

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 What is the Metropolitan Planning Organization?

The US Census Bureau has identified over 400 regions throughout the United States that they consider to be urbanized. Urban Areas, by definition, contain a population greater than 50,000. Federal law mandates the creation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for each census defined urbanized area, with the purpose of involving local governments in transportation decisions involving federal highway or transit funds.

To achieve this, the City of Waco has been designated by the Governor of Texas as the MPO responsible for transportation planning in the Waco Urbanized Area. The City of Waco Planning Staff organizes, researches, and coordinates activities between the Texas Department of Transportation, Waco Transit and the Waco MPO Policy Board.

Although federal law mandates the creation of an MPO for each census defined urbanized area, federal law also requires that the MPO plan for a larger area that reflects the region anticipated to be urbanized within the next 25 years or areas anticipated to significantly influence transportation activities within the forecasted urbanized area. This area is referred to as the Metropolitan Planning Area or MPA and is determined by an agreement between the MPO Policy Board and the Governor of Texas. The MPA for Waco is coextensive with McLennan County. Please refer to Map 1.1 for the Waco MPA and census defined urbanized area.

The Waco MPO is governed by the MPO Policy Board which consists of 18 members representing McLennan County, the various incorporated cities within McLennan County and TxDOT. See Appendix A for the list of Policy Board members for FY 2009. The Policy Board is the decision-making component of the MPO and their duties include adopting metropolitan transportation policy and determining regional transportation priorities.

In addition to the Policy Board, the MPO has a Technical Committee composed of engineering, planning, and other technical professionals from member governments, transit authorities, TxDOT engineers, MPO staff, and other transportation interests. The Technical Committee, along with the MPO Staff, provide the Policy Board with the technical assistance necessary for the decision making process. Please refer to the Preface for a list of Policy Board, Technical Committee and MPO staff members as of FY 2009.

1.1.2 What is the Metropolitan Transportation Plan?

Connections 2035: The Waco Metropolitan Transportation Plan, also known as the MTP, is the 25-year plan that outlines the mobility needs for the Waco Metropolitan Area. The MTP serves as the blueprint from which future mobility projects are developed and reflect the policies and priorities of the Waco MPO Policy Board. The MTP is required by federal law to include all projects which intend to utilize federal highway or transit dollars during the 25-year planning period as well as all other regionally significant transportation projects, regardless of their source of funding. The MTP, however, must also be constrained against a realistic estimate of available resources. Only those projects that can be realistically funded during the 25-year planning period may be included in the MTP.

Once identified within the MTP, a project is then eligible for federal highway or transit dollars for study, design, right of way acquisition or construction activities. Before proceeding to construction or implementation, however, the project must first be included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP identifies those projects that the MPO agrees should either be implemented or constructed within the next 4 fiscal years. Similar to the MTP, the TIP must also be constrained against realistic estimates of funding.

The MTP is the final product of several years of research through the continuing, comprehensive, cooperative effort of the MPO Staff, MPO Policy Board, MPO Technical Committee, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Waco Transit and the member governments of the MPO.

1.1.3 Relationship between the MTP & Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program, also known as the TIP, is a fiscally constrained, program of projects to be implemented during the next 4 fiscal years. All projects using either federal highway or transit funds must be included within the TIP prior to the execution of any contracts or the commencement of work.

In order to be included within the TIP, a project must first be identified within the 'Funded Recommendations' section of the MTP. In addition, projects must also have existing commitments to provide all necessary funding for completion. Construction projects must also have all necessary engineering and environmental studies complete in addition to all necessary right of way acquired.

1.2 Federal Legislation

The Waco MPO is the result of a long history of transportation planning legislation. In 1962, Congress passed the Federal Highway Act (FHWA) which focused on the needs for transportation planning in urbanized areas. The Act specifically states:

The Secretary [of Transportation] shall not approve...any projects in any urban area of more than 50,000 population unless he finds that such projects are based on a CONTINUING, COMPREHENSIVE transportation planning process carried on COOPERATIVELY by the States and Local Communities.

The FHWA of 1962 became the catalyst for many later federal actions. When Congress passed the Federal Highway Act of 1970 they added:

...no highway project may be constructed in any urban area of 50,000 population or more unless the responsible public officials of such urban area in which the project is located have been consulted and their views considered.

In compliance with this Act, the Cities of Waco, Bellmead, Beverly Hills, Hewitt, Lacy-Lakeview, Northcrest, Robinson, Woodway, McLennan County and the Texas Highway Department (now known as TxDOT) formed the Waco MPO in 1974.

In 1975, Congress implemented the FHWA/Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) Joint Regulation. This directed Governors to designate Metropolitan Planning Organizations that develop:

- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, known as ISTEA, included measures that have affected transportation planning in a more significant manner than any previous legislation. ISTEA included for the first time an emphasis on public involvement, multi-modal considerations, and better highway design. Although not as significant in the Waco area as in larger MPOs, the inclusion of the Clean Air Act provisions in ISTEA highlighted the growing importance of issues beyond fast and convenient transportation.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, known as TEA-21, was the reauthorization of ISTEA. TEA-21 further emphasized the importance of planning in the development of transportation projects and strengthened several core requirements within the transportation planning process.

All of these federal actions had a profound effect on the history, formation, and role of the Waco MPO. However, the most recent federal legislation that affects the organization and function of the Waco MPO is the reauthorization of TEA-21, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

As of the development of this plan, SAFETEA-LU has been extended by Congress beyond the original termination date of September 30, 2009. Congress is currently considering several different reauthorization proposals which will likely significantly impact the MPO and regional transportation decisions, once adopted. Until that time, however, the transportation planning process will continue to be governed by SAFETEA-LU.

1.3 Overview of SAFETEA-LU

SAFETEA-LU was signed into Law in August of 2005. This legislation authorizes highway, highway safety, transit and other surface transportation programs for fiscal years 2003 through 2009. As mentioned previously, SAFETEA-LU has been extended by Congress through fiscal year 2009.

The five key features of SAFETEA-LU are:

- **Investing In Our Future:** Highway and transit programs are guaranteed a minimum level of spending tied to actual Highway Trust Fund (HTF) Highway Account receipts and selected fixed amounts (for transit funding). The minimum guarantee specifies that each state's apportionment for specified programs is at least 90.5% of its percentage share of contributions to the Highway Account.
- **Improving Safety:** Non-construction highway safety programs, excluding motor carrier safety, are continued and expanded. These programs include driver and vehicle safety programs, infrastructure safety, motor carrier safety, recreational boating safety, and one-call notification programs for construction.
- **Rebuilding America's Infrastructure:** A commitment to improve the conditions and performance of the transportation system is reaffirmed with solid investments in people, highway construction, transit, and other special programs.
- **Protecting Our Environment:** Proven strategies for a cleaner environment are strengthened. Safety, quality of life, and environmental issues come together in programs such as Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ), Transportation Enhancements (TE), Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways, Recreation Trail Program, National Scenic Byways Program, Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program (TCSP), and Ozone and Particulate Matter Standards.

- **Advancing Research and Technology:** Establishing a strategic planning process is foremost in determining national research and technology development priorities, competitive merit review procedures, performance measurement procedures, and model procurement procedures.

1.4 Federal Planning Considerations

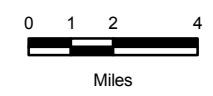
The 7 planning factors of SAFETEA-LU's predecessor, TEA-21, remain largely unchanged under SAFETEA-LU with the exception that safety and security have been separated into separate planning considerations. This change reflects the increased emphasis on protecting the public from threats to the transportation system.

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 the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight;
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life;
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; and
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

1.5 Air Quality Considerations

The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 requires all metropolitan areas to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for numerous pollutants, including ozone, nitrous oxides, and particulate matter. Metropolitan areas that meet these standards are considered to be in attainment and are not required to establish control measures to improve air quality. The Waco Metropolitan Area is considered to be in attainment for all air pollutants by the EPA.

Waco Metropolitan Area
Waco Urbanized Area



September, 2009

Map 1.1 Waco Urbanized & Metropolitan Areas

