

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a summary of the public input processes for the more significant planning activities that informed *Coulee Vision*—the metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) for the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the La Crosse and La Crescent Metropolitan Planning Area. Activities include those that were directly related to the update of the LAPC Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), *Coulee Vision*, and those in which LAPC staff participated that contributed significantly to the recommendations presented in the MTP.

- *Coulee Vision*
 - The *Coulee Vision 2050* plan—adopted by the LAPC in May of 2013.
 - The *Coulee Vision 2050 Implementation Plan*—adopted by the LAPC in September of 2015 as a component of the MTP.
 - Environmental Consultation—conducted during June of 2015.
 - The MTP 30-day public comment period—occurred beginning Tuesday, August 4, 2015 and ending Wednesday, September 2, 2015.
- Supportive Planning Activities
 - The *Grand River Transit Service Enhancement & Policy Plan*—anticipated to be adopted by the La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU) Board in August 2015.
 - The *Coulee Region Transportation Study*—an ongoing Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) planning study anticipated to be completed in early 2016.
 - La Crosse Transportation Vision workshop—a multi-day public input workshop conducted for the City of La Crosse the week of February 23, 2015.

COULEE VISION

The public process for *Coulee Vision* (also called the “MTP”) began in 2012 with the kickoff of the *Coulee Vision 2050* planning process. The final *Coulee Vision 2050* report was adopted by the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) in May of 2013 and

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followed up by the *Coulee Vision 2050 Implementation Plan*. These two plans developed the majority of the information provided in chapters 6 and 7 of this MTP.

COULEE VISION 2050

The purpose of *Coulee Vision 2050* was to create a long-range vision for transportation and land use in the La Crosse and La Crescent region.

The public process included a broad range of public outreach to the general public, local communities, and the LAPC. These activities included:

- Online community surveys;
- Public visioning sessions;
- Stakeholder focus group meetings (Emergency Services; Business and Education; Freight; Transit, Pedestrian, and Bicycling; and Government Agencies);
- Community plan commission meetings; and,
- LAPC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Policy Board meetings.

COULEE VISION 2050 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The planning process for the *Implementation Plan* continued on from where the *Coulee Vision 2050* process left off. It focused on four main tasks: 1) to facilitate discussion concerning intermunicipal boundary agreements among local communities; 2) to complete the recommendations and financial plan portions of the *Coulee Vision* metropolitan transportation plan (MTP); 3) to develop a range of projects through public input that would address some of our transportation needs; and, 4) to establish action steps and milestones needed to achieve the *Vision*. The consultants regularly informed the LAPC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Policy Board on the overall planning process and the progress of the intermunicipal boundary agreement discussions.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTATION

As required by federal law, the LAPC must engage in environmental consultation with appropriate Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies in order to mitigate the potential impacts of transportation plans and programs.

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The environmental review and consultation process involved:

1. Conducting an inventory of relevant resource plans;
2. Conducting an inventory of the agricultural, natural, cultural, and recreational resources in the region; and,
3. Consulting with the appropriate resource agencies regarding the potential impact of planned and programmed expansion projects on local resources; and,
4. Documenting a process for preservation and mitigation as developed through consultation with the appropriate agencies.

The environmental review is documented in Chapter 5.

The consultation process was initiated by e-mail on Monday, June 22, 2015, with a letter of invitation to review content from Chapter 5 and maps illustrating the planned and programmed expansion projects (Appendix B). The agency representatives were asked to comment on the accuracy of the inventory and to assess the potential impacts of the expansion projects on local resources.

The following Federal and State agencies were asked to participate in the review process:

- Ho-Chunk Nation
- Minnesota and Wisconsin Historical Societies
- Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service

The correspondence and list of participants are documented in Appendix B.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Low-income and minority persons are continually considered in the metropolitan planning process through not only the public process for *Coulee Vision* but also

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during the annual update of our transportation improvement program (TIP) and the roughly 10-year update of the City of La Crosse transit plan (currently, *Grand River Transit Service Enhancement & Policy Plan 2015-2025*).

The TIP document summarizes the analysis and potential impacts of transportation projects on minority and low-income populations. The transit plan ensures that disadvantaged persons (elderly, disabled, minority, low-income) are adequately served by transit. Appendix C of this document, *Coulee Vision*, outlines the methodology developed to identify areas of potential impact for not only minority and low-income persons but also persons with limited-English proficiency. The projects are mapped against these areas (**Figures C-1** and **C-2**) to see if any of the projects could negatively impact any of these groups.

In order to ensure consistency among planning efforts, these plans are considered a component of the MTP by reference.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The 30-day public comment period for the MTP began on Tuesday, August 4, 2015 and concluded on Wednesday, September 2, 2015. A public information meeting was held on August 18, 2015 at the Main Library in La Crosse to present the challenges to travel for all users and the strategies to overcome those challenges. People were invited to the public meeting through e-mail contact lists, which include contacts for persons representing minority and low-income groups, flyers posted at public services (i.e. La Crosse County Health and Human Services) and local businesses, and Facebook.

Substantive comments from the public meeting, e-mails, phone calls, and review agencies were incorporated and documented in a summary document that is available on the LAPC website at www.lapc.org.

The *La Crosse & La Crescent Metropolitan Area Public Participation Plan* documents the process and requirements for public input for LAPC plans and programs.

SUPPORTIVE PLANNING ACTIVITIES

GRAND RIVER TRANSIT SERVICE ENHANCEMENT & POLICY PLAN 2015-2025

The *Grand River Transit Service Enhancement & Policy Plan* (Transit Enhancement Plan or TEP for short) was completed as a work program task that LAPC staff completes exclusively for the City of La Crosse. The last transit plan—the *2008-2015 Transit Development Plan for the La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility*—was completed in 2007 and was about to expire, so staff set about to reassess MTU’s performance and transit capacity and to recommend service improvement strategies over the next 10 years. With transit as one of the tools we use to address access and mobility in the region, especially for disadvantaged populations, one of the priority outcomes was to develop recommendations that would provide people with more and better options for travel.

The planning process for the TEP began on Monday, March 31, 2014 with an all-day public input session at the Grand River Station and concluded on May 19, 2015 with the last day of the 30-day public comment period for the TEP. The La Crosse MTU Board is expected to adopt the TEP in August 2015.

COULEE REGION TRANSPORTATION STUDY

The *Coulee Region Transportation Study* is a Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) study initiated by WisDOT to re-study and streamline previous attempts to address mobility issues in the La Crosse area. This process is a significantly-improved process by ensuring that the public has input at every step. It also allows for a wider range of strategies to be considered in the solution package.

WisDOT kicked-off the PEL process by presenting an overview of the process to the LAPC TAC and Policy Board on January 21, 2015. The first community and technical advisory group (CAG and TAG) meetings occurred in February and the first general public involvement meetings (PIMs) occurred in March. CAG and TAG meetings have and will continue to occur monthly, while the PIMs will have occurred a total of four to five times by the end of the year-long planning process.

The work schedule for the Study includes data collection and strategy development during the spring of 2015, evaluation of the strategies during the summer, refinement of the strategies during the fall, and publication of a final report in the

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winter of 2015-2016. As members of the TAG, LAPC staff and members of the LAPC TAC have continual input into the PEL process.

Because the outcome of this study includes a range of strategies that will be considered more fully in the next phase of the planning process, we do not anticipate a preferred alternative being recommended before we enter the planning process for our next transportation plan update.

LA CROSSE TRANSPORTATION VISION

The City of La Crosse collaborated with Toole Design Group to host a series of workshops where officials and members of the public developed a transportation vision for the community. The goal was not only to develop a firm position on near-term projects but also to create a vision that clearly articulates how the community wants their transportation system to look like in twenty or even fifty years.

LAPC staff participated in three stakeholder interviews, providing input on highway, bicycle and pedestrian, and land use issues.

The results of the Vision are being used to inform strategies development in the *Coulee Region Transportation Study*.