportation needs of the population.

Objective 7: Incorporate fiscal constraint/innovate financing.

Research and implement innovative and non-traditional financing methodologies to fund the transportation network through the planning period. Fiscal constraint will be applied throughout the plan by investigating low cost alternatives to construction as solutions to the transportation problems.

Objective 8: Support and promote current economic levels.

Work closely with the local business community, the chambers of commerce, and the economic development authorities to assess their existing transportation, needs and problems; to obtain participation from these and the Texas Department of Transportation for determining solutions.

***Title VI addresses the social environment of a project, the neighborhood, community, and equity in voice and construction standards.**

GOAL NUMBER 2: EMPLOY A CORRIDOR ANALYSIS APPROACH TO CONSTRUCTION.

The incremental development of the majority of the urbanized cities along US Expressway 83, combined with the rapid growth of cities and the county as a whole, demands the need for the consistency of construction in corridor development.

Objective 1: Create a functional relationship between transportation planning and area development.

Educate community decision makers about the symbiotic relationship between land use and development and the transportation network. Implement transportation demand management techniques (for example: stop light synchronization, raised medians, van pooling and curb-cut reduction) and access management in order to mitigate flow and safety problems on corridors throughout the urbanized area.

Objective 2: Ensure multi-modal capability.

Study and incorporate, where feasible and/or necessary, all modes of transportation, including but not limited to transit, air, rail, pedestrian, and bike.

Objective 3: Ensure Efficient Movement of Freight

Ally the development of the existing and proposed international crossings in Hidalgo County; work with airports to provide sufficient land access to meet their freight movement needs (especially NAFTA corridors); work with the railroad companies to edify our presence in the urbanized areas; determine if existing truck routes are sufficient for anticipating increased truck borne freight to and through Hidalgo County.

Objective 4: Protect the environment

Work closely with the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission and local conservation organizations for determining environmentally sensitive areas and incorporating their input into the construction process. Where possible, the MPO will plan the transportation corridor with the least environmental impact.

Objective 5: Ensure/Promote Title VI (EJ)*

Increase solicitation of public involvement throughout the urbanized area by continuing to employ innovative and effective awareness techniques; work with the local planning and community development departments for incorporating transportation into the big picture; take an aggressive role in welfare to work goals and implementation; coordinate with area housing goals and strategies, environmental resource plans, and energy conservation goals and objectives.

Objective 6: Serve existing and projected needs

Maintain current or increased levels of service to the existing population and determine the projected growth and allocation and ensure that the MPO is designated to study the transportation needs of that population. The MPO also will assure that the highest priority corridors will serve greatest needs.

Objective 7: Incorporate Fiscal constraint/ innovative financing

Fiscal constraint will be applied throughout the Plan by investigating low-cost alternatives to construction as a solution to the transportation problem. Research and implement the Hidalgo County MPO's CMS to a corridor level approach. We also look for innovative, non-traditional financing methodologies to fund the transportation network through the planning period.

Objective 8: Promote Economic Development

Work closely with the business community, chambers of commerce, and economic development authorities to determine their existing transportation needs and problems; work with these and the Texas Department of Transportation to determine solutions. The MPO should continue its policy of connecting any new bridges with the existing transportation network.

**TABLE 6.1.1: HIDALGO COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Metropolitan Transportation Plan Financial Constraint by Category**

Category	Description	Funding Source	Annual Average	2030 Total Available	Total HCMPO MTP Projects	Total HCMPO Needs
1	Preventive Maintenance and Rehabilitation	Federal State	\$ 9,750,000	\$243,750,000	\$222,890,000	\$222,890,000
2	Metropolitan Area (TMA) Corridor Projects	Federal State	\$22,500,000	\$ 757,781,671	\$666,600,000	\$666,600,000
6	Structures (Bridges) Replacement and Rehabilitation	Federal State	\$ 750,000	\$ 18,750,000	\$18,750,000	\$18,750,000
7/11	Metropolitan Mobility / Rehabilitation & District Discretionary	Federal State	\$ 9,660,000	\$ 401,500,000	\$401,500,000	\$764,052,000
8	Safety- Federal Hazard Elimination Program	Federal State	\$ 1,600,000	\$ 40,000,000	\$39,000,000	\$39,000,000
9	Transportation Enhancements	Federal State	\$ 1,200,000	30,000,000	\$30,000,000	\$30,000,000
10	Miscellaneous Projects	State	\$ 150,000	\$ 3,750,000	\$2,740,000	\$2,740,000

12	Strategic Priority	Federal State	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 25,000,000	\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000
Local	Local Funds used for various locally funded projects	Local				\$2,139,000,000
FTA 5307	Urban transit System. These funds can be used for planning, capital and operating expenses.	Federal	\$2,623,640	\$65,591,000	\$65,591,000	\$65,591,000
State 5307	Urban transit System. These funds can be used for planning, capital and operating expenses.	State	\$236,000	\$5,900,000	\$5,900,000	\$5,900,000
TOTAL			\$49,469,640	\$1,592,022,671	\$1,477,971,000	\$3,979,523,000

As shown in the above table, Funding Categories 7/11 have financial “gap” of approximately \$360,000,000 million. To address this short fall in mobility funds, the 78th Texas Legislation through House Bill 3588 have provided an option to the eight Transportation Management Areas of the State via the Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plan.