

## Statewide Themes from ATP Outreach Meetings

A series of District/ATP area outreach meetings were conducted throughout the state in March and April, 2007.

<u>Outreach Meeting</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>
Metropolitan Council Transportation Advisory Board (TAB)	Saint Paul	March 21, 2007
District 6 ATP/Stakeholders	Rochester	March 23, 2007
District 8 ATP/Stakeholders	Willmar	March 30, 2007
District 2 ATP/Stakeholders	Bemidji	April 2, 2007
District 1 ATP/Stakeholders	Duluth	April 5, 2007
District 4 ATP/Stakeholders	Fergus Falls	April 9, 2007
District 3 ATP/Stakeholders	Saint Cloud	April 12, 2007
District 7 ATP/Stakeholders	Saint Peter	April 13, 2007
Metro District Capital Improvement Committee (CIC)	Roseville	April 20, 2007

Regional and local transportation stakeholders were given the opportunity to identify and discuss the transportation issues they felt were important to their region and the state. While a variety of issues were raised, they can be summarized under the following major themes.

**Set Priorities given Limited Funding** – Stakeholders acknowledge that transportation funding is limited and are concerned that this trend will continue into the future. Several suggested looking at alternative funding options as well as traditional funding sources to increase transportation resources. However, if additional funds do not become available, setting priorities based on the most cost-effective system improvements is necessary.

**Maintain System Preservation as a Top Priority**– The general consensus is that system preservation is essential for protecting the State's transportation investments and minimizing life-cycle costs, and appropriate resources need to be allocated to cost-effective system preservation strategies. There is interest in considering investments in innovative lower cost strategies, like reclamation. However, there are also concerns that there are limitations to these strategies and they may not be appropriate in all circumstances. Many believe that more attention needs to be paid to **operations and maintenance**, and expanding partnerships with local jurisdictions is a strategy that would reduce operations and maintenance costs.

**Focus on other Key System Needs** – Many stakeholders felt that investments in the following key areas need to continue, although more cost-effective strategies will be necessary given funding challenges:

- **Interregional Corridors (IRCs):** Continuing to invest in IRCs was identified as an important issue for many stakeholders, particularly for IRCs not meeting performance targets. Many suggested that more coordination with local jurisdictions is needed across corridors and IRCs. Increasing partnerships is a strategy suggested for preserving corridor right-of-way and addressing access management issues.
- **Metro Congestion:** The increasing level of congestion in the Twin Cities metro area is a major concern. Even those stakeholders outside of the Metro District noted that the repercussions of congestion spread beyond the metro area to greater Minnesota. Lower-cost/high benefit congestion management strategies along with increased investments in transit are seen as more viable for improving mobility in the metro area than focusing only on a few mega-projects.

- **Safety:** Safety is an important issue for stakeholders throughout the state. Many are particularly concerned with addressing safety on rural local two-lane roads. There is support for continuing to identify and implement cost-effective strategies for improving safety.

**Address the Challenges of Increasing Freight Traffic** – The impacts of increased truck traffic is a major theme highlighted in the discussions in almost every district. Many felt that the State should better accommodate freight movements in order to promote local and state economic development. It is assumed that the trend toward more and heavier trucks will likely continue due, in part, to changes in agriculture and the emergence and growth of the energy industry. Agriculture is using larger trucks and equipment and the growth in ethanol plants and wind farms require more oversized vehicles for transporting equipment. In addition, once ethanol plants are on-line, they are a major truck trip generator for incoming corn and outgoing ethanol and ethanol by-products.

Stakeholders suggested a broad range of strategies to address freight issues:

- **Multi-modal Alternatives:** Promote multi-modal alternatives for freight movements. Rail should play a larger role as the demand for freight shipments increase. Waterways also have a role to play. The port in Duluth is a point of entry for oversized shipments with significant potential for moving more freight.
- **More Passing Lanes:** Provide more passing and bypass lanes on two-lane roadways that are also heavy freight corridors.
- **Ten-ton Roads:** Ensure there is an adequate ten-ton road network (State and local) to accommodate more and heavier truck traffic throughout the state.
- **Weight Limits:** Enforce weight restrictions to prevent local system damage caused by trucks.
- **Truck Weight Standards:** Consider increasing truck weight standards to be consistent with neighboring states and to better accommodate inter-state shipments.

**Increase the Role of Transit** – The need to increase transit was brought up in the greater Minnesota districts as well as the Metro District. Transit in the Metro District and nearby urban areas such as Rochester, Mankato, and Saint Cloud, should focus on reducing congestion and providing regional transit connections between the Twin Cities and neighboring trade centers. Transit in all parts of the state must increasingly provide regional travel options for aging populations and for persons with limited mobility. These needs are especially pronounced in greater Minnesota. There is a need for transit in greater Minnesota to provide access to desired destinations regardless of city or county borders.

**Strengthen Partnerships to Support Local Economic Development** – Another common theme heard throughout the state is the importance of transportation in economic development. Many suggested that transportation investments are needed to sustain, accommodate, or promote economic growth. Increasing partnerships could allow leveraging of resources to support local transportation priorities and local economic development efforts. A few stakeholders noted that the ATP process is a positive tool for working with local jurisdictions that should be built upon to expand partnership opportunities.