

Chapter 1 Introduction

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Chapter 1: Introduction Contents

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Looking Ahead 2050: A Transportation Vision

A Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is a long-range, multimodal, regional surface transportation plan that identifies a regional vision for transportation and the steps toward achieving that vision.

Looking Ahead 2050 serves as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for the Saint Cloud metropolitan planning area (MPA). This document, therefore, updates and supersedes the Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization's (APO's) Metropolitan Planning and Programming: An Innovative Network Guide for 2045 (MAPPING 2045), initially adopted on Oct. 30, 2019.



Figure 1.1: Infographic stating Looking Ahead 2050 will serve as the Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization's (APO's) metropolitan transportation plan.

By federal regulation, MTPs must have a planning horizon of at least 20 years and must be updated no less than every five years (or every four years if a region does not meet certain air quality standards).

MTPs are a joint project of all individual jurisdictions within a Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA), and so represent a singular agreed upon vision for the future of transportation within that region. Goals and objectives are defined for the transportation system as well as individual strategies, policies, and transportation projects to help achieve those goals and objectives.

Federal Requirements of an MTP

At a minimum, components of an MTP must include:

1. The current and projected transportation demand of persons and goods in the MPA over the period of the transportation plan.
2. Existing and proposed transportation facilities (including major roadways, public transportation facilities, intercity bus facilities, multimodal and intermodal facilities, nonmotorized transportation facilities (e.g., pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities), and intermodal connectors) that should function as an integrated metropolitan transportation system, giving emphasis to those facilities that serve important national and regional transportation functions over the period of the transportation plan.

3. A description of the performance measures and performance targets used in assessing the performance of the transportation system in accordance with U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §450.306(d).
4. A system performance report and subsequent updates evaluating the condition and performance of the transportation system with respect to the performance targets described in §450.306(d) including
 - a. Progress achieved by the metropolitan planning organization in meeting the performance targets in comparison with system performance recorded in previous reports, including baseline data; and
 - b. For Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) that voluntarily elect to develop multiple scenarios, an analysis of how the preferred scenario has improved the conditions and performance of the transportation system and how changes in local policies and investments have impacted the costs necessary to achieve the identified performance targets.
5. Operational and management strategies to improve the performance of existing transportation facilities to relieve vehicular congestion and maximize the safety and mobility of people and goods.
6. Consideration of the results of the congestion management process in transportation management areas (TMAs) that meet the requirements of this subpart, including the identification of single occupancy vehicle (SOV) projects that result from a congestion management process in TMAs that are nonattainment for ozone or carbon monoxide. TMAs are urbanized areas with populations greater than 200,000 as determined by the U.S. Census. *The Saint Cloud urban area does not meet TMA status nor is the Saint Cloud urban area in either a nonattainment or maintenance air quality area.*
7. Assessment of capital investment and other strategies to preserve the existing and projected future metropolitan transportation infrastructure and provide for multimodal capacity increases based on regional priorities and needs, and reduce the vulnerability of the existing transportation infrastructure to natural disasters. The MTP may consider projects and strategies that address areas or corridors where current or projected congestion threatens the efficient functioning of key elements of the metropolitan area's transportation system. A transportation project listed in the MTP is eligible for federal transportation funding.
8. Transportation and transit enhancement activities, including consideration of the role that intercity buses may play in reducing congestion, pollution, and energy consumption in a cost-effective manner and strategies and investments that preserve and enhance intercity bus systems, including systems that are privately owned and operated, and including transportation alternatives as defined in 23 United States Code (U.S.C.) 101(a), and associated transit improvements, as described in 49 U.S.C.5302(a) as appropriate.
9. Design concept and design scope descriptions of all existing and proposed transportation facilities in sufficient detail, regardless of funding source, in nonattainment and maintenance areas for conformity determinations under the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93 subpart A). In all areas (regardless of air quality designation), all proposed improvements shall be described in sufficient detail to develop cost estimates.

10. A discussion of types of potential environment mitigation activities and potential areas to carry out these activities, including activities that may have the greatest potential to restore and maintain the environmental functions affected by the plan. The discussion may focus on policies, programs, or strategies, rather than at the project level. The MPO shall develop the discussion in consultation with applicable federal, state, and tribal land management, wildlife, and regulatory agencies. The MPO may establish reasonable timeframes for performing this consultation.
11. A financial plan that demonstrates how the adopted transportation plan can be implemented.
 - a. For purposes of transportation system operations and maintenance, the financial plan shall contain system-level estimates of costs and revenue sources that are reasonably expected to be available to adequately operate and maintain the federal-aid highways (as defined by 23 U.S.C. 101(a)(5)) and public transportation (as defined by title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53).
 - b. For the purposes of developing the MTP, the MPO, public transportation operator(s), and state shall cooperatively develop estimates of funds that will be available to support MTP implementation, as required under §450.314(a). All necessary financial resources from public and private sources that are reasonably expected to be made available to carry out the transportation plan shall be identified.
 - c. The financial plan shall include recommendations on any additional financing strategies to fund projects and programs included in the MTP. In the case of new funding sources, strategies for ensuring their availability shall be identified. The financial plan may include an assessment of the appropriateness of innovative finance techniques (for example, tolling, pricing, bonding, public private partnerships, or other strategies) as revenue sources for projects in the plan.
 - d. In developing the financial plan, the MPO shall take into account all projects and strategies proposed for funding under title 23 U.S.C., title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 or with other federal funds; state assistance; local sources; and private participation. Revenue and cost estimates that support the MTP must use an inflation rate(s) to reflect "year of expenditure dollars," based on reasonable financial principles and information, developed cooperatively by the MPO, state, and public transportation operator(s).
 - e. For the outer years of the MTP (i.e., beyond the first 10 years), the financial plan may reflect aggregate cost ranges/cost bands, as long as the future funding source(s) is reasonably expected to be available to support the projected cost ranges/cost bands.
 - f. For nonattainment and maintenance areas, the financial plan shall address the specific financial strategies required to ensure the implementation of Transportation Control Measures (TCMs) in the applicable State Implementation Plan (SIP).
 - g. For illustrative purposes, the financial plan may include additional projects that would be included in the adopted transportation plan if additional resources beyond those identified in the financial plan were to become available.
 - h. In cases that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) find a MTP to be fiscally constrained and a revenue source is subsequently removed or substantially reduced (i.e., by

legislative or administrative actions), the FHWA and the FTA will not withdraw the original determination of fiscal constraint; however, in such cases, the FHWA and the FTA will not act on an updated or amended MTP that does not reflect the changed revenue situation.

12. Pedestrian walkway and bicycle transportation facilities in accordance with 23 U.S.C. 217(g).

Federal Planning Factors

In addition to the components identified, MTPs must also be consistent with the following federal planning factors:

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 accessibility and mobility of people and freight.
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the 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.
9. Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation.
10. Enhance travel and tourism.

In short, the MTP is multimodal. As such, the document provides a comprehensive analysis of the region's transportation networks individually and as a whole including roadways, public transit, bicycle and pedestrian networks, and freight systems. Overall, the MTP is a regional plan that defines the course for future transportation investments.

Planning on a Regional Scale

Metropolitan transportation planning is the process of examining travel and transportation issues and needs in a region. To accomplish this, regional transportation planners explore connections between mobility, multimodal transportation systems, environmental conditions, land use, economic development, safety, and security. Using community demographic data as well as examining existing travel patterns and trends, planners are able to conduct an analysis of alternative scenarios to meet

projected future demands. These alternative future scenarios must not only provide for a safe and efficient transportation system, but these scenarios must also meet the mobility needs of the region as well as limiting adverse impacts to the environment.

In metropolitan areas over 50,000 residents the responsibility for transportation planning lies with the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

What is an MPO?

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the policy board of an organization created and designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process. MPOs carry out planning activities for regions over 50,000 people that are designated urbanized areas determined by the populations calculated with each Decennial Census.

As a federally designated (under the Federal Aid Highway Acts of 1962 and 1973) and federally-funded organization, MPOs are charged with ensuring coordination with all jurisdictions within an urban area in order to achieve consensus on a shared vision for transportation all while minimizing conflicts and transportation project delays.

Figure 1.2: Definition of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

To effectively plan on a regional level, local officials (who are part of the designated MPO) must cooperate with states and public transportation providers to undertake a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative (3C) multimodal transportation planning process. By employing the 3C process, it is expected the region will engage in an inclusive transportation planning process to meet both current needs as well as prepare for future challenges.

In addition to carrying out the 3C planning process and the subsequent development of the MTP, MPOs are responsible for other requirements including public engagement; project selection and alternative evaluation within the planning area; soliciting, prioritizing, and developing a four-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); and developing an annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization

The Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO) is the federally recognized MPO for the Saint Cloud urban area. The APO's origins can be traced back to an agreement between Saint Cloud Township and the City of Saint Cloud establishing a metropolitan development committee in 1964. Under the consideration of the transportation planning requirements established in the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1962, the committee formalized the APO through a Joint Powers Agreement adopted on May 12, 1966.

Today, the APO is an association of townships, cities, and counties in the Saint Cloud urban area. The decision-making body of the APO is the Policy Board, which is comprised of elected officials from nine local government jurisdictions as well as a senior executive leader from the Saint Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission (more commonly known as Metro Bus). Local government membership is comprised of three counties (Benton, Sherburne, and Stearns), five cities (Saint Cloud, Saint Joseph, Sartell, Sauk Rapids, and Waite Park), and one township (LeSauk). The township of Brockway, Haven, Minden, Saint Joseph, Saint Wendel, Sauk Rapids, and Watab as well as the cities of Rockville, Saint Augusta, and Saint Stephen – which are located within the designated APO planning boundary – choose not to participate as voting members on the APO Policy Board. Instead, these non-member jurisdictions are represented through their respective counties. The Policy Board is responsible for adopting regional transportation plans, projects, and policies as well as providing direction to APO staffers. All member units of government are represented by a single voting seat on the Policy Board except for the City of Saint Cloud which has three.



Figure 1.3: Members of the APO's Policy Board listening to a presentation at a Policy Board meeting.
Photo courtesy of Saint Cloud APO.

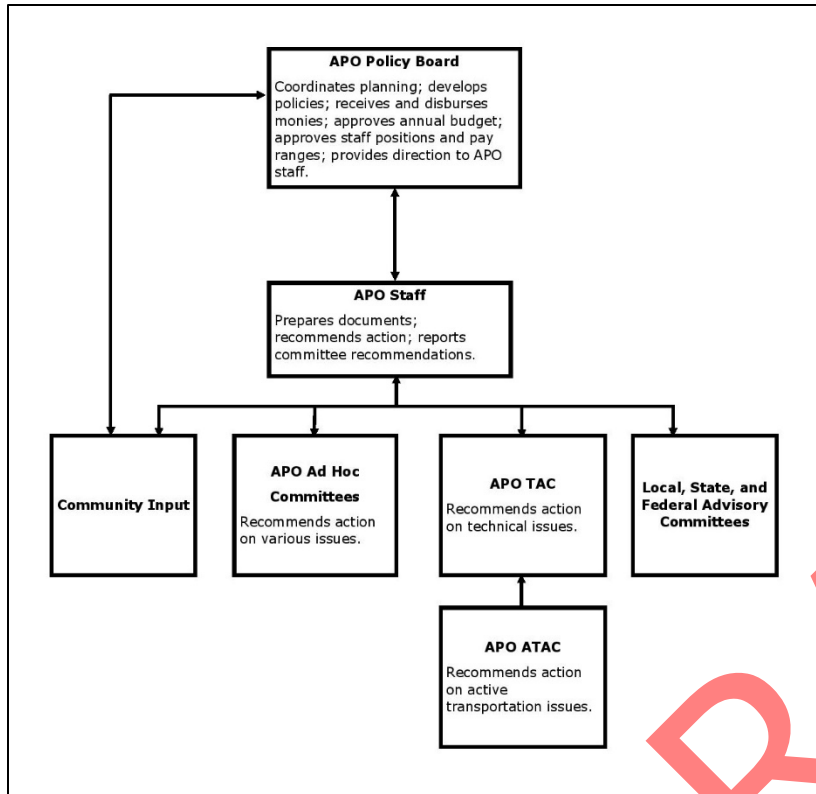


Figure 1.4: Organizational chart for the Saint Cloud APO.

To assist the APO’s Policy Board in making informed decisions, the APO has established a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which is comprised of engineers, planners, and other jurisdictional staff from the member jurisdictions and Metro Bus along with a representative from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) District 3. The TAC is tasked with making technical recommendations to both APO staff as well as the Policy Board.

In addition to the TAC, the APO has a subcommittee of the TAC known as the Active Transportation Advisory

Committee (ATAC). This group – made up of area residents and city/county staff – meets to discuss active transportation (i.e., bicycle, pedestrian, and other non-motorized means of transportation) issues, goals, and events. ATAC discussions and recommendations are reported directly to the TAC.

The APO Policy Board and TAC can create ad hoc committees, as warranted, to focus on a specific project or study.

All APO meetings (Policy Board, TAC, and ATAC) are open to the public.

The APO has six Board-approved staff positions, but as of the publishing of this document, the APO employs four full-time staffers (the Executive Director, the Senior Transportation Planner, the Associate Transportation Planner, and the Transportation Planning Technician) and one part-time employee (the Administrative Assistant).



Figure 1.5: Members of the APO’s Technical Advisory Committee listening to a presentation from APO staff. Photo courtesy of Saint Cloud APO.

The APO strives to be:

- Public service- oriented by providing accountability to constituents and exhibiting the highest standards of ethical conduct.
- Creative problem solvers by anticipating potential challenges and developing creative solutions based on professional knowledge, public involvement, and collaboration with our partners.
- Continuous learners who constantly seek new information, knowledge, and skills to better serve the Saint Cloud MPA.

Mission Statement of the Saint Cloud APO

"The APO is committed to coordinated planning -- in a fair and mutually beneficial manner -- on select issues transcending jurisdictional boundaries for the betterment of the entire Saint Cloud Metropolitan Planning Area. This mission is accomplished through professional planning initiatives, the provision of objective information, and building collaborative partnerships that foster consensus."

Figure 1.6: The mission statement of the Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization.

In the transportation planning process, the APO's roles include:

1. Maintaining a certified "3-C" transportation planning process.
2. Coordinating the planning and implementation activities of local, regional, and state transportation agencies.
3. Undertaking an effective stakeholder engagement process which ensures that meaningful public input is part of the decision-making process behind plans and programs.
4. Providing leadership both in setting transportation policy and in metropolitan system planning.
5. Lending technical support in planning and operations to local governments.
6. Planning for an intermodal transportation system that is economically efficient, environmentally sound, provides the foundation to compete in the global economy, and will move people and goods in an energy-efficient manner.

Saint Cloud Metropolitan Planning Area

The Saint Cloud urban area is designated by the U.S. Census Bureau every decennial census year. Criteria for defining this urban area is largely based on population density. The APO Policy Board (in consultation with MnDOT and FHWA) can review the census-defined urban area and add additional urban and urbanizing areas to create the metropolitan planning area (MPA).

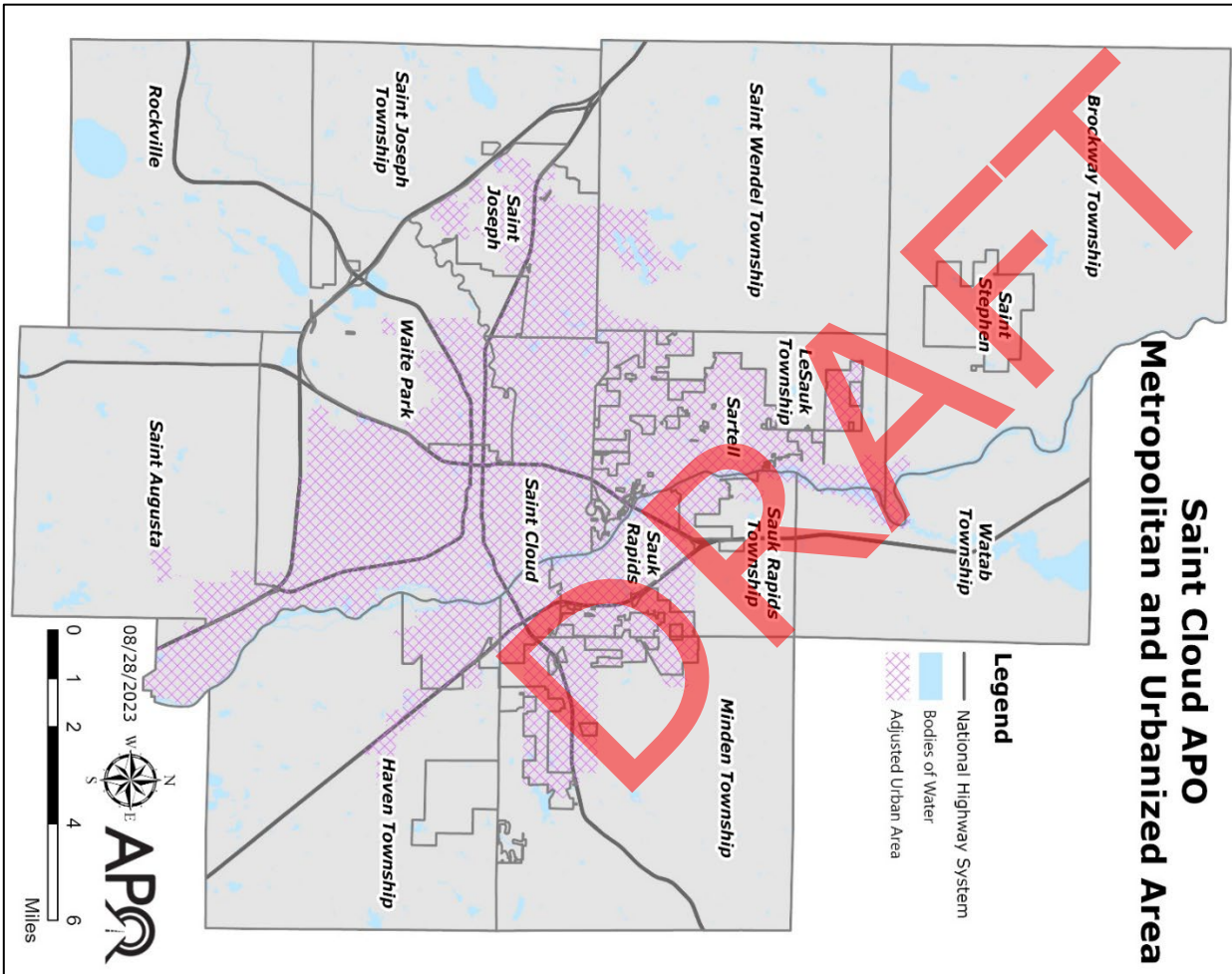


Figure 1.7: Map of the Saint Cloud APO Metropolitan Planning Area.

Development of Looking Ahead 2050

Plan Review

As part of the development of the MTP as well as to ensure the policies and projects including in Looking Ahead 2050 reflected local, regional, and state priorities for transportation, APO staff conducted a review of current and relevant planning documents completed by partner agencies and jurisdictions. Plans reviewed were those adopted or in final draft stage prior to January 2024. Plans that were either being newly developed or in various stages of being updated after January 2024 were not reviewed. Instead, prior versions of these planning documents were consulted.

The following is a list of all planning documents reviewed by APO staff.

1. [Benton County 2040 Comprehensive Plan \(2019\)](https://tinyurl.com/ycxcdppj) (https://tinyurl.com/ycxcdppj).
2. [Benton County Hazard Mitigation Plan \(2011\)](https://tinyurl.com/2u4fd983) (https://tinyurl.com/2u4fd983).
3. [Sherburne County 2040 Comprehensive Plan \(2023 – Draft Version\)](https://tinyurl.com/39udzxta) (https://tinyurl.com/39udzxta).
4. [Driving Forward: Sherburne County Transportation Plan \(2019\)](https://tinyurl.com/mvps2ppj) (https://tinyurl.com/mvps2ppj).
5. [Shape 2040 Stearns: Stearns County 2040 Comprehensive Plan \(2020\)](https://shapestearns.com/) (https://shapestearns.com/).
6. [Comprehensive Plan for the City of Saint Cloud \(2015\)](https://tinyurl.com/nspne96x) (https://tinyurl.com/nspne96x).
7. [Survey of Saint Cloud Residents Spring 2019 \(2019\)](https://tinyurl.com/49exzeps) (https://tinyurl.com/49exzeps).
8. [City of Saint Cloud Emergency Management Ordinance 2732 \(2017\)](https://tinyurl.com/3ypn7u6n) (https://tinyurl.com/3ypn7u6n).
9. [The City of Saint Joseph Comprehensive Plan: A Vision to the Future \(2018\)](https://tinyurl.com/4xhr68cu) (https://tinyurl.com/4xhr68cu).
10. [City of Sartell 2016 Comprehensive Plan \(2016\)](https://tinyurl.com/ezsv5xzc) (https://tinyurl.com/ezsv5xzc).
11. [Vision Next: 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Sauk Rapids \(2023 – Draft Version\)](https://tinyurl.com/2e3bcpps) (https://tinyurl.com/2e3bcpps).
12. City of Waite Park Comprehensive Plan (2023 – Draft Version).
13. [Saint Cloud Metro Bus Public Transit Agency Safety Plan \(PTASP\) \(2023\)](https://tinyurl.com/bdf4jyn5) (https://tinyurl.com/bdf4jyn5).
14. [State of the System: Saint Cloud Metro Bus \(2023\)](https://tinyurl.com/yywrn8w4) (https://tinyurl.com/yywrn8w4).
15. [Survey Analysis: Saint Cloud Metro Bus \(2024\)](https://tinyurl.com/2p8xzjd4) (https://tinyurl.com/2p8xzjd4).
16. [MnDOT District 3 Freight Plan \(2020\)](https://tinyurl.com/3s8zn8hp) (https://tinyurl.com/3s8zn8hp).
17. [MnDOT District 3 Bicycle Plan \(2019\)](https://tinyurl.com/27ydx7t2) (https://tinyurl.com/27ydx7t2).
18. [Manufacturers’ Perspectives on Minnesota’s Transportation System District 3: Central Minnesota \(2020\)](https://www.dot.state.mn.us/mps/) (https://www.dot.state.mn.us/mps/).
19. [MnDOT District Safety Plans Update \(2016\)](https://tinyurl.com/4yypueuv) (https://tinyurl.com/4yypueuv).

20. [MnDOT Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan \(2022\)](https://tinyurl.com/48hajh2u) (https://tinyurl.com/48hajh2u).
21. [Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan \(2024\)](https://tinyurl.com/yannfkk4p) (https://tinyurl.com/yannfkk4p).
22. [Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan \(2017\)](https://tinyurl.com/uuzcwthh) (https://tinyurl.com/uuzcwthh).
23. [MnDOT Connected and Automated Vehicle Strategic Plan \(2019\)](https://tinyurl.com/j63k69yv) (https://tinyurl.com/j63k69yv).
24. [Minnesota Statewide Freight System and Investment Plan \(2018\)](https://tinyurl.com/yxh5wb8d) (https://tinyurl.com/yxh5wb8d).
25. [MnDOT State Freight Plan – 2022 Amended Freight Investment Plan Chapter \(2022\)](https://tinyurl.com/mpczu8rr) (https://tinyurl.com/mpczu8rr).
26. [Statewide Bicycle System Plan \(2016\)](https://tinyurl.com/yjnd5a9y) (https://tinyurl.com/yjnd5a9y).
27. [Statewide Pedestrian System Plan \(2021\)](https://tinyurl.com/betppv4k) (https://tinyurl.com/betppv4k).
28. [Minnesota State Aviation System Plan \(2022\)](https://mnsasp.org/) (https://mnsasp.org/).
29. [Statewide Ports & Waterways Plan \(2014\)](https://tinyurl.com/yc26v9ft) (https://tinyurl.com/yc26v9ft).
30. [Minnesota State Rail Plan \(2015\)](https://tinyurl.com/29htzks3) (https://tinyurl.com/29htzks3).
31. [Minnesota Transportation Asset Management Plan \(2022\)](https://tinyurl.com/4s7mhbsp) (https://tinyurl.com/4s7mhbsp).
32. [District 3 2024-2033 Capital Highway Investment Plan](https://tinyurl.com/38d56fex) (https://tinyurl.com/38d56fex).
33. [2020-2024 Strategic Highway Safety Plan](https://tinyurl.com/3ephhauv) (https://tinyurl.com/3ephhauv).
34. [Minnesota Statewide Regional ITS Architecture \(2018\)](https://tinyurl.com/zr4uwwrdd) (https://tinyurl.com/zr4uwwrdd).
35. [Greater Minnesota Mobility Study \(2018\)](https://tinyurl.com/mw4vmcbx) (https://tinyurl.com/mw4vmcbx).
36. [Auto Accessibility Report: Minnesota \(2018\)](https://tinyurl.com/3wv392ca) (https://tinyurl.com/3wv392ca).
37. [Minnesota Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan \(2023\)](https://www.dot.state.mn.us/nevi/) (https://www.dot.state.mn.us/nevi/).
38. [Minnesota Resilience Improvement Plan \(2024 – Draft Version\)](https://tinyurl.com/54x9z9jr) (https://tinyurl.com/54x9z9jr).
39. [Region 7W Long Range Transportation Plan \(2022\)](https://tinyurl.com/32v4hzwc) (https://tinyurl.com/32v4hzwc).
40. [Community Health Improvement Plan July 1, 2022- June 30, 2025 \(2022\)](https://tinyurl.com/hc5bp6ab) (https://tinyurl.com/hc5bp6ab).
41. [2021 Region 7W/Saint Cloud APO Area Local Human Services-Transit Coordination Plan \(2021\)](https://tinyurl.com/ykkxe4jf) (https://tinyurl.com/ykkxe4jf).
42. [2023 Minnesota Carbon Reduction Strategy](https://tinyurl.com/mryuh23k) (https://tinyurl.com/mryuh23k).

Different factors were considered for each plan review based upon the plan type and the entity preparing the planning document. For local comprehensive planning efforts (those conducted by APO member jurisdictions), plans were reviewed to understand each entity’s priorities for surface transportation. In addition, during these plan reviews, APO staff were able to review possible areas identified by each respective municipality (in particular) of future development – including residential, commercial, industrial, retail/office space, etc., to understand how future land use decisions would impact the current transportation as well as identify the need for future improvements to the overall network.

As of the drafting of this plan, Saint Cloud Metro Bus was in the process of conducting a review of its current service area to optimize existing routes as well as effectively and strategically plan for future changes to the service. While the planning effort was not finalized prior to the completion of this MTP, APO staff have been involved throughout the Metro Bus planning effort, including participation in the Metro Bus stakeholder advisory committee. In addition, deliverables from this planning effort including a “State of the System” report and community survey results were reviewed to ensure transportation planning efforts outlined in this MTP were in line with current information regarding Metro Bus service.

APO staff reviewed several regional planning efforts facilitated by MnDOT District 3 staff to gain a broader understanding of how the APO planning area’s transportation network interacts with neighboring transportation networks throughout Central Minnesota. As one of the MnDOT District 3’s largest urban areas (outside of the extreme southeastern portion of the district which is part of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Planning Area), planning efforts at the MnDOT District level emphasize the importance of connecting communities from across the district to the Saint Cloud area. These plans underscore the important role this region serves as a “hub” of activity for both people and freight as well as providing a critical connection to the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Lastly, a review of the various statewide planning efforts was conducted to ensure the goals, objectives, and strategies to be incorporated into this planning effort aligned with the ultimate vision for the State of Minnesota. Unlike the local and even some of the regional planning efforts conducted, the statewide plans (such as the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP)) focus more on establishing a policy direction for the state and its various partners on all levels of government. Several of these plans including the SMTP and the Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan (MnSHIP) were in the works during the early stages of the development of Looking Ahead 2050. As such, the APO, its planning partners, and staff were involved in this policy/planning process. This coordinated engagement not only helped the state with its various efforts but also worked to ensure the APO’s policy/planning process also closely aligned with the direction the state was heading.

Overall, the transportation visions outlined in Looking Ahead 2050 as well as the implementation of this plan are in alignment with existing planning documents at a local, regional, and statewide level.

Consultant Assistance

At several key milestones within the process of developing this MTP, the APO contracted with several consulting firms to provide technical assistance. Consulting firms were utilized to collect data – such as pavement condition and shared-use path condition data – as well as calibrating and running the APO’s Travel Demand Model (TDM) and facilitating community liaison outreach efforts. References to several deliverables provided by these firms are included as appendices to this plan.

Coordination with Planning Partners

The APO itself is an intergovernmental organization. As such, coordination among member jurisdictions and agencies is vital to the creation of this long-range, multimodal surface transportation plan. APO member jurisdictions and agencies played a crucial role in the development of this plan. Members of the APO’s TAC functioned as the primary steering committee for this plan,

providing guidance to APO staff and contracted consultants. Recommendations from the TAC were ultimately relayed to members of the Policy Board for their consideration.

Representing the Community's Voice

The purpose of public involvement is to make better decisions, create a better product, and decrease the time required to implement transportation decisions by:

1. Facilitating a dialogue with a broad cross-section of citizens during the planning process.
2. Organizing and recording information and other input for consideration and use by staff, planning partners, and decision-makers.
3. Informing citizens of the impact their input has on the development of regional policies and priorities.

For this or any planning effort to be successful, effective community engagement is critical. The vision and the priorities of this plan must align with the vision and priorities of those individuals living and working within the APO's planning area. As a result, APO staff facilitated several public engagement opportunities at key stages during the development of Looking Ahead 2050. To accomplish this, the APO consulted its [Stakeholder Engagement Plan \(SEP\)](https://tinyurl.com/c4ad78xf) (<https://tinyurl.com/c4ad78xf>), which serves as the APO's guide to conducting effective public participation during the development of the MTP.

In accordance with federal regulations, the APO provided individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of people with disabilities, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the MTP.

The public engagement process and outcomes regarding the development of Looking Ahead 2050 can be found in Appendix M and Appendix R of this document. Additional public comments can be found in Chapter 4: Regional Vision and Chapter 7: Transportation Infrastructure Investments.

Commitment to Transportation Equity

The Saint Cloud APO is committed to creating an equitable transportation system. Like MnDOT, the APO acknowledges the transportation system and decisions about it have underserved, excluded, harmed, and overburdened some communities. The APO understands some of the past decisions denied Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities as well as people with disabilities the full participation of transportation benefits. These and other underserved communities have historically carried disproportionate burdens of transportation decisions.

By acknowledging the past harms various decisions related to transportation have had on underserved communities, the APO, like MnDOT, is committed to ensuring all voices are heard throughout the decision-making process. To do this, the APO and its staff are committed to listening, learning, changing, implementing, and adapting to the needs of our communities.

Defining Transportation Equity

As part of the development of the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP), MnDOT staff set out to define equity in the context of transportation. Through substantial community and stakeholder engagement, MnDOT has adopted the following definition.

"Transportation equity means the benefits and burdens of transportation systems, services and spending are fair and just, which historically has not been the case. Transportation equity requires ensuring underserved communities, especially Black, Indigenous and People of Color, share in the power of decision making."

Figure 1.8: The definition of transportation equity as defined by the Minnesota Department of Transportation and documented in the State Multimodal Transportation Plan.