

Chapter 1

Introduction and Transportation Planning Process

1.1 Introduction

The long-range transportation plan for the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Area is intended to be a multimodal plan describing the transportation system that will best suit the projected travel needs of the public to the year 2035. The multimodal aspect of the plan takes into account the projected needs and desires of the various sectors of the traveling public for mobility whether by car, public transit, truck, rail or bicycle and according to purpose, for work, school, commerce or pleasure.

Long-range planning starts with an understanding of the current situation, followed by a forecast of the population and economy to the year 2035 and projection of the impact the resulting travel demand will place on the transportation system. The identification of potential improvements to manage future travel demand should be guided by the goals and objectives that the general public and the governing bodies establish for the region. In developing the current plan particular attention was given to the effects of recent hurricanes on the forecast data, land use changes and shifting emphasis on goals and objectives for the region.

The challenge of developing a long-range plan is further compounded by the need to consider the availability of funding to finance proposed improvements. The history of financing transportation improvements within the region serves as a reasonable baseline of potential funding for future project development.

This is the principal transportation planning document for the region. It was developed through a coordinated process between the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), local jurisdictions, various agencies, and the public in order to develop regional solutions to transportation needs. The new target years for this plan are 2015 for the short range, 2025 for the intermediate range and 2035 for the long range stages.

This document constitutes the latest update to the MPO's long-range transportation plan, and fulfills the federal planning requirements (23 CFR 450) necessary to receive transportation funds through the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which was signed into law in 2005 to provide guaranteed federal funding for highways, highway safety, and public transportation.

1.2 Historical Background

In response to the Federal Highway Act of 1962, the first Long Range Transportation Plan for the Houma Area was completed in 1975. This was essentially a thoroughfare plan and was not based on a computerized travel demand model. In 1984, an initial attempt was made to develop a travel demand

model using the QRS II package; however, it was never completely placed online. In 1987, a second attempt was made to revive the QRS II Model but that was aborted by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development's (LADOTD) adoption of the TRANPLAN Model as the standard for all urban areas in Louisiana.

In 2004, a computer based travel demand model using TRANPLAN was developed and the long range transportation plan for the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Area was updated. The target years for this 2004 update were 2010 for the Intermediate Range and 2025 for the Long Range Stages.

Due to advances in computer technology, LADOTD decided to convert to the Geographical Information System (GIS) based TransCAD Travel Demand Forecasting Model. The current plan is being modeled in version 5.0 by the MPO and Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

1.3 Regulatory Framework for MTP Development

With the passing of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1962, Congress made urban transportation planning a condition for receipt of federal funds for highway projects in urban areas with a population of 50,000 or more. That legislation encouraged a continuing, comprehensive transportation planning process carried on cooperatively by the states and local communities. Metropolitan Planning Organizations were designated by the governor in each state to carry out this legislative requirement. Following that initial federal legislation, there have been a series of acts by Congress that have continued to fund transportation projects, with the most recent act being the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

In August 2005, SAFETEA-LU was authorized and currently serves as the regulatory and funding framework for transportation planning in metropolitan areas. SAFETEA-LU succeeded a series of transportation legislative acts that drastically changed the process of planning for transportation systems. These legislative acts included the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991 and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 1998. All have been a direct result of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAA), which broadened the goals of transportation system planning to include reducing vehicle miles traveled, expanding travel mode options, improving air quality, and integrating land use considerations into the planning process.

The authorization of ISTEA in 1991 created a major shift in metropolitan transportation planning. In accordance with the CAAA, it required transportation agencies to promote the protection of ecological and human environments. ISTEA mandated metropolitan areas within regions in violation of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards to plan for improvements in emissions, while preserving mobility. These additional considerations required planning for reductions in privately occupied vehicles, and expansion of transit and bicycle/pedestrian options. In addition, ISTEA recognized the growing changes in cultural and economic diversity within urban areas and provided metropolitan planning organizations with greater control of transportation systems in each region.

In 1998 the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century was authorized to succeed ISTEA. TEA-21 incorporated many of the same regulatory requirements as the previous legislation. However, various key additions were implemented in TEA-21, including a greater focus on safety and security for motorized and non-motorized users; accessibility and mobility for people and freight; efficient systems management and operation; and integration or connectivity within and across different transportation modes.

In 2005 SAFETEA-LU succeeded ISTEA and TEA-21. This legislation maintains the core considerations of mobility, accessibility, quality of life, safety and security, environmental protection, air quality, economic development and operations management. This legislation also establishes a metropolitan planning process that is a cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive framework for making transportation decisions in metropolitan areas.

SAFETEA-LU

SAFETEA-LU provides funding for highways, highway safety, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and multi-modal infrastructure for a five year period, 2005 to 2009. The MTP is one of the planning documents required to obtain federal funds through SAFETEA-LU. SAFETEA-LU also requires that the MPO select and prioritize a set of regionally significant transportation projects for programming in a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which must be updated every four years. The TIP identifies federally funded transportation projects to be implemented during the next four years. These projects are included in the TIP based on a realistic estimate of the available revenues and are consistent with the MTP. Although SAFETEA-LU is no longer in effect, appropriations will most likely follow those of the previous year until new legislation is adopted.

The MTP consists of a set of short- and long-range strategies to address transportation needs and guide investment in the regional transportation system in a manner that will address the deficiencies of the system. The MTP must also be consistent with the region's land use and economic development objectives in addition to the region's overall social, environmental, system performance, and energy conservation objectives.

Federal regulations require that the planning process for the MTP include:

- ▶ Consideration of social, economic, and environmental effects;
- ▶ Public participation in the planning process;
- ▶ No discrimination based on race, color, sex, national origin, or physical disabilities;
- ▶ A special effort to plan for public transportation facilities and services for the elderly, people with disabilities, and people of low income;
- ▶ Consideration of energy conservation;

- ▶ Involvement of all appropriate public and private transportation providers; and
- ▶ Consultation and coordination with other public agencies.

SAFETEA-LU, Section 5303, also requires that a metropolitan planning area carry out a planning process that provides for consideration and implementation of projects and strategies and services that will:

1. Support the economic vitality of the United States, the States, nonmetropolitan areas and metropolitan areas, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;
5. 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;
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes throughout the State, for people and freight;
7. Promote efficient system management and operation; and
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Together, these are known as the eight (8) SAFETEA-LU planning factors.

1.4 The Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization

The US Census Bureau has identified over 400 regions throughout the United States that they consider to be urbanized. Urban Areas, by definition, contain a population greater than 50,000. Federal law (23 CFR Part 450) mandates the creation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for each census defined urbanized area, with the purpose of involving local governments in transportation decisions involving federal highway and/or transit funds. Under these regulations, the South Central Planning Development Commission (SCPDC) has been designated by the Governor of Louisiana as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Area and is the responsible agency for transportation planning activities. SCPDC also functions as the regional planning commission for the six-parish region in south Louisiana which includes the parishes of Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist and Terrebonne.



The Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Area is located in south Louisiana approximately 50 miles southwest of New Orleans. The metropolitan area lies mostly in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes, with a smaller portion extending into Assumption Parish. The cities of Houma, Thibodaux, and the towns of Lockport, and Golden Meadow are the only incorporated municipalities in the study area. Figure 1-2 shows the current boundaries of the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Area as well as the expanded study area that was included in this plan. The study area is that portion of the region that is anticipated to be included in the urbanized area within the 25-year planning horizon.

Local jurisdictions involved in the planning activities of the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization (HTMPO) include the following:

- ▶ Assumption Parish
- ▶ Lafourche Parish
- ▶ Town of Lockport
- ▶ Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government
- ▶ City of Thibodaux

In addition, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration participated in the MPO process.

The HTMPO organizational structure has been designed so that it operates as an entity separate from the participating jurisdictions so that no single entity dominates the organization's decision-making processes.

Two committees shape the decision making process of the Houma-Thibodaux MPO. The Policy Committee (PC) is the official decision making body, and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) advises the MPO on technical matters of projects, plans, and programs.

Policy Committee (PC)

The Policy Committee (PC) serves as the official decision making body for the MPO. The Policy Committee oversees how federal transportation dollars are spent in the transportation study area. The Policy Committee's responsibilities include the review and approval of all plans, programs, and projects. It is comprised of elected officials from region within the MPO study area.

The Policy Committee is comprised of ten voting members and one non-voting member.

Voting Members:

President, Terrebonne Parish

President, Lafourche Parish

President, Assumption Parish Police Jury

Council Member, Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government (TPCG)

Council Member, TPCG

Council Member, TPCG

Council Member, TPCG

Mayor, City of Thibodaux

Mayor, Town of Lockport

District 02 Administration, LADOTD

Non-voting Member:

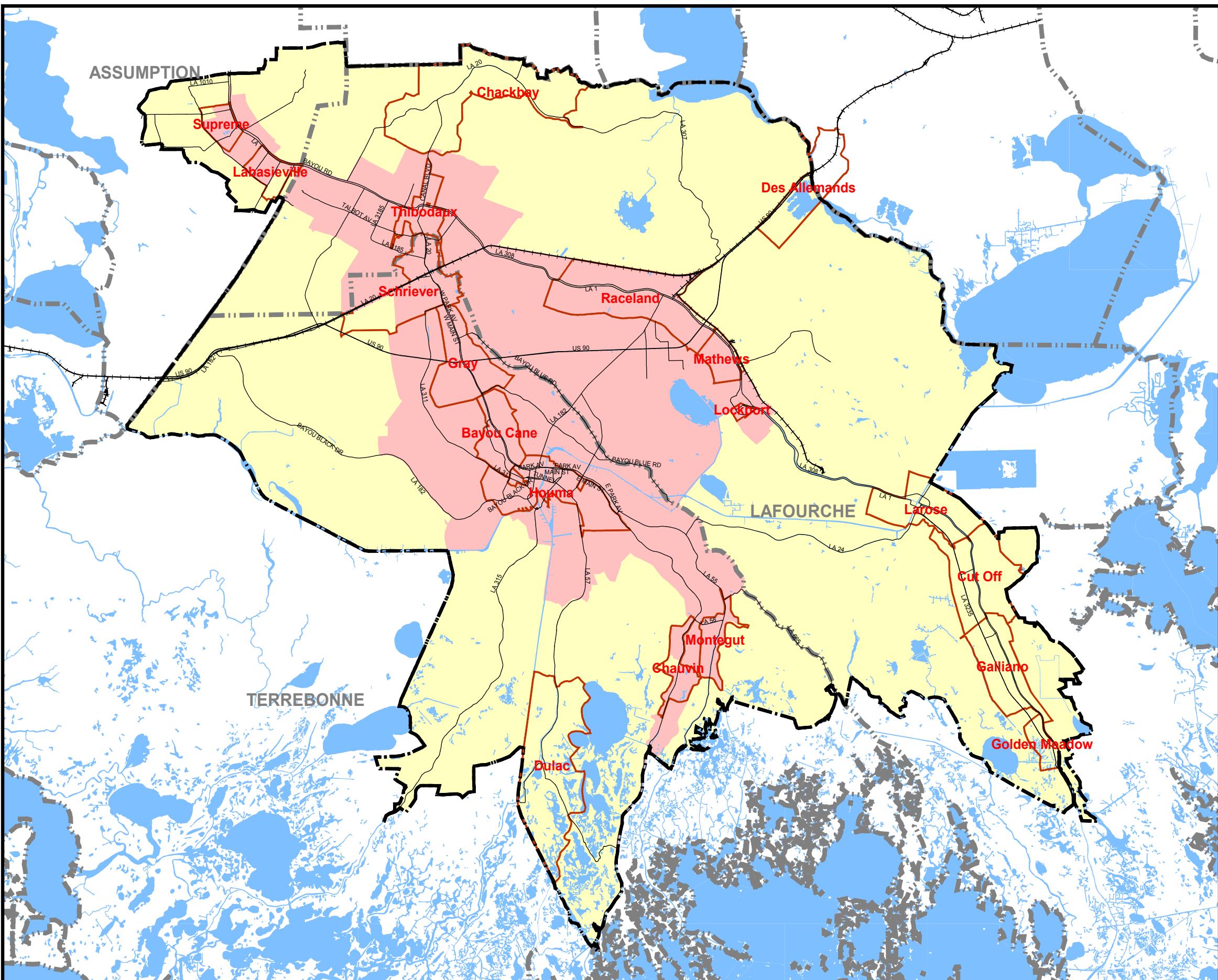
Federal Highway Administration

Houma-Thibodaux
Metropolitan Transportation Plan
2035

Figure 1-1
Study Area

LEGEND

-  Study Area
-  2000 Urbanized Area
-  Parish Lines
-  City/Urban Place
-  Railroad



Source: SCPDC,
Census Bureau



Prepared for:



Prepared by:



In Association with:



Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Technical Advisory Committee reviews plans, programs, projects, studies, and reports and provides the MPO with recommendations concerning these documents. The TAC includes representatives from all agencies involved in the transportation planning process. Participants on the TAC include municipalities, parishes, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, the Federal Highway and Transit Administration and other selected transportation interests.

TAC Members:

Director of Planning and Zoning, TPCG
Director of Public Works, TPCG
Engineering Division, TPCG
Operations Manager, Roads and Bridges Division, TPCG
Public Transit Manager, TPCG
Public Works Director, Lafourche Parish
Planning Department, Lafourche Parish
Parish Manager/Public Works Director, Assumption Parish
Public Works Administration, City of Thibodaux
Grants Administrator, City of Thibodaux
Mayor, Town of Lockport
Office of Planning and Programming, LADOTD
District 02 Traffic Engineer, LADOTD
District 02 Maintenance Engineer, LADOTD
Public Transportation Administrator, LADOTD
Federal Highway Administration

Federal and state transportation planning responsibilities for the HTMPO can generally be summarized as follows:

- ▶ Develop and maintain a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) consistent with state and federal planning requirements.

- ▶ Review specific transportation and development proposals for consistency with the MTP.
- ▶ Coordinate transportation decisions among local jurisdictions, state agencies, and area transit operators.
- ▶ Develop an annual work program (known as the Unified Planning Work Program [UPWP]).
- ▶ Maintain the regional travel-demand model for the purposes of assessing, planning, and coordinating regional travel demand impacts.

1.5 The MTP Purpose, Goals and Objectives

The purpose of the MTP is to identify the transportation needs of the community over the next 25 years, establish priorities for funding those improvements, and chart a course for meeting the community's identified transportation needs. The study identifies the existing and future land use trends and transportation needs, and develops coordinated strategies to provide necessary transportation facilities essential for the continued mobility and economic vitality of the Houma-Thibodaux Urbanized Area.

The MTP is a Long Range Transportation Master Plan, which is a blueprint to guide the establishment of priorities for development programs and transportation projects within Houma-Thibodaux Urbanized Area. The MTP seeks to balance investments in various transportation modes against anticipated funding from federal, state and local sources while maintaining flexibility to address the dynamic changes in both the needs and the resources of the community.

Access to transportation shapes the lives of the members of the community. The transportation system supports the individual's access to jobs and shopping, to recreation and social opportunities, to health care and emergency services, to evacuation routes and travel routes, and to people and places near and far. The transportation system also supports the movement of goods and services to, from, and through the community. The transportation system is the structure upon which many of the other aspects of the life of the community rests.

As the transportation system grows, so grows the community. The transportation system affects both the physical and social environment of the community. It affects the physical health of the residents and the economic health of the businesses. Transportation systems cost millions of dollars to build and maintain, and changes can take many years to implement. Because of the many and varied impacts of transportation on the community, as well as the large investment of public resources, and the extended time frame necessary to design and implement changes in the transportation system, it is essential that the community be involved in the planning process that creates the future transportation system. The community has been involved in the process and has established a vision and a set of goals for its transportation system.

1.5.1 MTP Goals and Objectives

One of the first tasks of the study is the formulation of a set of goals and objectives to provide a framework for the MTP and to maintain it as a viable document. The goals and objectives are also used as guidelines in preparing and evaluating potential improvements to the system.

The purpose of establishing goals and objectives for transportation system development is to provide a rational and coherent basis for evaluating proposed capital infrastructure improvements related to the movement of people and goods in the Houma-Thibodaux Area. A balanced approach must be sought that maximizes the general welfare without unfairly burdening any particular group and that maximizes the utility of the entire system. In addition, the transportation system must be safe, secure, efficient, economically feasible, and in harmony with the character of the area.

Ultimately the *Summary Goals and Objectives* outlined below attempt to provide a rational basis for developing a long-range regional transportation plan that would not only make it easier to move about within the area, but would also make the Houma-Thibodaux Area itself a better place in which to move about.

GOAL 1: ENHANCE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL ROADWAY USERS AND MODES

1. Relieve traffic congestion and decrease travel time on Houma-Thibodaux roadways.
2. Facilitate the design of roadways to accommodate multiple users.
3. Enhance the availability, attractiveness, and efficiency of public transportation.
4. Enhance the mobility of those who are elderly, physically or mentally impaired, or lacking the economic means to take advantage of existing transportation options.
5. Improve rural/urban connectivity for roadway and transit.
6. Consider the impact of development on adjacent roadway corridors.
7. Improve regional access to community facilities.
8. Plan and promote viable alternative modes of travel for commuters.
9. Facilitate intermodal goods movement.
10. Enhance bicycle and pedestrian mobility and accessibility.
11. Optimize the use of available resources by prioritizing potential projects on the basis of their probable effectiveness in relieving congested conditions.

GOAL 2: ENHANCE REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY AND ECONOMIC VIABILITY

1. Improve regional connectivity by enhancing mobility between different parts of the Houma-Thibodaux Area.
2. Optimize the use of available resources by prioritizing potential projects on the basis of their regional significance and potential benefit to the Houma-Thibodaux Area as a whole.
3. Increase the potential benefits to be derived from expenditure of scarce public resources by developing projects capable of attracting private-sector investment and broad community support.
4. Maximize the economic development potential of the transportation system.
5. Provide for the development of a balanced transportation system compatible with future plans that serve the specific needs of the citizens of the Houma-Thibodaux Area in support of the region's economic vitality.

GOAL 3: ENHANCE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

1. Support hurricane and other emergency evacuation planning efforts by giving priority consideration to proposed transportation system improvements that would facilitate the safe and expeditious removal of people from the area in the event of an impending catastrophe.
2. Promote the safety of motorists and users of non-motorized modes.
3. Support the allocation of resources to upgrade grade crossing protection and warning systems on major rail lines in the region.
4. Enhance air quality in the region by developing projects that would help reduce mobile-source emissions of pollutants.
5. Promote access management, divided roadway and other roadway design measures intended to maximize safety for all roadway users.
6. Promote the design of safe intersections for all roadway users.
7. Promote traffic calming strategies where warranted.
8. Promote "context sensitive" design in the project development process.
9. Screen for potential environmental concerns.

GOAL 4: SUPPORT LOCAL VALUES AND PRESERVE EXISTING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

1. Preserve and make use of existing transportation infrastructure wherever possible by encouraging the development of projects that optimize available system capacity through the application of intelligent transportation system (ITS) techniques and transportation system management (TSM) concepts.
2. Ensure that proposed improvements are consistent with local plans, goals, and objectives.
3. Support local standards by giving priority consideration to projects that meet community expectations regarding walkability, aesthetic appeal and other quality-of-life issues.
4. Support local land use and community planning activities by developing projects that are consistent with access management and traffic-calming strategies for transportation system development.
5. Identify and acquire or protect transportation corridors and the necessary rights-of-way in advance of immediate need to permit future safe and efficient transportation improvements at a minimal cost.
6. Promote the designation of scenic byways.

GOAL 5: PROVIDE A TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS THAT INFORMS AND INVOLVES THE PUBLIC AS WELL AS ELECTED OFFICIALS

1. Increase public understanding of and involvement in the regional transportation planning process.
2. Identify stakeholders and encourage their participation in development of the long-range regional transportation plan.
3. Provide adequate public input into decision making.

GOAL 6: DEVELOP A LONG-RANGE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN THAT IS FINANCIALLY FEASIBLE

1. Develop a plan that meets the requirements of the U. S. Department of Transportation (Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration) and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development.
2. Produce estimates of revenues and other funds available for transportation improvements anticipated through the year 2035.

1.6 Planning Process and Methodology

The long-range transportation planning process begins with a vision of the area's future that can be understood and communicated easily and used to build consensus regarding the need for transportation improvements in the region. This vision can then be translated into a set of goals and objectives that will guide the development of transportation improvement projects, programs and policies. The planning process seeks to determine how resources likely to be available for expanding and improving transportation infrastructure can best be invested. The HTMPO identifies a variety of potential funding options and weighs the benefits of providing various modal options to meet anticipated travel demand. Finally, the study takes into consideration the long-range implications of improvements for both individual communities and the larger environment.

The planning process is intended to fulfill the following responsibilities undertaken by the MPO:

- Provide opportunities for public involvement in development of the long-range plan
- Forecast future population and employment in the region and assess project land uses
- Identify major growth corridors
- Analyze transportation needs and options, and develop alternative capital and operating strategies
- Estimate the impact of the transportation system on air quality and environment
- Develop fiscally constrained plans and programs that serve both to preserve the existing system and provide for new capital investments.

Adoption of the MTP is the first step towards implementation of a transportation project. Following formal adoption of the plan, a project can be programmed for design, right-of-way acquisition or construction in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) identifying the sources and estimated amount of funding to be used. The process that will be used to adopt the MTP is as follows.

- ▶ The proposed list of projects will be published for public review and comment.
- ▶ Public input on the proposed list will be solicited through both the MPO website and through public meeting(s).
- ▶ Any further analysis requested by the MPO Policy Committee based on public comment will be conducted.
- ▶ The MPO Policy Committee will adopt a final fiscally constrained list of projects and approve the MTP.

- The MTP will be forwarded to the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration for their review and comment.

1.6.1 Transportation Improvement Program and MTP Amendments

Projects listed in the short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Houma-Thibodaux Area must be consistent with the fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan. The long-range plan includes a short-range component representing immediate needs to be addressed in developing the TIP. Since the Houma-Thibodaux Urbanized Area is an “attainment area” with respect to EPA air quality requirements, the long-range plan must be updated at least every five years. Between five-year updates the need may arise for an amendment adding a project which significantly alters the scope or budget of the long-range plan. The HTMPO has adopted the following procedures to amend or administratively modify the MTP and TIP.

Procedures to Amend or Administratively Modify the Louisiana Statewide (STIP) and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs)

The following procedures are applicable for processing amendments or modifications to the Statewide (STIP) or Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs). In accordance with the provisions of [23 CFR 450.216\(b\)](#), the STIP shall be developed in cooperation with the MPO designated for a metropolitan area. Each metropolitan transportation improvement program (TIP) shall be included without change in the STIP, directly or by reference, after approval of the TIP by the MPO and the Governor. A metropolitan TIP in a nonattainment or maintenance area is subject to a FHWA/FTA conformity finding before inclusion in the STIP. In areas outside a metropolitan planning area but within an air quality nonattainment or maintenance area containing any part of a metropolitan area, projects must be included in the regional emissions analysis that supported the conformity determination of the associated metropolitan TIP before they are added to the STIP.

In accordance with [23 CFR 450.216 \(n\)](#), projects in any of the first four years of the STIP may be moved to any other of the first four years of the STIP subject to the project selection requirements of [23 CFR 450.220](#). Such modifications do not require formal approval, provided expedited project selection procedures have been adopted in accordance with 23 CFR 450.330 and the required interagency consultation or coordination is accomplished and documented.

An **Administrative Modification** is a minor revision to a long-range statewide or metropolitan transportation plan, Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) that includes minor changes to project/project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates. An administrative modification is a revision that does not require public review and comment, re-demonstration of fiscal constraint, or a conformity determination (in nonattainment and maintenance areas).

Administrative Modification thresholds include:

1. Revisions to a project description without changing the project scope or which do not conflict with the pertinent environmental document;
2. Minor changes to project/project phase cost applying to R/W, UTIL, ENG, CONST:
 - Funding changes are limited to \$600,000 for projects for < \$3,000,000.
 - For projects > \$3,000,000, an administrative modification is limited to budget changes of less than 20% in funding
3. Minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects that do not affect fiscal constraint of the STIP or the ability to complete the project as initially described.
4. Minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates as long as the project stays within the approved STIP timeframe and does not affect fiscal constraint of the STIP or the ability to complete the project as initially described. 23 CFR 450.330 (a).
5. A change in the project implementing agency;
6. A split or combination of individually listed projects; as long as cost, schedule, and scope remain unchanged;
7. The addition or deletion of projects from grouped project (line item) listings as long as the line item total funding amounts stay within the guidelines in number two above.

Administrative modifications can be processed in accordance with these procedures provided that:

1. It does not affect the air quality conformity determination, including timely implementation of Transportation Control Measures (TCMs), and
2. It does not impact financial constraint of the STIP or the ability to complete the project as described.

Each MPO approved administrative modification needs to be published online separately from TIP amendments. The MPO should summarize this as an information item to the MPO Committee members each month. The MPO Board may delegate approval of administrative modifications to the MPO's Executive Director. If the MPO board delegates approval of administrative modifications to the Executive Director, the MPO will need to provide copies of the delegation to LADOTD, FHWA, and FTA. Any administrative modifications will be forwarded to LADOTD Transportation Planning Section and Public Transportation Section for approval on behalf of the Governor.

If a project affected by an administrative modification is located within the planning boundaries of a MPO, the MPO must first generate and/or accept the administrative modification for its TIP. Once approved by the MPO, then LADOTD, on behalf of the Governor, can incorporate the administrative modification into Louisiana's STIP. LADOTD will immediately notify the MPO, FHWA, and FTA of any approved administrative modification(s).

For projects in a rural area, once approved by LADOTD, on behalf of the Governor, the Administrative modification will be incorporated into Louisiana's STIP. LADOTD will immediately notify the MPO, FHWA, and FTA of any approved administrative modification.

An **Amendment** is a revision to a long-range statewide or metropolitan transportation plan, TIP, or STIP that involves a major change to a project included in a metropolitan transportation plan, TIP, or STIP, including the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in project cost, project/project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or design scope (e.g., changing project termini or the number of through traffic lanes). Changes to projects that are included only for illustrative purpose do not require an amendment. An amendment is a revision that requires public review and comment, redemonstration of fiscal constraint, and/or a conformity determination (for metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs involving “non-exempt” projects in nonattainment and maintenance areas). In the context of a long-range statewide transportation plan, an amendment is a revision approved by the State in accordance with its public involvement process.

If a project affected by an amendment is located within the planning boundaries of a MPO, it must first be amended in the TIP before it can be amended in the STIP. Once approved by LADOTD, on behalf of the Governor, the amendment will be incorporated into Louisiana’s STIP. LADOTD will immediately notify the MPO, FHWA, and FTA of any approved amendment(s).

Amendments: Are all other changes to STIP/TIPs that are outside of the administrative modification listed above.

Timeline for Amendment Approval

When an amendment is sent to FHWA, it will take a maximum of two weeks to be processed.

Dispute Resolution

If a question arises on the interpretation of the definition of an administrative modification or an amendment, LADOTD, the appropriate MPO, FHWA and FTA (the parties) will consult with each other to resolve the question. If after consultation, the parties disagree on the definition of what constitutes an administrative modification or an amendment, the final decision rests with the FTA for transit projects and FHWA for highway projects.

Table 1-1
Quick Reference Table for
Amendments vs. Modifications

| Administrative Modification | Amendment |
|---|---|
| Revision of a project description that does not significantly change the project design concept and/or scope | Major changes to a project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including the addition or deletion of a project |
| Minor changes to project/project phase cost applies to R/W, UTIL, ENG, CONST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding changes are limited to \$600,000 for projects for <u>< \$3,000,000</u>. • For projects <u>≥ \$3,000,000</u> an administrative modification is classified as a change of less than 20% in funding | Major changes in project cost, project/project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or design scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding changes that are greater than \$600,00 for projects <u>≤ \$3 million</u> • Change of 20% or more in funding |
| Minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects that does not affect fiscal constraint | Major changes to funding sources, such as adding a new federal funding source for a project not previously funding with federal funding. |
| Minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates as long as the project stays within the approved S/TIP timeframe and does not affect fiscal constraint. <u>23 CFR 450.330(a)</u> | |
| A change in the project implementing agency; | |
| A split or combination of individually listed projects; as long as cost, schedule, and scope remain unchanged; | |
| The addition or deletion of projects from grouped project (line item) listings as long as the total funding amounts stay within the guidelines in number two above. | |

1.7 The MTP Update Cycle

Federal law (23 CFR Part 450) mandates that the MPO shall review and update the transportation plan at least every four years in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas and at least every five years in attainment areas. This requirement ensures that transportation plans remain valid and consistent with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends and to extend the forecast period to at least a 20-year planning horizon. In addition, the MPO may revise the transportation plan at any time without a requirement to extend the horizon year. The transportation plan (and any revisions) shall be approved by the MPO and submitted for information purposes to the Governor. Copies of any updated or revised transportation plans must be provided to the FHWA and the FTA.

Since the HTMPO Area is an attainment area for air quality, the long-range plan must be updated every five years. Since the current plan has a long-range planning target of 2035, and it is necessary to maintain a 20-year planning horizon, the next update must be adopted before May 13, 2015. If any of the areas within the study area were to be reclassified as non-attainment areas, the update cycle would be reduced to every four years with more stringent project selection and development processes.