

Chapter 3 – District Planning Direction

Introduction

The TSP planning direction reflects Mn/DOT's strategic objectives contained in *Mn/DOT's Strategic Plan* and the *Statewide Transportation Plan*. This direction takes into account the district's assessment of the health and condition of its transportation system according to the performance measures and targets and funding forecasts identified in the district plan guidance. The district also gave considerable attention to the public input it received during the planning process in charting an overall planning direction for the plan.

Mn/DOT Strategic Plan

Mn/DOT's *Strategic Plan* first adopted in 1997 and last updated in 2003 calls for "a coordinated transportation network that meets the needs of Minnesota's citizens and businesses for safe, timely and predictable travel." Intrinsic to this vision is the need for Mn/DOT to better understand the needs of the public using the State's transportation system.

The *Strategic Plan* defines three strategic directions.

- Safeguard what exists. Preserve the physical condition of the State's transportation system.
- Make the network operate better. Make improvements to the state's transportation system that are balanced and cost-effective.
- Make Mn/DOT operate better. Continuously improve services and efficiency in order to give citizens the best value for their tax dollars.

Federal Planning Factors

Mn/DOT relies on direction and guidelines from the federal government in the planning and development of the State's transportation infrastructure. Federal law identifies seven factors that States and MPOs must consider in the development of their transportation plans and programs. They include:

- Support the economic vitality of the United States, state, and metropolitan areas, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and freight.
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes throughout the state, for people and freight.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Mn/DOT conscientiously addressed the seven planning factors in developing the *Statewide Transportation Plan*. These factors were considered throughout development of the department's *Strategic Plan* and the policies and performance measures established in the *Statewide Transportation Plan*.

Mn/DOT Statewide Transportation Plan

In August 2003, Mn/DOT completed and published *Minnesota Statewide Transportation Plan, Moving People and Freight from 2003 to 2023*. The *Statewide Plan* provides a policy framework for Mn/DOT to implement and achieve its *Strategic Plan*. The policy framework is tied to 10 major policies aligned with the *Strategic Plan*. Five policies highlighted in bold text specifically focus upon the capital investments related to mobility, safety and condition of the transportation infrastructure:

- **Policy 1: Preserve Essential Elements of Existing Transportation Systems**
- Policy 2: Support land use decisions that preserve mobility and enhance the safety of transportation systems.
- Policy 3: Effectively manage the operation of existing transportation systems to provide maximum service to customers.
- **Policy 4: Provide Cost Effective Transportation Options for People and Freight**
- **Policy 5: Enhance Mobility in Interregional Transportation Corridors Linking Regional Trade Centers**
- **Policy 6: Enhance Mobility Within Regional Trade Centers**
- **Policy 7: Increase the Safety and Security of Transportation System and Users**
- Policy 8: Continually improve Mn/DOT's internal management and program delivery.
- Policy 9: Inform, involve and educate all potentially affected stakeholders in transportation plans and investment decision processes.
- Policy 10: Protect the environment and respect community values.

Policies 2 and 3 are also significant for performance outcomes. Policy 2 is important for identifying Community Improvement Project Priorities (CIPPs) in the fiscally constrained plan. Policy 3 supports Metro District's investment priority to manage for safety and efficiency. The purpose of management investments is to improve safety as well as optimize mobility of the highway system by maximizing unused available capacity. Management investments are typically moderate cost solutions that address a specific safety or mobility related operational issue. Metro District has established several management related set-aside funding programs that support multiple policy objectives:

- Advantages for Transit (e.g., bus-only shoulders and park & ride lots). Policies 3 and 4.
- Access Management (e.g., access modification-removal/consolidation). Policies 3 and 7.
- Safety Capacity (e.g., turn lanes, reconstructing intersections, modifying access, and constructing bridges or interchanges to replace at-grade intersections). Policies 3 and 7.
- Traffic Management - ITS (Intelligent Transportation Systems) Solutions (e.g., advanced traffic and travel condition communications and electronic traffic management techniques including ramp meters). Policies 3 and 7.

Policy 8 is specific to Mn/DOT internal operations and does not directly influence TSP investment decisions. Policies 9 and 10 relate to stakeholder involvement discussed in Chapter 1.

District Plan Guidance

For each policy area there are a set of performance measures which Metro's TSP applied to three planning periods over the 2008-2030 time frame along with two funding scenarios one which is performance-based and the other which is fiscally constrained. These measures were refined and included in the guidance the districts received for updating their long-range plans. The performance targets correspond to the three planning horizons for which the plans are prepared. They are as follows: 2008-2014, 2014-2023, and 2024-2030.