

Chapter 2: Plan Purpose and Development Process

This Statewide Transportation Policy Plan is the culmination of a process that began in the spring of 2007. The plan sets a long-range vision for transportation in Minnesota and identifies transportation system needs, goals, and priorities over a 20-year period. This chapter summarizes the purpose and role of the plan, and the plan development process. Specifically, the chapter:

- Describes how the plan is used as a guide to Mn/DOT investment decisions as well as a framework for other transportation policy and investment planning efforts.
- Describes how the planning process and the plan satisfy state and federal requirements and guidelines pertaining to state long-range transportation planning.
- Provides an overview of the process, describing the performance-based planning approach, the outreach process, and how stakeholder input was used to establish a 20-year vision and policy goals.

The Purpose and Role of the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan

The Statewide Transportation Policy Plan is the cornerstone of a family of plans. It establishes a long-range multimodal vision for transportation in the State of Minnesota, examines the most critical trends and issues, and sets the overall policy direction. This overarching plan both draws from and provides direction to the many modal and specialty plans and studies developed by Mn/DOT and its partners (Figure 2.1). These would include but are not limited to Mn/DOT's Strategic Vision; metropolitan, regional, local, and tribal transportation plans; transit, aeronautics, bicycle and pedestrian, and rail plans; freight studies and plans; and safety and operations plans.

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, the planning process is a continuous cycle. Policy plans set the framework for investment plans which identify how the policies will be reflected in implementation. Implementation includes not only state road construction but also capital investment in other modes. Results are monitored through stakeholder input at the plan and project level, market research, and measurement of system performance. The feedback and data gathered are used to inform current and future policy and investment decisions.

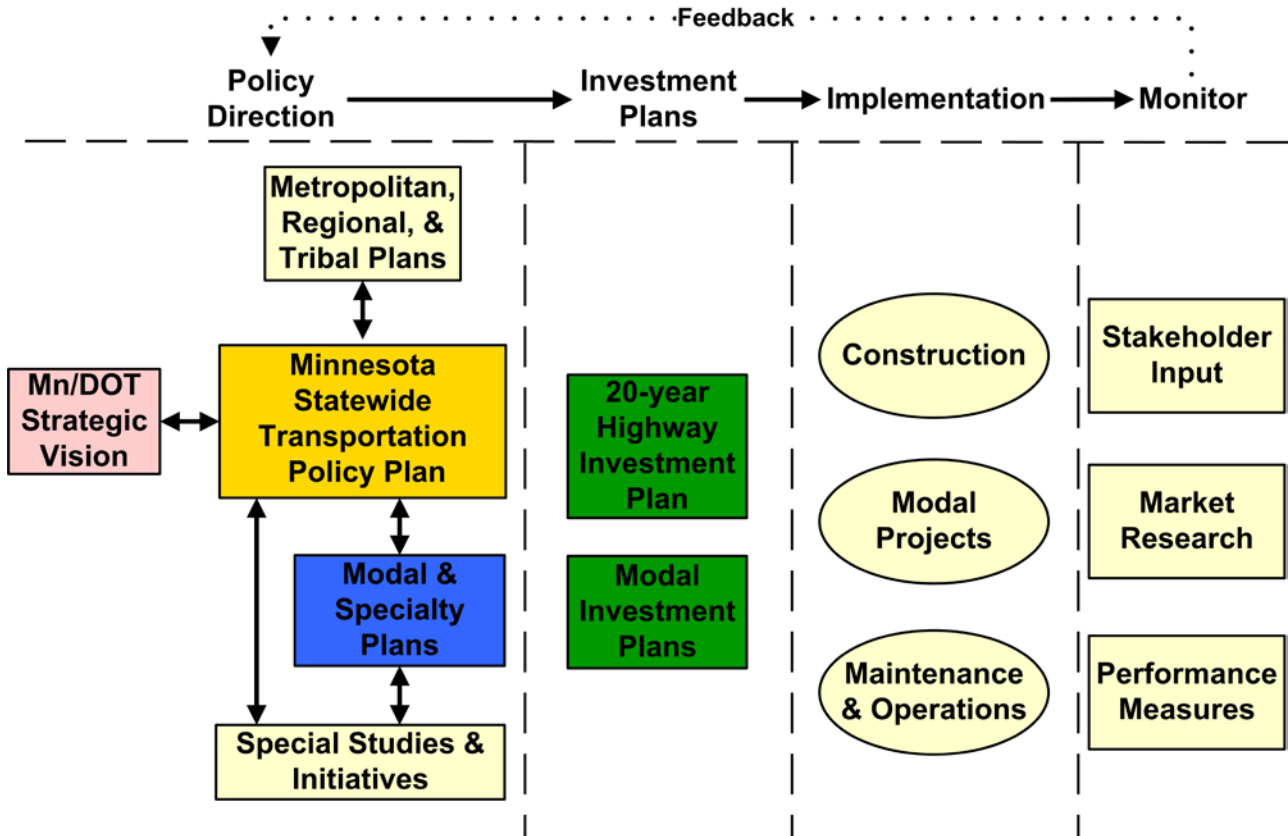


Figure 2.1 Planning and Programming Process

Source: Mn/DOT Office of Investment Management

Policy Direction

The Statewide Transportation Policy Plan receives and integrates policy direction from a number of sources.

Mn/DOT’s Strategic Vision

Mn/DOT’s Strategic Vision is to be a global leader in transportation, committed to upholding public needs and collaboration with internal and external partners to create a safe, efficient, and sustainable transportation system for the future. This vision serves as the foundation for all Mn/DOT initiatives including the development of the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan.

Modal and Specialty Plans

Figure 2.1 highlights Mn/DOT’s responsibility and role in planning and programming for many modes of transportation including freight, bicycles and pedestrians, transit, rail, highways, and aeronautics. Modal plans go beyond the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan, detailing mode-specific trends, issues, investment policies, strategies, and performance measures. Currently, modal plans cover policy and, to a varying degree, provide investment direction. The future intent is to develop investment plans for each

mode comparable to the Statewide Highway Investment Plan. Recently completed or ongoing modal plans include:

- Statewide Freight Plan (2005)
- Mn/DOT Bicycle Modal Plan (2005)
- Minnesota Aviation System Plan (2006)
- Greater Minnesota Transit Plan (update to be completed in 2009)
- Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Passenger and Freight Rail Plan (to be completed in 2009)

Several additional plans, “specialty plans”, contribute to the formulation of the statewide plan. Specialty plans typically focus on a particular issue or objective such as improving operations, enhancing traveler safety, or improving mobility. Recent examples include:

- Minnesota Statewide Highway Systems Operation Plan (2005)
- Strategic Highway Safety Plan (2007)

Special Studies and Initiatives

In addition to modal and specialty plans, Mn/DOT has completed a number of special studies and initiatives that provide additional policy direction. These studies provide background and analysis that support statewide policy and investment planning:

- Mn/DOT District highway safety plans
- Metropolitan Highway System Investment Strategy
- Feasibility of a Complete Streets policy in Minnesota
- Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan
- Regional Trade Centers Study (2003)
- Minnesota Interstate Truck Parking Study – Phase 1 (2008)
- Highway Corridor Studies (e.g., Trunk Highway 5 Corridor Study, I-35 Interregional Corridor Management Plan)

Metropolitan Plans

Minnesota has seven Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) that are responsible for planning, programming, and coordinating federal highway and transit investments in urbanized areas.

Metropolitan area long range plans identify issues, goals, and policies at the regional level. As shown in Figure 2.2 and listed below, Minnesota MPOs include:

- Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

- Rochester-Olmsted Council of Governments
- LaCrosse Area Planning Committee
- Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments
- St. Cloud Area Planning Organization
- Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area¹



Figure 2.2 Metropolitan Planning Organizations in Minnesota

Source: Mn/DOT Office of Investment Management

Coordination among statewide and metropolitan planning efforts is crucial for developing a comprehensive and cohesive vision and approach. MPOs are required by federal law to regularly update their regional transportation plan that identifies transportation system needs, goals, and priorities over a 20-year period. The Statewide Transportation Policy Plan also builds on these transportation plans and establishes a metropolitan framework and direction for their update area.

Regional Development Commissions

The State of Minnesota has 10 Regional Development Commissions (RDCs) that were established to ensure coordination of federal, state, and local comprehensive planning and development programs. As shown in Figure 2.3 and listed below, these commissions include:

- Northwest Regional Development Commission
- Headwaters Regional Development Commission
- Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
- West Central Initiative
- Region 5 Development Commission
- Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
- Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission
- East Central Regional Development Commission
- Southwest Regional Development Commission
- Region 9 Development Commission

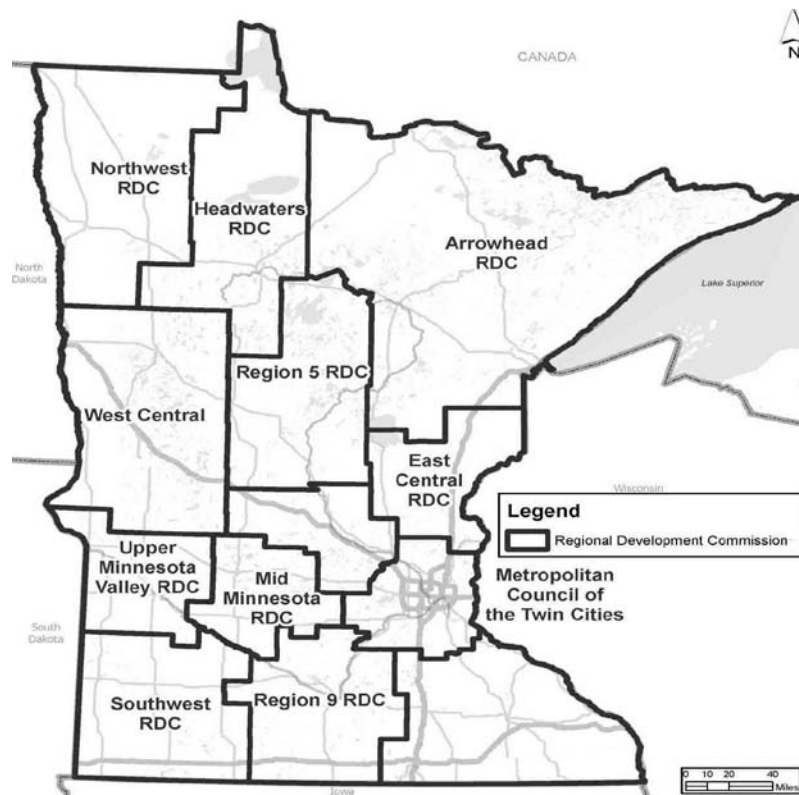


Figure 2.3 Regional Development Commissions in Minnesota

Source: Mn/DOT Office of Investment Management

Although each of the regional commissions has its own process and work programs, all provide technical and professional assistance to local governments for transportation planning.

Local Governments

City, county, and township governments are responsible for local transportation planning and land use decisions. Coordination of these efforts with regional and metropolitan transportation planning and the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan will result in more cohesive and consistent decisions.

Tribes

There are 11 federally recognized tribal governments located in Minnesota. Each tribe is a separate sovereign nation, unique unto itself and distinct from all other federally recognized tribes. Each tribe has an independent relationship with the United States and the State of Minnesota. Coordination between state, regional, and local transportation planning efforts and those of the tribes will improve cohesiveness and consistency. These tribes include:

Anishinaabe Reservations

- Red Lake
- Nett Lake/Bois Fort
- Fond du Lac
- Mille Lacs
- Grand Portage
- White Earth
- Leech Lake

Dakota Communities

- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux
- Prairie Island
- Upper Sioux
- Lower Sioux

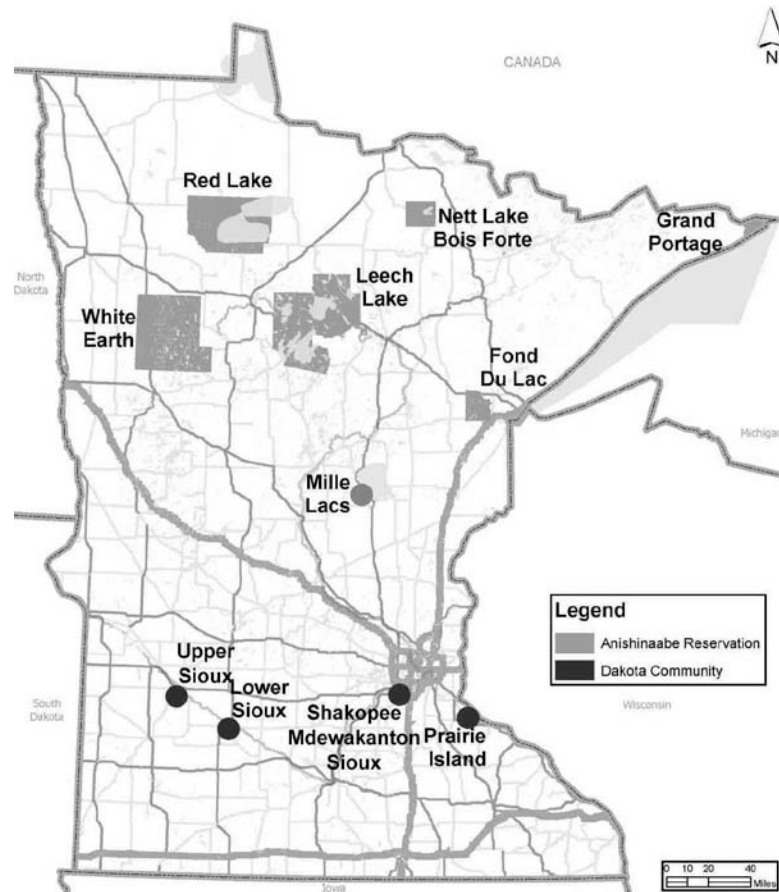


Figure 2.4 Indian Tribal Governments in Minnesota

Source: Mn/DOT Base Map 2006

Investment Plans

Completed policy plans direct modal investment plans. The only current stand-alone modal investment plan providing investment direction is the 20-year Statewide Highway Investment Plan. The Statewide Highway Investment Plan aggregates eight Mn/DOT District 20-year Highway Investment Plans, and provides the link between policies and strategies established in the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan and capital improvements made to the state highway system. It identifies capital investment needs, projects future revenue, and identifies expenditures. A future objective is to develop investment plans for each mode similar in scope and purpose to the 20-year Highway Investment Plan.

Implementation

Implementation covers a range of activities, including maintenance and operations of Mn/DOT facilities and roads, snow removal, and construction of capital improvements to the highway system or other modes. For example, highway improvements may include bridge or pavement reconstruction; transit improvements may include bus purchases or construction of garage facilities and park-and-ride lots; rail improvements may include track reconstruction.

Monitor and Feedback

The final step in the planning process involves monitoring outcomes and providing feedback to the planning cycle. Mn/DOT monitors the outcomes of its investments, gathering and analyzing stakeholder input, market research, and performance data to inform policy decisions. Stakeholder input, market research, and performance data are an integral part in the formation of the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan. They are also part of an ongoing process of continuous feedback, influencing appropriate decisions throughout the planning and programming process.

Stakeholder Input

Mn/DOT highly values public involvement and has taken considerable steps over the past decade to ensure everyone's voice is heard. In August 1997, Mn/DOT formed a task force charged with developing an agency guide to public involvement.

This guide, known as *Hear Every Voice*, outlines Mn/DOT's approach to public involvement. Consistent with federal and state requirements and best practices, guidelines emphasize that every plan and project be based on early and continuous stakeholder consultation and public involvement opportunities; provide timely information about transportation issues and decision-making processes to stakeholders; and provide the appropriate level of stakeholder involvement in the planning process. A complete summary of this plan's public involvement effort is provided in the Appendix C.

Market Research

Market research allows for incorporating public input on broader questions regarding policy priorities and level of satisfaction.

In addition to the three rounds of outreach completed through this plan, stakeholder input is gathered through ongoing market research. Market research is a customer-based technique to gather data used to reduce risks when making decisions and is a tool to increase understanding of the target market. It is an effective way to involve those who may not or cannot otherwise have their voice heard through more formal participation. Market research allows for incorporating public input on broader questions regarding policy priorities and level of satisfaction with investment decisions and services.

Mn/DOT has used market research methods for years and has conducted several important and revealing market research studies since completion of the 2003 Statewide Transportation Plan. These efforts include the Omnibus Survey, which has been conducted annually since 1987. The Omnibus Survey gauges Minnesotans' opinions on transportation issues ranging from satisfaction with maintenance services to investment priorities. Other specific market research has examined the public's tolerance for congestion, potential acceptance for a mileage-based user fee, perception of Mn/DOT's traffic management tools in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (e.g., ramp meters and overhead electronic signs), and perception of changes in speed limits and enforcement levels on state roads.

The plan development process is guided by state and federal regulations and statutes.

Federal and State Planning Factors

An important part of the plan development process is guided by state and federal regulations and statutes. The most recent federal transportation authorization bill (SAFETEA-LU), for example, provides guidance in a number of key areas and identifies specific stakeholder groups that must be provided an opportunity to participate in the planning process.

These requirements are codified in the United States Code of Federal Regulations under Title 23, Section 135 (f)(1) and state that “each State shall develop a long-range statewide transportation plan, with a minimum 20-year forecast period for all areas of the State, that provides for the development and implementation of the inter modal transportation system of the State.”

Planning factors were identified in SAFETEA-LU and subsequent guidance documents. These federal planning factors include:

- Support the economic vitality of the United States, the states, metropolitan areas, and non-metropolitan areas, 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 and throughout the state, for people and freight.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Explicit guidance is also given by the State of Minnesota. Minnesota Statute 174.03, Subdivision 1a, requires that an update of the transportation plan occur at least every six years. Furthermore, Minnesota State Statute 174.01, Subdivision 2, identifies the goals of Minnesota’s transportation system. These include:

- Provide safe transportation for users throughout the state.
- Provide multimodal and intermodal transportation that enhances mobility and economic development and provides access to all persons and businesses in Minnesota while ensuring that there is no undue burden placed on any community.
- Provide a reasonable travel time for commuters.
- Provide for the economical, efficient, and safe movement of goods to and from markets by rail, highway, and waterway.

- Encourage tourism by providing appropriate transportation to Minnesota facilities designed to attract tourists.
- Provide transit services throughout the state to meet the needs of transit users.
- Promote productivity through system management and the utilization of technological advancements.
- Maximize the long-term benefits received for each state transportation investment.
- Provide funding for transportation that, at a minimum, preserves the transportation infrastructure.
- Ensure that the planning and implementation of all modes of transportation are consistent with the environmental and energy goals of the state.
- Promote and increase the use of high-occupancy vehicles and low-emission vehicles.
- Provide an air transportation system sufficient to encourage economic growth and allow all regions of the state the ability to participate in the global economy.
- Increase transit use statewide by giving highest priority to the transportation modes with the greatest people-moving capacity and lowest long-term economic and environmental cost.
- Promote and increase bicycling as an energy-efficient, nonpolluting, and healthful form of transportation.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the state's transportation sector.
- Accomplish these goals with minimal impact on the environment.

The Plan Development Process

This performance-based plan has been developed by Mn/DOT in cooperation and consultation with its partner transportation providers, both public and private, stakeholders, and the general public. It results from work and discussions over a two-year period beginning in the spring of 2007.

A Performance-Based Approach

In 2003, Mn/DOT adopted its first performance-based state plan. That plan identified outcomes for 10 policy areas and established specific performance measures and targets or in some cases identified areas for the future development of measures and targets.

Following adoption of the 2003 Statewide Transportation Plan, Mn/DOT's eight transportation districts developed long-range district plans that identified the investments needed to meet the performance targets and also set investment priorities within projected available revenues. These plans won the Transportation Planning Excellence Award from the Federal Highway Administration in 2006.

The focus on and inclusion of performance measures, indicators, and targets has been retained in this update.

The focus on and inclusion of performance measures, indicators, and targets has been retained in this update. Performance measures, indicators, and targets provide quantitative information to transportation authorities and decision-makers. Measures are used to track system performance over time for a broad set of system characteristics such as condition of infrastructure, traveler safety, and traffic congestion. Numerous existing performance measures and indicators have been incorporated into this plan and several new measures are proposed.

Mn/DOT's senior leadership is briefed quarterly on the status of system performance as well as internal operations.

As part of the overall effort to incorporate performance information into the investment decision-making process, Mn/DOT's senior leadership is briefed on the status of system performance for the various modes including highways, transit, bicycles and pedestrians, aeronautics, and freight as well as that of internal operations. The annual highway infrastructure report, for example, provides core information on Mn/DOT's progress toward its performance goals for the highway infrastructure. These reports include performance data for pavements, bridges, serious injury crashes, Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (TCMA) congestion, and interregional corridor (IRC) mobility.

Developing the 2009-2028 Statewide Transportation Policy Plan

The development of the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan was advised by a Statewide Plan Steering Committee with primary support provided by Mn/DOT's Office of Investment Management (OIM) and technical support provided by subject specific, technical working groups. The Steering Committee included Mn/DOT's central and district leadership, directors of Mn/DOT specialty offices, and representatives of key external stakeholders, including state and federal agencies, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, cities, and counties. The Steering Committee met regularly throughout the plan development process to review progress, consider the broader vision, and advise on general policy direction. Committee members examined trends and issues, reviewed technical workgroup recommendations, and considered stakeholder feedback.

The plan is the result of analysis and discussions over a two-year period. As illustrated in Figure 2.5, it began in the spring of 2007 with a series of outreach meetings held across the state. Regional and local transportation stakeholders identified and discussed the transportation issues they felt were important to their region and state. The planning team identified the following themes from the feedback provided in this first round of outreach:

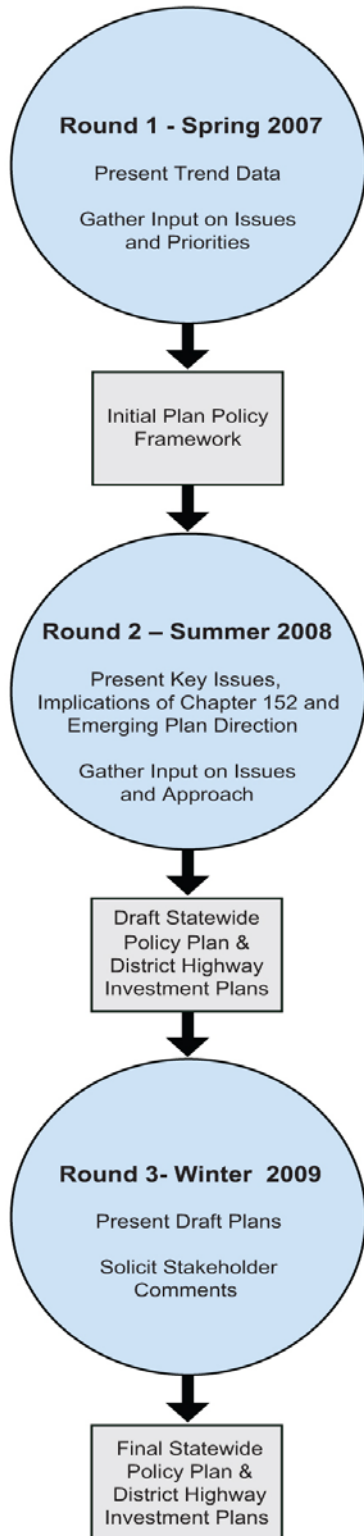


Figure 2.5 Stakeholder Outreach
 Source: Mn/DOT Office of Investment Management

- Mn/DOT should set priorities for its limited funding, but should also get additional funding.
- System preservation should remain a top priority but other areas, such as operations and maintenance, should not be overlooked.
- Mn/DOT should focus on these key system performance needs:
 - Interregional Corridors
 - Metropolitan Area Congestion
 - Safety
- The plan should address the challenges of increasing freight traffic.
- Mn/DOT should increase the role of transit in the state.
- Stronger partnerships to support local economic development are needed.

The Steering Committee met for the first time in June 2007 to consider the comments received in the first round of outreach and to identify major issues to be addressed in the statewide plan update. Following the tragic collapse of the I-35W Bridge on August 1, 2007, a decision was made to suspend the formal planning process as Mn/DOT staff focused on more immediate issues. Over the next six months, the planning team worked with the technical working groups to address the issues and objectives as identified by the through the first round of outreach and refined by the Steering Committee. The working groups examined trend data and developed proposed policy directions, performance measures, and strategies.

The Steering Committee reconvened in January 2008 and met monthly through June 2008 to consider input from the technical working groups and establish draft policy objectives, strategies, performance measures, and targets. Figure 2.5 shows that a second round of outreach meetings was held in July 2008 to share the results of the Steering Committee work and the implications of the Chapter 152 transportation funding bill enacted during the 2008 Minnesota Legislative session. The second round of outreach produced robust feedback, which is summarized here and more fully documented in Appendix C:

- Mn/DOT’s proposed state highway priorities and strategies for available funding are in general appropriate.
- The Chapter 152 Bridge Program is necessary to address the state’s bridge needs.

- High benefit/low cost strategies to address safety and mobility needs are an appropriate use of funding.
- Alternate modes of transportation and multimodal connections are important part of Minnesota's transportation future.
- Stronger partnerships and the flexibility to respond to local partnership opportunities are needed.
- Mn/DOT should be a stronger advocate for transportation funding and clearly communicate all of its transportation needs to the public and legislature.
- The plan should emphasize the importance of the transportation system (all modes) to the economic vitality of the state.
- Mn/DOT should make its decision-making processes more transparent and easily understandable by the public.

In the fall of 2008, Mn/DOT developed a draft plan which incorporated input from the Steering Committee as well as the comments received throughout the first two rounds of outreach. In late January, the draft plan was posted on the web for public review. Individuals and groups had the opportunity to submit comments in a variety of ways: electronically on the Mn/DOT website using a specially designed online public comment tool, by US Mail, email, facsimile, or telephone.

In February and March of 2009, the third and final round of outreach meetings were held in the form of open houses, one in each of the eight Mn/DOT Districts. During these open house meetings, participants had the opportunity to ask questions and submit comments verbally or on comments cards. In addition, two formal public hearings were held in March of 2009 to gather testimony on the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan. These hearings were conducted via video conference, which allowed for testimony to be received from 16 remote locations throughout the state. Overall, more than 300 people participated in the open house meetings, and 22 individuals, 11 stakeholder groups and 4 government agencies either provided testimony at the public hearings or submitted written comments.

Comments received on the Draft Statewide Transportation Policy Plan during the public review period are summarized below. While many comments focused on the need for additional information or suggested a detailed strategy, several general themes emerged:

- The multimodal approach to transportation outlined in the plan was broadly supported by a wide spectrum of stakeholder groups.
- The plan should more fully address other modes such as transit and passenger rail, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and other policy issues such as Complete Streets, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) conformity, and the need for Twin Cities congestion targets and additional mobility measures.
- Noting that the plan included an investment plan for highways but not for the other modes, Mn/DOT should develop similar investment plans for transit, freight, passenger rail, aeronautics, and other modes.

- Interest in developing long-range investment plans for system operations.

Comments, proposed responses, and proposed changes to the draft plan were presented to the Steering Committee on June 4, 2009 and Mn/DOT's Transportation Program Investment Committee (TPIC) on June 8, 2009. The TPIC recommended that the Commissioner adopt the plan with the changes identified.

Several changes were made to the draft plan based on the input received. Perhaps the most significant change was the separation of the Statewide Highway Investment Plan from the body of the policy plan. Although developed and reviewed concurrently, the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan and the Statewide Highway Investment Plan will be published as two distinct documents. In the future, Mn/DOT will develop modal (rail, transit, aeronautics etc.) investment plans in a similar manner to the Statewide Highway Investment Plan. These modal investment plans will identify performance-based needs and associated costs, project future revenues and identify investment priorities over the planning period.

¹ The Minneapolis-Saint Paul Metropolitan Area is a federally designated transportation management area (TMA). A TMA is an urbanized area with population greater than 200,000 that must meet additional federal requirements for continuation and comprehensive transportation planning, including addressing congestion management based on a metropolitan-wide strategy.