
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHAT IS A "MPO"?

Since the enactment of the 1962 Federal-Aid Highway Act, it has been a requirement that each urbanized area with a population of 50,000 or more persons establish a *Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)*. An urbanized area, as defined by the Census Bureau, is composed of one or more "central places" plus the adjacent, densely settled urban fringe. While the organizational structure and philosophy of each MPO may be different (a reflection of local needs and conditions), the overall purpose of each MPO is the same: to conduct a transportation planning process that is "*continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive*".

The Ithaca urbanized area first crossed the 50,000 population threshold in the 1990 Census with a population of 50,133. The 2000 Census showed Tompkins County with a population of 96,501 and an Ithaca urbanized area population of 53,528. The urbanized area is composed of the City of Ithaca, the Village of Cayuga Heights, the Village of Lansing, most of the Town of Ithaca, and a portion of the Town of Dryden (see attached map). On September 30, 1992, the Governor of the State of New York joined with these municipalities, Tompkins County, and the New York State Department of Transportation in executing the Memorandum of Agreement formally designating the *Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council (ITCTC)* as the MPO for the Ithaca urbanized area.

The ITCTC is structured at three levels: The *Transportation Policy Committee* is the final MPO decision-making authority and is composed of the primary elected official from each member government. Cornell University, the New York State Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration and Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit are also represented.

The *Transportation Planning Committee* is responsible for coordinating and managing the area's transportation planning activities and providing technical assistance and recommendations to the Policy Committee. The Planning Committee is composed primarily of lead technical staff from the member entities.

The *Central Staff* is responsible for performing the administrative and technical services necessary to operate the MPO.

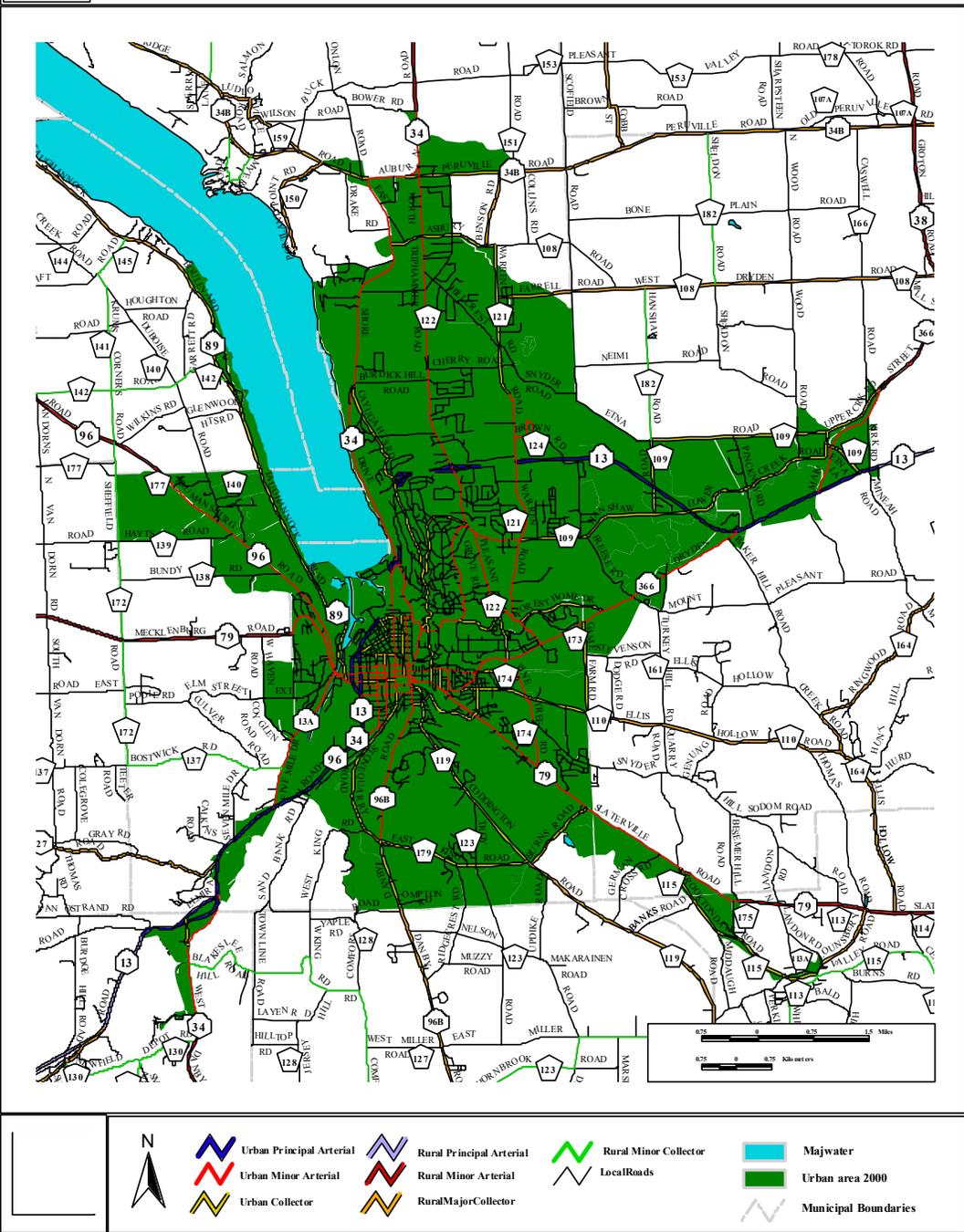
The operations and procedures of the ITCTC are guided by the Unified Operations Plan, adopted by formal resolution in August, 1992 and last amended on May 16, 2000. This document specifies that the Transportation Planning Committee has responsibility for the development of a comprehensive transportation plan - referred to as the *Long-Range Transportation Plan* - to be forwarded to the Policy Committee for its consideration.

WHY PLAN?

"Planning may be considered the conscious organization of human activities to serve human needs. Better planning can be accomplished by greater integration of the separate components at each scale into a broader, more coherent framework. To be effective, planning must consider not only the physical environment but the way people perceive and utilize each segment of the environment." Thomas F. Saarinen, Environmental Planning: Perception and Behavior (1976).



ITHACA-TOMPKINS COUNTY 2000 URBANIZED AREA BOUNDARY FOR TRANSPORTATION



"Planning is preparing for the future; if order is to be created out of chaos, the solution will be found in the process of planning. Excellent communities, like excellent businesses, must plan to ensure a successful future. In a highly competitive environment, planning enables local governments to use public resources in a more focused, efficient way." Roger K. Hedrick, AICP, What is LAPC? (1993).

These definitions suggest that the process of planning is intended to facilitate *rational decisions* that lead to *efficient utilization* of limited resources in order to accomplish a *desired end-state*.

The most recent federal transportation act, the *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)*, continue and enhance the mandates of the *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA)*, requiring a metropolitan transportation planning process and the development of metropolitan transportation plans.

The metropolitan transportation planning process is often referred to as the **"3-C Process"**. These C's are:

Continuing - the process must be on-going, adjusting to changes in the urban form and conditions over time, and not a one-time effort;

Cooperative - the process should include all affected governments (e.g., local, regional, state and federal), industries (e.g., transit, freight, construction), and persons, all working in conjunction to achieve a desired end-state;

Comprehensive - the process, particularly under the requirements of TEA-21, must consider "all modes of transportation", as well as "the effects of all transportation projects to be undertaken within the metropolitan area". (Source: Section 134 of title 23, United States Code)

The TEA-21 legislation (and corresponding

regulations for implementation) mandates the development of a specific transportation plan for each metropolitan area. These plans, developed under the *3-C Process*, must address a 20-year forecast period, must include a financial plan that demonstrates that the plan is financially feasible, and must address all modes of transportation (to the extent appropriate for each area).

Specific deadlines for completion and approval of plans were established in the regulations. The deadline established for the original *2015 Long-Range Transportation Plan* for the Ithaca-Tompkins County Area was December 1994. As Tompkins County is in attainment for air quality standards the ITCTC must update the long-range transportation plan every five years. The deadline for the *2025 Long-Range Transportation Plan* update was December 2004. Failure to meet regulatory deadlines can result in the withholding of federal transportation funds (including transit assistance). This is perhaps the strongest response to the question of "Why Plan?"

These requirements and deadlines have generally accomplished what Congress intended - that every metropolitan area engages in a meaningful transportation planning process.

WHAT'S IN THE PLAN?

Purpose

The primary objective of the ITCTC Long-Range Transportation Plans has been to arrive at a ***common vision for the future of the transportation system and for the community***. While the *ISTEA/TEA-21* regulations tend to focus on *quantitative* analyses, they also recognize the individuality of each metropolitan area and that each MPO has unique resource/analytical capacities and capabilities. As such, the TEA-21 regulations allow each MPO to address the regulatory planning requirements in a manner consistent with local circumstances. The

ITCTC recognized very early in the process that it would be necessary to focus on qualitative issues in order to meet the deadlines. The ITCTC also realized that the development of a *community vision* was an essential prerequisite to any and all subsequent transportation planning or projects.

The *community vision* for the future of the metropolitan transportation system was built on the goals and objectives in the 2020 LRTP. These goals and objectives in turn were originally articulated by the broader community and channeled through the citizen-based Transportation Task Teams during development of the 2015 LRTP. The Task Teams were provided direct input from the general community through a number of formal and informal conduits, including public meetings and open Task Team committee meetings.

For the 2025 LRTP update process the goals and objectives received a thorough re-evaluation. The LRTP Sub-committee created by the ITCTC Planning Committee reviewed the update process. The first LRTP update public meeting, held September 24, 2003, focused on the goals and objectives and resulted in numerous comments and changes. The Planning Committee of the ITCTC reviewed the evolving Goals and Objectives during preparation of the 2025 LRP update and addressed them at advertised meetings open to the public. Throughout their development, the draft goals and objectives were available to the public at the ITCTC web site. The new goals and objectives presented in this plan continue to provide an ambitious agenda for the ITCTC staff and participating agencies.

Geographic Coverage

One of the most common questions is "*what area does the plan cover?*"

In December 1994 the ITCTC passed a resolution expanding its Metropolitan Area Planning Boundary from including only the Census defined urbanized area, to covering all of Tompkins

County. This continues to be the planning boundary in effect and was used for development the *2025 Long-Range Transportation Plan*.

Planning Process

The Ithaca-Tompkins County metropolitan area is a unique area to Upstate New York. Due largely to the strong community ties to its three major academic institutions; the socioeconomic profile of the residents includes relatively high levels of education and family income. The citizens of the metropolitan area are acutely tuned to the activities of local government and have a keen interest in the environmental ramifications and impacts of development. Given this planning environment, ITCTC staff designed a plan update process that facilitated broad-based community participation while addressing the strategic issues associated with plan implementation.

The ITCTC Planning Committee, via a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Sub-committee dedicated to this project, supervised the long-range plan update process. The LRTP sub-committee met regularly starting in the fall of 2003 and through 2004 to review, comment and provide direction on the work of staff.

Working drafts of the 2025 Long-Range Transportation Plan were continuously made available to the public via the ITCTC web page. Updated drafts were presented to the Planning and Policy Committees during their regular meetings, which are open to the public. Three heavily publicized public meetings were held as follows: September 24, 2003, May 5, 2004 and September 9, 2004. Direct mailings, emails, newspaper articles, press releases, radio interviews and paid newspaper ads were all used in an effort to reach the public and solicit public participation in the plan development process. Comments were accepted throughout the process starting with the first public meeting and ending with an advertised deadline of December 1, 2004. All comments were addressed in Appendix A of the *final 2025 Long-Range Transportation Plan*.

Document Organization

The framework for the *2025 Long Range Transportation Plan* consists of two main sections: first, six chapters making up the text of the plan; second, three appendices. Each of these sections is summarized below.

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Chapter 1. Background and Overview

This section provides an introduction to the *ITCTC*, general population and employment statistics, information on local travel trends/characteristics, and an overview of the planning process. The source of this information is generally the U.S. Census Bureau (1990 and 2000 Census), the National Personal Transportation Survey (1995) and the National Household Travel Survey (2001). The narrative on travel trends/characteristics contains an extensive analysis of the Census Journey-to-Work surveys including mode choice and commuting patterns and travel time to work.

Chapter 2. Vision Statements

The *community vision* was articulated through the participatory elements of the planning process. Specifically, the Goals and Objectives provide the direction necessary to begin the process of achieving the desired end-state for the community and its transportation system. The goals, presented alphabetically by issue-area headings, follow.

Bicycle Issues

- Goal I: *Make bicycling safer.*
- Goal II: *Promote bicycling as a legitimate form of transportation.*
- Goal III: *Create a local transportation system that is bicycle-friendly.*
- Goal IV: *Promote awareness of and sensitivity to bicycling issues and enhance cyclist skills.*
- Goal V: *Protect people and property while encouraging bicycling.*

Community Issues and Transportation

- Goal I: *Develop a transportation system that enhances the quality of life for*

Tompkins County residents and visitors.

- Goal II: *Protect and enhance the economic vitality of Tompkins County.*

Environmental Issues

- Goal I: *Ensure that the transportation initiatives address air emissions issues in a comprehensive manner with the goal of improving or maintaining air quality.*
- Goal II: *Encourage and implement the development of a transportation system, which uses energy efficiently and minimizes transportation related traditional fossil fuel consumption.*
- Goal III: *Limit the negative impacts or disruptions to the natural, scenic, or cultural environment.*

Infrastructure Issues

- Goal I: *Improve the planning and design of local infrastructure.*
- Goal II: *Identify existing & future infrastructure needs.*

Mobility Issues

- Goal I: *Develop a transportation system that is accessible to all users.*
- Goal II: *Promote and use design innovations to achieve system diversification and efficient intermodal linkages.*
- Goal III: *Achieve and maintain the efficient operation of the transportation system in Tompkins County.*
- Goal III: *Enhance the movement of freight in the Ithaca-Tompkins County metropolitan area.*

Pedestrian Issues

- Goal I: *Create a safe and efficient network for pedestrian travel.*
- Goal II: *Urge pedestrian oriented land use development.*
- Goal III: *Promote walking as a viable mode of transportation.*

Public Transportation Issues

- Goal I: *Identify existing and emerging markets and provide a package of public transportation services capable of capturing those markets.*
- Goal II: *Operate safe, comfortable, accessible, environmentally friendly, transit vehicles.*
- Goal III: *Exceed customer expectations for transit system convenience.*
- Goal IV: *Develop infrastructure resources to support public transportation.*
- Goal V: *Promote comprehensive public transportation services to improve quality of life, to encourage economic revitalization.*

Chapter 3. Transportation System

The elements of the *Transportation System* chapter provide the necessary background and system inventory information. Five specific sections are included in this chapter: ***Infrastructure, Mobility, Intermodal/Freight, Environmental, and Financial.*** Major issues affecting the future of the transportation system are addressed under each of these headings.

Of particular importance is the *Financial* section. As previously discussed, the *TEA-21* legislation requires that long-range plans be "*fiscally constrained*". This means that estimated resources must balance with projected expenditures, regardless of fund source. Expenditures were projected based on several items: (1) the funding levels contained in the current Transportation Improvement Program, the five-year capital program for federal transportation investment in the metropolitan area; (2) analysis performed by NYSDOT to predict bridge and state-system pavement needs; (3) maintaining the local government "status quo" with regard to transit, maintenance and operations, and capital replacement projects. It was evident from this analysis that additional funding would be necessary in order to pursue major projects beyond the current level. The table on page ES-7 provides a brief synopsis of the investment

strategy.

Chapter 4. Scenario Analysis

This is a new chapter in the LRTP. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the results of an analysis of future development scenarios conducted jointly by the ITCTC and the Tompkins County Planning Department (TCPD). The TCPD developed the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan (Comprehensive Plan) at the same time that the LRTP was being updated. This provided the opportunity for both agencies to coordinate their efforts to ensure the creation of mutually supportive planning documents.

In order to meet energy and air quality reporting requirements for the State of New York Energy Plan, ITCTC staff used its travel demand model and some off-model techniques to make future projections of energy use and emissions. The projections were made based on potential future development scenarios crafted in cooperation with the TCPD.

The scenario analysis indicates that the development scenarios proposed by the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan and supported by the LRTP will generate less vehicle miles traveled, energy use, greenhouse gas emissions and criteria pollutant emissions than a scenario modeled on continuing the development trends of the past ten years. Off – model project analysis indicate additional reductions in fuel use and emissions.

Chapter 5. Projects for Implementation

Selected activities for implementation were identified. This chapter of the plan is organized around the functional headings of **Trail Development, Planning, Mobility/Capacity, Infrastructure and Operations and Maintenance.**

ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE ALLOCATIONS 2005-2024			
Project Type	Expense Allocation	Percent of Total	Percent of Category
Highway: Bridge	\$97,500,000	9.0%	12%
Pavement	\$181,071,112	16.6%	22%
Safety	\$40,472,949	3.7%	5%
Enhancement	\$6,000,000	0.6%	0.7%
Operating & Maintenance	\$408,685,654	37.6%	50%
Multimodal Capacity	\$85,729,273	7.9%	10.5%
<i>Subtotal</i>	\$819,458,989	75.1%	100%
Transit: Capital Facilities	\$7,560,736	0.7%	2.8%
Operating	\$210,647,242	19.5%	78.4%
Maintenance/Misc.	\$1,981,434	0.2%	0.7%
Buses	\$48,394,507	4.5%	18%
Subtotal	\$268,583,920	24.9%	100%
Total	\$1,088,042,909	100%	

While not every activity fits neatly under one of these headings, they provide a useful organizational framework. These activities are presented below.

Trail Development Efforts

- Implementation of a Trail Development Strategy

Planning Efforts

Land Use Planning and Policies

- Review of Local Development Regulations
- Develop Traditional/Physical Land Use Plans
- Develop a Countywide SR-13 Corridor Plan
- Develop a Countywide Scenic Roads Plan

Transportation Data Collection Activities

- Develop a Coordinated Annual Traffic Count Program
- Conduct a household travel survey for Tompkins County

Promotional and Educational Strategies

- Safety Education
- Transit Promotions
- Bicycle Promotions
- Pedestrian Promotions
- Develop Bicycle Suitability Map for Tompkins County

Transportation Infrastructure

- Roadways Needs Assessment

- Bicycle Needs Assessment
- Local Design Standards for Bicycle Facilities
- Pedestrian Facilities Planning
- Transit Infrastructure

Mobility/Capacity Efforts

Transportation Demand Management Programs

- Voluntary Employee Commute Options (ECO) Program
- Ride-Matching Program
- Voluntary Variable Work Hours Program

Community Based Projects

- Study of the Parking System in the City of Ithaca
- Study Implementation of Car Sharing Program in Tompkins County
- Cornell Daily-Fee Parking System Study
- Northeast Subarea Transportation Study Follow-up
- Study of Mobility Impaired Populations

Transit Programs

- Passenger Information Services
- Enhanced Downtown Ithaca Transit Facilities (City Center Project)
- Passenger Facilities Improvements
- NTPP Implementation of Study Recommendations
- Linking Collegetown and Downtown Ithaca-Feasibility Study

Transportation Systems Management

- Traffic Signal Upgrade Program
- Intersection Studies

Operations and Maintenance Efforts

Local Resource Sharing

- Personnel
- Equipment
- Materials Purchasing & Storage
- Review of Highway Jurisdiction
- Snow Plowing Priority Plan

Enforcement Actions

- Priority Enforcement Plan
- Study the Use of Remote Enforcement Options

- Traffic Clearing Plan
- Hazardous Materials Routing
- Accident Reporting System

Freight Movement

- Freight Transportation Study – Implement Study Recommendations

Chapter 6. TEA-21 Narrative

This section of the LRTP provides specific responses to the seven *Planning Requirements* and *Eleven Plan Requirements* contained in the TEA-21 legislation and corresponding regulations. These responses are intended to inform the public, local, state and federal officials regarding the level of regulatory conformity achieved by this plan.

APPENDICES

There are three appendices to the report.

Appendix A – Summary of Comments and Responses

Public comments submitted during the various public meetings and comment periods during development of the *2025 Long-Range Transportation Plan* are reproduced in this appendix. Responses to the final comments are also addressed included.

Appendix B - Inventory Transportation Documents:

The *ITCTC Staff* created an annotated inventory of local (and other significant) plans that affect, or are affected by, the transportation decision-making process.

Appendix C – Glossary of Acronyms, Definitions, and Transportation Related Web Sites:

This section provides a guide to the jargon and numerous acronyms used by transportation planners, as well as a guide to useful transportation information on the internet.

THE PLAN?

Chapter 5, *Projects for Implementation*, provides a listing of the specific recommendations contained in the LRTP. Of the activities listed in this chapter the ITCTC has selected the following to be priority areas to facilitate implementation:

- Trail Development Efforts
- Transportation System Management Projects
- Transit Enhancement Initiatives

The *2025 Long Range Plan*, continues to represent a *policy plan* approach. It does not provide specific implementation details, such as where a specific road corridor should be located, or which traffic signals should be replaced. Those types of questions will be answered only as a result of additional planning efforts, and by law, projects that have not undergone specific alternative and impact analyses cannot be committed in the plan. The purpose of this plan is to articulate a *vision* for the future of the community and its transportation system and to offer points of departure that private citizens, local, state and federal agencies can use to begin to achieve that *vision*.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The federal regulations specify that the plan "*shall be reviewed and updated at least every five years to confirm its validity and consistency with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends and to extend the forecast period.*" (23 CFR 450.322).

The philosophy of the *ITCTC* is that this plan represents a 'living, breathing document'. It is not intended to become the proverbial "dust gathering plan" that gets filed on a shelf and never utilized. It is intended to be reviewed, and if necessary, revised on a regular basis.

The purpose of this planning effort has been to meet the regulatory requirements of the *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century* to develop and maintain an updated long-range *community vision* for the future of the local transportation system. The foundation of the process has been a community-based planning process open to the public and all interested parties.

The planning document identifies **\$1,088,042,909** for transportation expenditures over the 20-year plan horizon. Of this amount, 24.9% (\$268,583,920) represents investments in the operation of the transit system; 75.3% (\$819,458,989) represents non-transit investments (see page ES-7, above). Investment priorities concentrate on maintaining the operational capabilities of the existing system.

It is intended that this *Long Range Transportation Plan* be dynamic, changing on an "as needed" basis to reflect changes in the urban form, levels of resource availability, or changes in the *community vision* for the future.

CONCLUSION

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