

Chattanooga Hamilton County North Georgia TransPlan 2030 – Long Range Transportation Plan (as amended to meet the provisions of SAFETEA-LU)

Executive Summary

Introduction

A new transportation bill (Public Law 109-59) known as Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy For Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law on August 10, 2005. The bill requires that all MPO documents and products adopted after July 1, 2007 must be in compliance with the new provisions of the law.

Because of the requirements of SAFETEA-LU, the Chattanooga Hamilton County North Georgia (CHCNGA) 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) has been revised. The new planning and programming requirements of SAFETEA-LU have been reviewed and sections of the 2030 LRTP have been modified to meet the provisions of the law. Revisions to the 2030 LRTP include modifications in the planning factors, added sections related to operational and management strategies, environmental mitigation activities, safety and security, coordination with state and local agencies responsible of environmental, land use, natural resources, and historic preservation, and activities related to public transit planning and coordination with human services.

The planning assumptions from the 2030 LRTP, which was adopted in June 2005, remain relevant. This was established and documented in the MPO inter-agency consultation process. The same estimates and assumptions for land use, population, travel, employment, congestion and economic activity were relied upon in this analysis. The TPO is in the process of developing its 2035 LRTP which will reexamine the planning assumptions and be based on updated estimates.

The Chattanooga Hamilton County North Georgia (CHCNGA) 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) provides a vision and a comprehensive long range blueprint for moving people and goods safely and efficiently throughout the region. It supports regional land use plans and policies, and it identifies multimodal transportation improvement projects and programs supporting LRTP goals.

The Plan's horizon year is 2030, enabling the region to maintain a minimum 20-year planning time frame, as required by federal transportation legislation [Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy For Users (SAFETEA-LU)]. Elected officials, Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) staff, transportation agency staff, local stakeholders and interested citizens participated in the development of the 2030 LRTP approved in June 2005. Major transportation planning partners included the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT); Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT); Hamilton County, Tennessee; Dade County, Catoosa County and Walker County, Georgia; Regional Planning Agency (RPA), Coosa Valley Regional Development Center (CVRDC); Chattanooga Regional Transit Authority (CARTA); and the rural transit providers.

The Chattanooga Urban Area's transportation planning boundary includes the municipalities of Chattanooga, Collegedale, East Ridge, Lakesite, Lookout Mountain, Red Bank, Ridgeside,

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Signal Mountain, Soddy-Daisy and Walden, and unincorporated Hamilton County in Tennessee. Also included are the northern portions of Dade, Walker, and Catoosa counties in north Georgia. The cities of Rossville, Fort Oglethorpe, Lookout Mountain, Chickamauga, and Ringgold fall within this north Georgia boundary.

Plan Development

The CHCNGA 2030 LRTP was shaped by a number of factors. The plan was built by first considering previous plans and programs, including the previous long range plan, *TransPlan 2025*. Input was gathered from local stakeholder and the public. Technical analysis was performed using the CHCNGA travel demand model, GIS processing and other planning tools. Seven LRTP goals were established to guide plan development. The goals, which reflect input from the LRTP Advisory Group, Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), TPO staff and the general public, are as follows:

- Provide a balanced multimodal transportation system that provides for the efficient movement of people and goods.
- Develop and maintain a multimodal system which provides for the safe, efficient and convenient movement of people and goods.
- Coordinate the transportation system with existing development and the planned growth of the study area consistent with specific land use plans.
- Provide viable travel choices to ensure mobility and sustain the quality of the environment.
- Develop a financially feasible multimodal transportation system that supports the development of all sectors of the study area's economy.
- Increase cooperative intergovernmental programs that enhance the safety, convenience and efficiency of motorized and nonmotorized travel throughout the study area.
- Develop operations and maintenance strategies that maximize the life of the transportation system.

Public involvement and outreach for the study which resulted in the June 2005 adopted plan was community-based and focused on building support at two levels throughout the study process: the organized stakeholder group and the general public. Major stakeholder groups involved in the process included neighborhood associations, religious organizations, environmental justice communities, airport managers, small city officials, public transit agencies, trucking and rail officials, Chamber of Commerce staff and north Georgia local officials. Thirteen public meetings were conducted throughout the CHCNGA region over the 18-month study period at key study milestones. Based upon the multimodal transportation needs identified during the plan development, the 2030 LRTP was developed. Solutions and recommendations for transportation needs were carefully balanced to reflect the LRTP goals and community input.

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The revisions made in this amended LRTP were done in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration and the Departments of Transportation of Tennessee and Georgia. The draft amended plan was published on the TPO website (www.chcrpa.org) for public review. A public meeting was advertised and held on _____; and a 14 – day public review and comment period was provided. This amended plan has been reviewed and approved by the Executive Staff and the Executive Board of the TPO on _____ and _____ respectively.

Plan Findings

Planning for future transportation improvements is necessary to accommodate growth anticipated in the region. Population in the four-county area is expected to increase by almost 32 percent over the 30-year planning horizon, and employment forecasts indicate nearly 37 percent growth over the same time period. While Catoosa County, Georgia will experience the largest percent increase in both population and employment, Hamilton County, Tennessee will continue to have the largest share of both population and employment.

Roadways

The travel demand model was utilized to identify existing and future roadway capacity needs. The base model network represented 1,060 miles of roadways. A comparison of the base model for 2000 and the 2030 existing plus committed (2030 E+C) model¹ indicated an increase in the portion of the roadway network operating at level of service (LOS) F from 9 percent in 2000 to 24 percent in 2030. With only one exception (Gunbarrel Road), every major roadway facility is forecast to operate at LOS F in 2030, with many having volume to capacity (V/C) ratios well in excess of 1.0. The increase in volumes on many facilities is expected to be dramatic, with several roadways experiencing forecast increases of 100 percent or more. The most severe congestion in 2030 is expected on St. Elmo Avenue, US 127, Ooltewah-Ringgold Road, Old Lee Highway, and East Brainerd Road. The V/C ratios on these roads are expected to surpass 2.0 if no improvements are made. A V/C ratio of 2.0 for a road means that the traffic volume is double the carrying capacity of the road. The condition of traffic flow on a road with a V/C ratio of 2.0 would be forced, congested flow with unpredictable characteristics. Operating speed under this condition would be less than 45 miles/hr.

¹ The E+C network includes projects where right-of-way acquisition or construction will occur on or before the year 2006, but assumes no other capacity adding improvements are made. The results of this model scenario show what could happen by 2030 if there are no capacity improvements to the system after 2006.

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Transit

Public transportation needs were identified by CARTA, Hamilton County Rural Transportation (HCRT), Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency (SETHRA), Care-A-Van staff in Tennessee and staff from Dade Transit (DT), Walker County Transit (WCT) and Catoosa County Transit (Catoosa Trans-Aid) in Georgia. Technical assessment and public input were also important for identifying where future transit services may be needed and/or required. Major identified needs included creating better linkages within Chattanooga and with other transit providers, providing service improvements on high-demand routes, improving transit amenities such as bus shelters and sidewalks on transit routes, and increasing service to high growth areas.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

Bicycle and pedestrian needs were identified by reviewing the recommendations set forth in local Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans, discussion with the Bicycle Task Force as well as stakeholder and public comments and safety data. One of the most immediate needs is to ensure all sidewalks comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards and that sidewalks are provided along all fixed transit routes. Priority projects include completing missing sidewalks along collector and arterial streets to prevent pedestrians from walking in vehicle travel lanes. Major bicycle needs include providing viable bicycle-commute routes, ensuring bicyclist safety, and implementation of the adopted bicycle plans.

Rail

Rail needs were identified by reviewing the recommendations outlined in the Tennessee Statewide Rail Plan, CSX, NSC as well as stakeholder and public comments. There are several rail projects that were identified during the planning process which will improve the safety, efficiency and mobility of rail travel but also automobile and commercial truck travel as well. Major rail needs identified include improving safety at at-grade rail crossings and upgrading roadway access to industrial rail spurs. The region continues to explore the possibility for Mag Lev passenger rail between Atlanta and Chattanooga. If implemented, this would be the only rail passenger service to Chattanooga.

Aviation

Airport needs were identified by reviewing the *Chattanooga Airport Master Plan*, the *Georgia Statewide Aviation Plan*, and through discussions with airport staff, stakeholders and the general public. The plan supports needs identified in the Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport strategic plan and other plans.

Long Range Transportation Program

The CHCNGA 2030 LRTP includes 393 roadway, pedestrian, and bicycle projects which, based on the planning level cost estimates, total \$2.4 billion. Additionally, safety, bridge, ITS, and transit projects and programs, as well as planning studies, identified in the 2030 LRTP have a

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total estimated cost of \$645 million. Improvements include expansion to the existing roadway, new location roadways, pedestrian and bicycle system, ITS projects, and a Traffic Management Center (TMC). While not individually listed, maintenance projects such as resurfacing and reconstruction and operation projects are categorically included for a total \$553 million. The 2030 LRTP projects and programs total \$4.137 billion.

All of the projects and programs contained in the 2030 LRTP approved in June 2005 reflect input received throughout the 18-month public involvement process. Based on the available funding estimates provided by TDOT and GDOT, adequate funding is available to implement the selected projects over the 25-year planning horizon.

Estimates provided by TDOT, GDOT and CARTA indicate that the CHCNGA TPO is expected to receive \$5.733 billion over the next twenty five years to implement multimodal transportation projects and programs as well as maintain and operate the system. A majority of these funds will be for Tennessee projects and programs (75 percent), reflecting the role of Chattanooga as a major urban center for the State of Tennessee. The balance of the funding will support projects and programs in north Georgia.

The financially constrained LRTP includes projects and programs financed with state, federal and local funds including funds sub-allocated directly to the TPO. Projects included in the 2030 LRTP were assigned to one of three Tiers. Projects contained in the 2008 to 2011 Transportation Improvements Program (TIP), will be taken from Tier 1 and will be prioritized based on the TPO TIP prioritization process.