

# Chapter 1: Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update

---

## Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process

As required by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act and its predecessors, the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the La Crosse, WI – La Crescent, MN urbanized area must review and update a long-range, metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) every five years. This ensures that the plan is valid and consistent with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends and that the forecast period extends to at least a 20-year planning horizon.

The scope of the metropolitan transportation planning process as codified in 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 450.306 includes considering 10 planning factors, utilizing a performance-based approach, coordinating with the statewide transportation planning process, consistency with the development of applicable regional intelligent transportation systems architectures, and ensuring the coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan is coordinated and consistent with the MPO planning process.

## Scope

### Planning Area

The geographic scope for metropolitan transportation planning at the LAPC includes all the Census-designated urbanized area and additional area anticipated to urbanize over a 20-year planning horizon. Figure 1 illustrates the LAPC planning area, the Census-designated urbanized area, and the communities within the planning area boundary.

### Transportation Planning Factors

The metropolitan transportation planning process is a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive process that provides for the consideration and implementation of projects, strategies, and services that address the following 10 planning factors as applicable:

- ⇒ Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- ⇒ Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- ⇒ Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- ⇒ Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight;

- ⇒ 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;
- ⇒ Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- ⇒ Promote efficient system management and operation;
- ⇒ Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system;
- ⇒ Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and,
- ⇒ Enhance travel and tourism.

The planning factors are addressed during the planning process through the short- and long-range planning activities scheduled in the Planning Work Program (PWP), tracking and target-setting of performance measures, prioritization of transportation projects, development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and TIP project list, participation in State and local agency planning activities, and development of the MTP.

### Performance-based Approach

The metropolitan transportation planning process must provide for the establishment and use of a performance-based approach to transportation decision-making to support the national goals described in the FAST Act. MPOs may develop their own targets for the federal measures or they may elect to support targets that are developed by their state agencies.

The LAPC Policy Board decided at its May 2017 meeting that the LAPC would support the performance measure targets developed by our Wisconsin and Minnesota Departments of Transportation (DOTs). Targets for 24 measures addressing safety (5 highway, 7 transit), pavement and bridge condition (6), travel time reliability (3), and transit asset management (3) as applicable to our area as an attainment area and small MPO are developed in coordination with our DOTs and transit operators. A detailed discussion of these measures and their targets can be found in the LAPC's annual transportation improvement program (TIP) and in the System Performance Report in chapter 5. The State goals, objectives, performance measures, and targets described in State plans for asset and access management, highway safety, transit safety and asset management, and freight are integrated where appropriate.

### **Coordination with the Statewide Transportation Planning Process**

Coordination with the statewide transportation planning process occurs throughout the metropolitan transportation planning process as DOT staff and LAPC staff provide information, data, planning, and project support to each other as needed. LAPC staff review State plans, serve on State planning committees, incorporate State transportation projects into the metropolitan TIP, and coordinate with State development of system performance measures.

### **Development of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Architectures**

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) defines Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) as “the application of advanced information and communications technology to surface transportation in order to achieve enhanced safety and mobility while reducing the environmental impact of transportation.” Because ITS technology is rapidly evolving, the LAPC must maintain coordination with its federal and state agency partners. This coordination ensures that the metropolitan transportation planning process is consistent with the development of applicable regional ITS architectures. In March 2019, the LAPC approved Resolution 02-2019 recognizing the Minnesota Department of Transportation Statewide Regional ITS Architecture as the regional ITS architecture that governs all ITS improvements within the LAPC metropolitan transportation planning area.

### **Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan**

The FAST Act requires that grantees under several federal transportation programs including the 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program are required to meet certain planning requirements in order to receive funding. The act requires that projects selected for funding under the various programs be “derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan” and that the plan be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers and participation by members of the public.

In Wisconsin, the development of the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan is led by the regional planning commissions, not the MPOs. The *La Crosse County Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan 2019-2023* was coordinated by the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission during a one-day session in July 2018 that included participation by La Crosse County and LAPC staff.

## Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

### 2015 Metropolitan Transportation Plan: *Coulee Vision 2040*

*Coulee Vision 2040* (CV 2040) has been the MTP for the LAPC since its approval on September 16, 2015. Its vision, goals, and land use plan were generated out of an extensive public input process and access to then timely data (i.e. 2010 Decennial Census data; 2010-2040 population, household, and employment projections; 2010-2011 6-inch aerial photography). CV 2040 lays the groundwork for this update.

### 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan: *Beyond Coulee Vision 2040*

*Beyond Coulee Vision 2040* (BCV 2040) is the 2020 MTP and update to CV 2040, the 2015 MTP. It moves *beyond* CV 2040 by introducing a systems performance report that evaluates the condition and performance of the transportation system with respect to adopted state targets and local tracking measures. This update is considered an *interim* update mainly because the groundwork was laid during the CV 2040 public process when:

1. The land use and transportation goals and guiding principles were developed and
2. The LAPC regional travel model was updated to inform the *Coulee Region Transportation Study*.

The 2020 MTP is also more than an interim update in that it incorporates more recent estimate data from the American Community Survey to describe regional demographic and economic trends, a systems performance report, and the results from studies of infrastructure vulnerability, bicycle and pedestrian safety, and impacts of projects on the environment and vulnerable populations.

The content of the 2020 MTP includes the:

- ⇒ Background, scope, and purpose for the plan update (chapter 1);
- ⇒ Public process to include activities that have taken place since the approval of *Coulee Vision 2040* as well as the vision and goals carried forward (chapter 2);
- ⇒ Status of local comprehensive plans and how their land use and transportation goals and objectives align with those of the metropolitan transportation plan (chapter 2);
- ⇒ Population and economic trends in the planning area (chapter 3);
- ⇒ Existing transport systems and services available to move people and freight (chapter 4);
- ⇒ Performance of the transport systems as related to 24 federal performance measures and additional local tracking measures (chapter 5);

- ⇒ Impact of the transportation improvement program and metropolitan transportation plan on meeting adopted state targets (chapter 5);
- ⇒ Action strategies for and implementation challenges of project, planning, and policy recommendations (chapter 6);
- ⇒ Potential impacts of our transportation improvement program and metropolitan transportation plan on environmental resources and protected groups (chapter 7);
- ⇒ Financial plan that reports the estimated funds anticipated to be available to support implementing the MTP (chapter 8); and,
- ⇒ Next steps and future considerations for the 2025 metropolitan transportation plan (chapter 9).

The appendices provide supplemental information and additional documentation supporting the metropolitan transportation planning process and approval of the MTP.

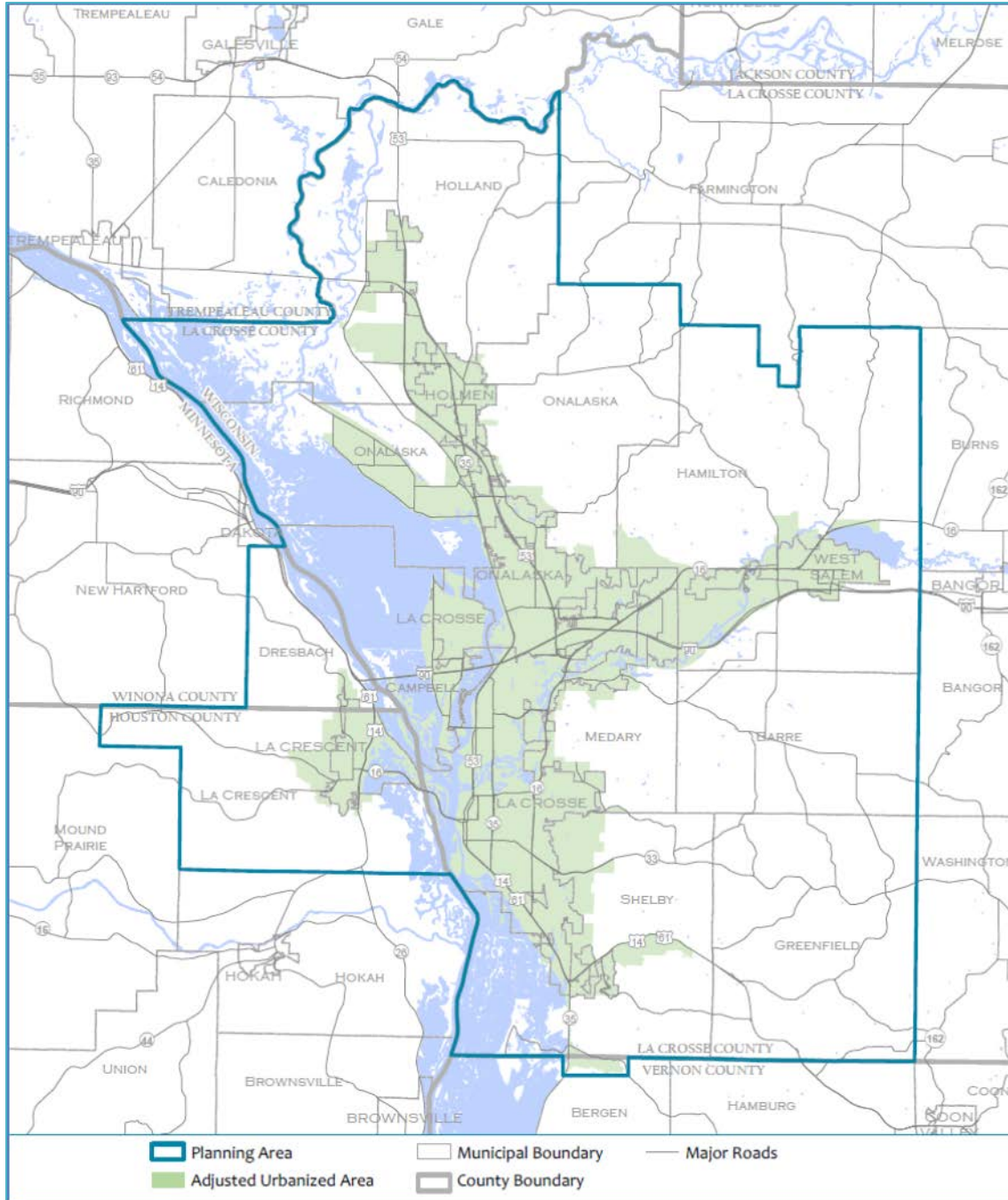


Figure 1: LACP planning area and Census-designated urbanized area.