



The North Carolina Transportation Museum located in Spencer.- Photo from Rowan Chamber of Commerce

Transportation Planning for our Communities

Transportation planning has a long and productive history in Cabarrus and Rowan Counties. Much of the development of the area can be attributed to the railroad first and then Interstate 85 in later years. The origination of a multijurisdictional planning organization can be linked to the official designation by the US Census Bureau in 1980 of an “Urbanized Area” encompassing the Concord and Kannapolis area urban core. This urbanized area was located approximately 20 miles north of Charlotte and 15 miles south of Salisbury and the historic Yadkin River. The area encompassed the I-85 corridor in Cabarrus and southern Rowan, which predated the incorporation of the City of Kannapolis. Due to this geographical orientation, the Cabarrus-South Rowan area formed a federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) with a population density exceeding 50,000. (North Carolina currently recognizes 19 MPO’s throughout the State.)

Cabarrus Rowan MPO Member Jurisdictions

Cabarrus County

- City of Concord
- City of Kannapolis

Towns of

- Harrisburg
- Midland
- Mount Pleasant

Rowan County

- City of Kannapolis
- City of Salisbury

Towns of

- China Grove
- Cleveland
- East Spencer
- Faith
- Granite Quarry
- Landis
- Rockwell
- Spencer

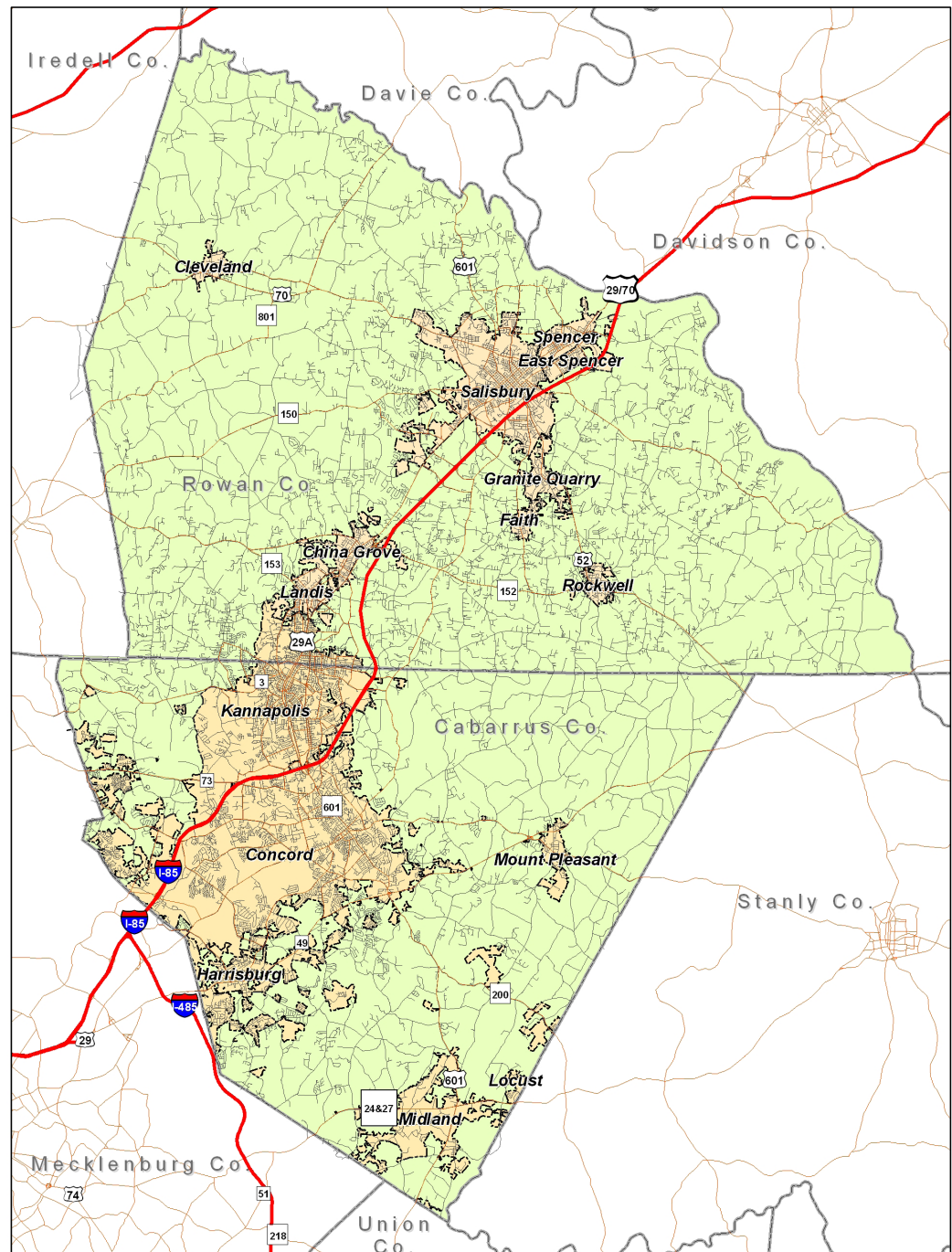
Charter members of the new MPO were Concord, Kannapolis, China Grove, Landis, Harrisburg, Rowan County, and Cabarrus County. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was executed between these local jurisdictions and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) in January 1980.

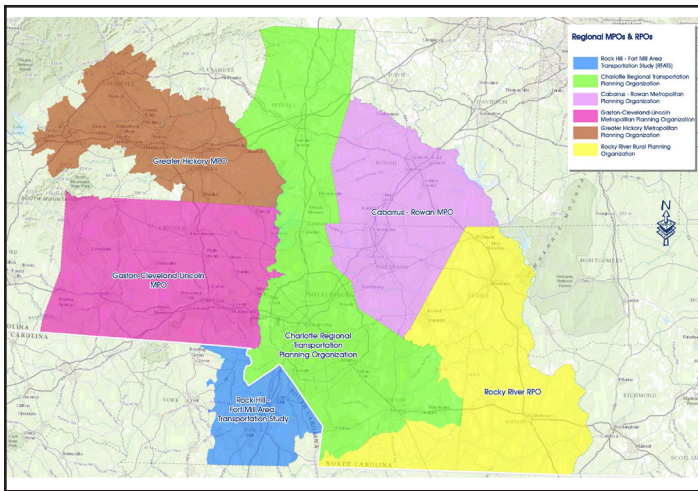
The memorandum delineated and established a Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) with the responsibility for general technical review, guidance, and coordination of the planning

process and a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) established to ensure coordination between the governmental entities represented.

The next major milestone of growth occurred following the 2000 Census with expansion into northern Rowan County. The MPO became the Cabarrus-Rowan MPO with the addition of the rest of Cabarrus and Rowan Counties for a total of approximately 141 square miles of planning oversight. All municipal members within both counties had joined by the year 2006.

Map 1-1
Cabarrus Rowan MPO
Boundary and
Municipalities





CR MPO Boundary and neighboring MPOs.

Transportation Management Area Designation and Air Quality Conformity

MPO expansion also brought new responsibilities from horizontal adjacent relationships with neighboring MPOs through the Metrolina Regional Travel Model and regulatory requirements from the US DOT and EPA for planning as a Transportation Management Area (TMA) and air quality designation under the established 8-hour ozone standard. The MPO initially became a TMA due to the inclusion of a portion of the Charlotte urbanized area in Cabarrus County, but was confirmed by the 2010 Census when the urbanized population grew to exceed the federal population threshold of 200,000..

The non-attainment status was the result of monitor violations tied to the Charlotte Air Shed dating back to the 1997 ozone standard, which was implemented in 2004 following a series of lawsuits. The region was recently re-designated attainment status in 2013 by US EPA, and another standard released in 2008 produced a non-attainment boundary that excludes a few rural townships in Cabarrus and Rowan Counties. The most significant occurrence in 2013 was the release of motor vehicle emission budgets at the MPO level for transportation conformity, including the conformity determination for the 2040 MTP. The US EPA released a new standard in 2015 and the state of NC recommended attainment for all of the counties in the Charlotte Region in the fall of 2016. On November 6, 2017, the US EPA issued a confirmation of the NC recommendation. The US EPA is not likely to revoke the 2008 standard and therefore attainment

status will remain out of reach for the foreseeable future, or at least until 2035.

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) defines the transportation goals, plans and projects to be implemented over the next 25 years to improve our transportation system by reducing congestion, increasing safety, providing mobility choices for all users and supporting freight movement and economic vitality in the Cabarrus Rowan planning area. It addresses planning factors related to transportation, establishes performance measures to track the system's progress, and responds to model driven socioeconomic and financial projections for the region's future. The MTP is based on federal requirements established and documented in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 23, Volume 1. The primary goal of the federal requirements is to ensure that tax dollars are spent on useful, meaningful projects that are supported by the residents/taxpayers of the Cabarrus-Rowan Urban Area (CRUA). The MTP must be fiscally constrained, meaning the projects included in the MTP have been evaluated for their relative costs and balanced against anticipated revenues to determine that these projects can be programmed based on available funding. Projects are shown in implementation phases indicated by the MTP's three horizon years of 2035, 2045, and 2055.

Federal Requirements

The MTP must meet certain federal requirements set by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Subpart C – Metropolitan Transportation Planning and Programming, Part 450. The 2055 MTP was developed in compliance with these requirements as well as all guidelines set by federal regulations for a metropolitan area transportation plan. As a requirement of the federal regulations, the metropolitan transportation planning process shall include the development of a MTP addressing a 20-year planning horizon, at a minimum. The MTP shall be reviewed and updated at least every four years and must address current and forecasted land use plans and projected socioeconomic data.

The MTP must be approved by the MPO. In addition, the Plan shall:

- Identify the projected transportation demand for persons and goods;
- Identify adopted Congestion Management strategies that demonstrate a systematic approach in addressing current and future transportation demand;
- Identify pedestrian and bicycle transportation facilities;
- Assess capital investment and other measures necessary to preserve the existing transportation system;
- Include design concept and scope descriptions of all existing and proposed transportation facilities in sufficient detail;
- Be a multimodal evaluation of the transportation, socioeconomic, environmental, and financial impact of the overall Plan;
- For major transportation investments for which analysis is not complete, indicate that the design concept and scope have not been fully determined and will require further analysis;
- Consider the area's comprehensive long range land use plan and metropolitan development objectives;
- Indicate, as appropriate, proposed transportation enhancement activities; and
- Include a financial plan that demonstrates the consistency of proposed transportation investments with currently available and projected sources of revenue.

Other Transportation Plans and Programs

The 2055 MTP is just one of the transportation plans that envision MPOs transportation future. The Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) is a long-term vision for how the transportation network that includes highways and streets, public transportation and rail, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities will need to be improved to support the regions growth. The CTP does not include funding or priority constraints and is developed in conjunction with the MPOs and NCDOT. The MTP then sets out the funding and implementation priorities for the

25 year planning horizon which ties directly to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which is the statewide funding document. The TIP is a 10-year funding program of projects developed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation with the MPOs using the Strategic Transportation Investment process. The first five years of the program are committed funds with the second five years consisting of the development program. The TIP is updated every two years and approved by NCDOT and the MPOS.

FAST Act

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act is the federal transportation legislation that outlines the regulations for the metropolitan transportation planning process. It was signed into law in 2015, replacing the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) that established much of the current federal guidance for metropolitan transportation planning. The FAST Act carried forward most of the MAP-21 standards, but also includes two new planning factors, which are discussed in Chapter 4 of this document. The CR MPO's goals and objectives align with the FAST Act federal guidelines.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) enacted in November 2021 will provide \$283.8 billion dollars in transportation funding. Some highlights include the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient and Cost Saving Transportation (PROTECT) program, that will provide \$7.3 billion in formula funding, in addition to \$1.4 billion of competitive grant funding through the Highway Trust Fund. The \$6.4 billion new Carbon Reduction Program will channel formula funding into bicycle and pedestrian trails, transit, and other energy-efficient transportation investments and the IIJA will invest an estimated \$15 billion in electric vehicle chargers and electric buses. FTA's Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program makes nearly \$2 billion available over five years to help transit agencies purchase and rehabilitate buses, vans, and related equipment, and build bus facilities. The City of Concord received \$3,966,318 and purchased hybrid electric diesel buses to replace older buses that have exceeded their useful life.