



Town of Landis, Rowan County- Photo from Rowan Chamber of Commerce

Federal transportation funding legislation creates guidance that defines the way MPOs carry out their long-range planning efforts. Federal planning factors were established to serve as a set of overarching transportation planning goals for the MPOs.

Originally, eight planning factors were set out under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), enacted in 2005. The eight factors were carried forward by MAP- 21 in 2012, and two new planning factors were added in the FAST Act, and carried into the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

The ten planning factors must be addressed by the projects, programs and strategies recommended in the MTP. The Cabarrus Rowan MPO 2045 MTP goals align with the federal planning factors to ensure recommendations conform to federal guidance and the resulting transportation system supports local, state, and federal objectives.

The ten planning factors are as follows:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area
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 of people and freight
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve the 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 operations
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system
9. Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation
10. Enhance travel and tourism

The primary objective of the MTP is to provide a comprehensive review of existing and proposed transportation needs for the Urban Area over a 25-year horizon. The Plan should incorporate all aspects of transportation including modal characteristics and infrastructure needs and priorities. In doing so, the Plan will /shall:

Planning Factor 1

Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.

This planning factor is achieved by identifying existing and future transportation needs and prioritizing those needs. The Highway Element is one such component that identifies the needs for increasing highway capacity. The CR MPO will continue to work with NCDOT and FHWA to enhance the Urban Area Transportation System. Federal and State funding programs are continuously evaluated by the CR MPO for consideration to fund its transportation planning and capital improvements. The CR MPO is a member of the Charlotte Regional Alliance for Transportation (CRAFT) and continues to work with adjacent MPOs to improve transit service connectivity and accessibility. The support for the Concord/Kannapolis Area Transit System and Salisbury Transit System provides connections between transit-dependent residents and economic opportunities, which improves the vitality of the area. The two airports also provide growing economic development opportunities within the CR MPO as Concord Padgett Regional has initiated and added to commercial air service. The CR MPO participated in the regional Freight study detailed in Chapter 6 which provides a set of facilities and strategies to increase freight movement both by rail and roads, as well as the Metrolina Regional ITS Strategic Deployment Plan (2024).

Planning Factor 2

Increases the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

Bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts are one means through which CR MPO accomplishes this planning factor. The funding of bicycle and pedestrian facilities is an objective of the MPO

Committee(s). Considerable planning efforts have been expended to develop a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan that identifies potential funding programs. These programs may include Powell Bill funds, NCDOT division funds, SRTS funds, TAP Funds, STBGP funds, CMAQ funds, Enhancement Grant funds, and other federal programs. Bicycle and pedestrian projects can also be funded through the TIP process as incidental projects. Specific goals have been identified that will enhance the existing bicycle and pedestrian system, thereby reducing the potential conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. The Cabarrus Rowan MPO Congestion Management Process (CMP) has identified congested corridors including safety considerations as well as critical intersections. The MPO has begun mapping bicycle and pedestrian crash data and will cross reference census block averages with statewide and national crash averages to determine where there are problems and potential environmental justice issues. The MPO annually adopts the Safety Performance Measures established by NCDOT and rely on the Highway Safety Improvement Program and crash data to develop mitigation strategies.

Planning Factor 3

Increases the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

The Rider Transit system is working on many ways to enhance security through its operations procedures for emergency evacuations. In addition, several major highways including NC 49, NC 73, and I-85 provide the routes to transport citizens in the case of a natural or man-made disaster. Member jurisdictions of the CR MPO provide law enforcement and EMS to secure the ingress and egress of participants' at large events and gatherings such as NASCAR races at Charlotte Motor Speedway, events at the NC Transportation Museum, Rowan and Cabarrus County Fairs, and other municipal sponsored-street festivals. In the post 9/11 world, these events have become important ventures for collaborating between various levels of state and local governments. Emergency management training and regional risk assessment drills have

created seamless communication and cooperative action plans. The MPO can partner with NCDOT to plan and coordinate security at a multi-jurisdictional level to secure the mobility of motorized and non-motorized participants. The Incident Management Assistance Program (IMAP) along with law enforcement patrol the major highway corridors and assist with minor incidents to prevent larger transportation impacts.

Planning Factor 4

Increases the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.

An example of increasing accessibility and mobility options within the Urban Area is the transportation service provided by CCTS, RTS, CCX (formerly Concord Express), Rider, and Salisbury Transit. The CCX provides connections between metropolitan areas and access to the major employment market. The CR MPO also coordinates with the trucking industry to determine future corridor improvements for the movement of area freight within or outside the area. Linkages can be made to the rail line through the CR MPO as well as the Rail Yard in the Charlotte Metro area. The CR MPO participated in the regional Freight Study detailed in Chapter 6 which provides a set of facilities and strategies to increase freight movement by both rail and roads. In addition, the Town of Harrisburg has applied for a federal grant to open a new Amtrak station in town.

Planning Factor 5

Protects and enhances the environment, promotes energy conservation, improves the quality of life and promotes consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.

This planning factor is achieved by including environmental criteria in the MPOs Strategic Transportation Implementation project selection process and with preliminary engineering and planning efforts in the development of transportation projects. An effective example is the Corridor Planning within several thoroughfare

corridors, which has been conceptualized on the CTP map. By including the projects in a planning process it will help identify potential social and environmental conflicts. The NC 73 Transportation/Land Use Corridor Plan was a multi-jurisdictional approach to corridor planning with land use scenarios that can complement the future transportation infrastructure. The MPO has made a commitment to including sidewalks in new roadway projects and funding greenways and multi-use trails with CMAQ funding and other federal sources. The CR MPO is an active participant in the air quality State Interagency Consultation Meeting held monthly to review conformity issues. The MPO previously funded an ongoing environmental stewardship and outreach program at Catawba College that developed educational programs and a speaker series with CMAQ funds.

Planning Factor 6

Enhances the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.

Continuous planning efforts have been supported by the CR MPO to achieve an efficient multi-modal Transportation Plan. Enhancements to the existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities will be greatly improved through future planning and programming efforts. Additional work will include pursuing alternative funding measures for multi-modal projects. The CR MPO has used the CMAQ program to fund projects that connect multiple modes and create a seamless transportation system.

New express bus service was programmed to begin in 2018 that provided direct service to the Lynx light rail station at the UNC Charlotte. This allowed for new accessibility to jobs and education for communities in both Cabarrus and Rowan counties. Evaluations are underway to identify bus routes without sidewalk and ADA accessible ramps to develop an implementation plan for transit and pedestrian improvements.

Planning Factor 7

Promotes efficient system management and operation

This planning factor is accomplished by providing a continuous and comprehensive needs' assessment of the transportation system. This MTP incorporates a congestion management and traffic monitoring system that identifies system management and operational improvements. The CR MPO has the responsibility of pursuing cost-effective practices that will not only maintain the current transportation system, but will enhance its efficiency and operation through state-of-the-art measures. This task includes securing State and local funding for the support of such programs. The CR MPO Congestion Management Process (CMP) identifies several strategies for achieving these objectives. The MPO is a partner in the implementation of the recently completed Metrolina ITS Strategic Deployment Plan.

Planning Factor 8

Emphasizes the preservation of the existing transportation system

This planning factor is achieved by establishing measures that will protect existing transportation facilities and future corridors. An example of this measure is through the reservation of right-of-way for future thoroughfares with the use of local ordinances and subdivision requirements. These key corridors and the associated right-of-ways are being protected from encroaching development; so that when the need arises, they can be implemented into the transportation system. The MPO is also committed to securing the necessary resources for maintaining and preserving the existing transportation system.

Planning Factor 9

Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts for surface transportation.

This planning factor is accomplished through the latest design and drainage elements applied through projects such as the I-85 widening. The continuous 8 lanes through the urban area will provide more predictability and reliability for regional vehicular travel. In addition, several ARRA projects have improved the rail corridor that connects Charlotte and

Raleigh and provides a viable alternative for business and tourist travel to the State Capital from both Kannapolis and Salisbury and hopefully Harrisburg one day. In addition, pedestrian improvements in the municipalities will result in less reliability on the single occupant vehicle and limit the long term foot print for road or lane capacity investments.

Planning Factor 10

Enhance travel and tourism.

This planning factor is accomplished by the increased access to the MPO area through infrastructure improvements particularly completion of the I-85 project with additional lanes and less congestion on the interstate. There has been an increase in hotel development in the MPO communities and area's first convention center was built in Concord near Concord Mills Mall. In addition, this area is known as North Carolina's #1 tourist destination with attractions like the NC Transportation Museum in Spencer and Charlotte Motor Speedway in Concord and the area's first flyover at exit 49 into the Mall Complex was completed and has made a big difference for holiday travel. Transit also plays a role in the MPO area in providing access to travel and tourist destinations in all of the cities. There are ongoing discussions with NCDOT Rail about connections between Salisbury and Asheville. This corridor has been prioritized by the state of North Carolina thru the federal Corridor ID program.

Finally, both counties are now members of the Carolina Thread Trail, which connects many natural amenities, parks, and cultural sites. Several of the municipal MPO members are working on connecting greenway projects to realize the vision of this regional trail system.

