

1. BACKGROUND – The MPO & The LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The MPO & The Long-Range Transportation Plan

What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization

In 1974, the U.S. Congress amended the Federal Aid Highway Act, which mandated that all Urbanized Areas having a population of 50,000 or more designate a single agency to administer federal transportation funds. The agencies that were established were called Metropolitan Planning Organizations. These organizations were to provide a transportation planning process for local, state and federal officials. Today, there are approximately 384 MPOs across the country, including the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council (ITCTC), the MPO for the Ithaca-Tompkins County area. The ITCTC was created in 1992 after the Ithaca Urbanized Area reached 50,000 population in the 1990 census.

ITCTC Organizational Structure

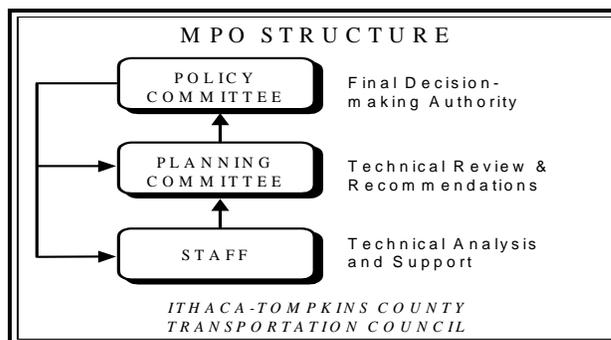
As the designated MPO for the Ithaca metropolitan area, the *ITCTC* is responsible for conducting a transportation planning process that is "*continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive*" (see infographic at the end of this chapter). In order to achieve this objective, the *ITCTC* is structured at three levels.

The **Transportation Policy Committee** is the final MPO decision-making authority and is composed of the primary elected official from each member government in the urbanized area. Cornell University, the New York State Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration and Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) and the other local governments in Tompkins County are also represented on the Policy Committee.

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

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

the MPO. The efforts of the Central Staff are supplemented by the "in-kind services" of various participants in the MPO process.



The MPO holds a series of meetings during each calendar year that are open to the public and where the public may speak on issues taken up by the Committees. The Policy and the Planning Committees meet alternately during the year, holding two joint committee meetings in June and December.

The core functions that the MPO must carry out include developing and maintaining both the long Range Transportation Plan and a Transportation Improvement Program, a 5-year program of transportation planning and capital projects. During the process of developing these planning documents the MPO informs the public of the activities and encourages their participation

The operations and procedures of the ITCTC are guided by the Unified Operations Plan, originally adopted by formal resolution in August, 1992 and updated in May 2000. This document specifies that the Transportation Planning Committee is responsible for development of the Comprehensive Long-Range Transportation Plan.

What is the Long-Range Transportation Plan

The regulations that guide the operation of all MPOs indicate that the transportation planning process must include the development of a transportation plan covering a 20-year planning horizon – the **Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)**. The ITCTC Long-Range Transportation Plan needs to be updated every five years. The first ITCTC LRTP was developed in 1995. The 2035 LRTP is the fourth update since the original.

Federal guidelines state the following basic direction for long-range transportation plans:

"The transportation plan shall include both long-range and short-range strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand."

Public Involvement

In this 2035 update of the Long Range Transportation Plan, the Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation Council will describe the vision for the transportation systems in Tompkins County taking into account the expressed views of residents, transit users, bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists concern for the environment and the quality of life in their communities.

In the broadest sense, transportation in its many forms affects our common future and what that our community will be like as it evolves. The LRTP looks at a developmental path that makes strategic choices, which have a positive impact on the overall quality of life. The LRTP supports the reduction of the negative impacts of transportation on the environment and our community and seeks to involve the public in making choices that contribute towards improving the quality of life in Tompkins County.

Through a series of public meetings, printed materials, media outreach and public presentations, the Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation County engaged the public and solicited comments and reactions on key components of the LRTP update. The intent was to gather comments on the public's thinking on a transportation system that:

1. Includes all modes.
2. Will be safe, convenient, and efficient.
3. Serve and enhance existing land use and planned growth.
4. Sustain the quality of the environment and enhance our communities.
5. Be financially feasible.
6. Provide access and connectivity with diverse land uses and modes.
7. Be maintained through local officials and citizens participating in transportation decision-making.

Introduction to Tompkins County

Located in Upstate New York, Tompkins County contains nine towns, six villages and is home to the City of Ithaca, one of the principal cities of the scenic Finger Lakes region (see **FIGURE 1.1**). The City of Ithaca, which is centrally located within Tompkins County, is situated at the southern end of Lake Cayuga and serves as the activity hub for the County and indeed for a greater multi-county region. The area is characterized by topography that is restricted and interrupted by the aftereffects of past glacial activity that created the Finger Lakes region. The climate of the area is variable and is characterized by well-defined seasons. The County is best known as an education center, as it is home to Cornell University, Ithaca College, and Tompkins Cortland Community College. These institutions provide important sources of revenue, employment, and cultural amenities for the

residents of Tompkins County as well as surrounding counties.

Metropolitan Planning Organization Geographic Structure

Urbanized Area

The ITCTC Urbanized Area is a Census designated contiguous urban area with a population greater than 50,000. The area is defined primarily by population density and the intensity of land uses. In Tompkins County 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 portions of the Towns of Dryden, Lansing and Ulysses (see **FIGURE 1.2**).

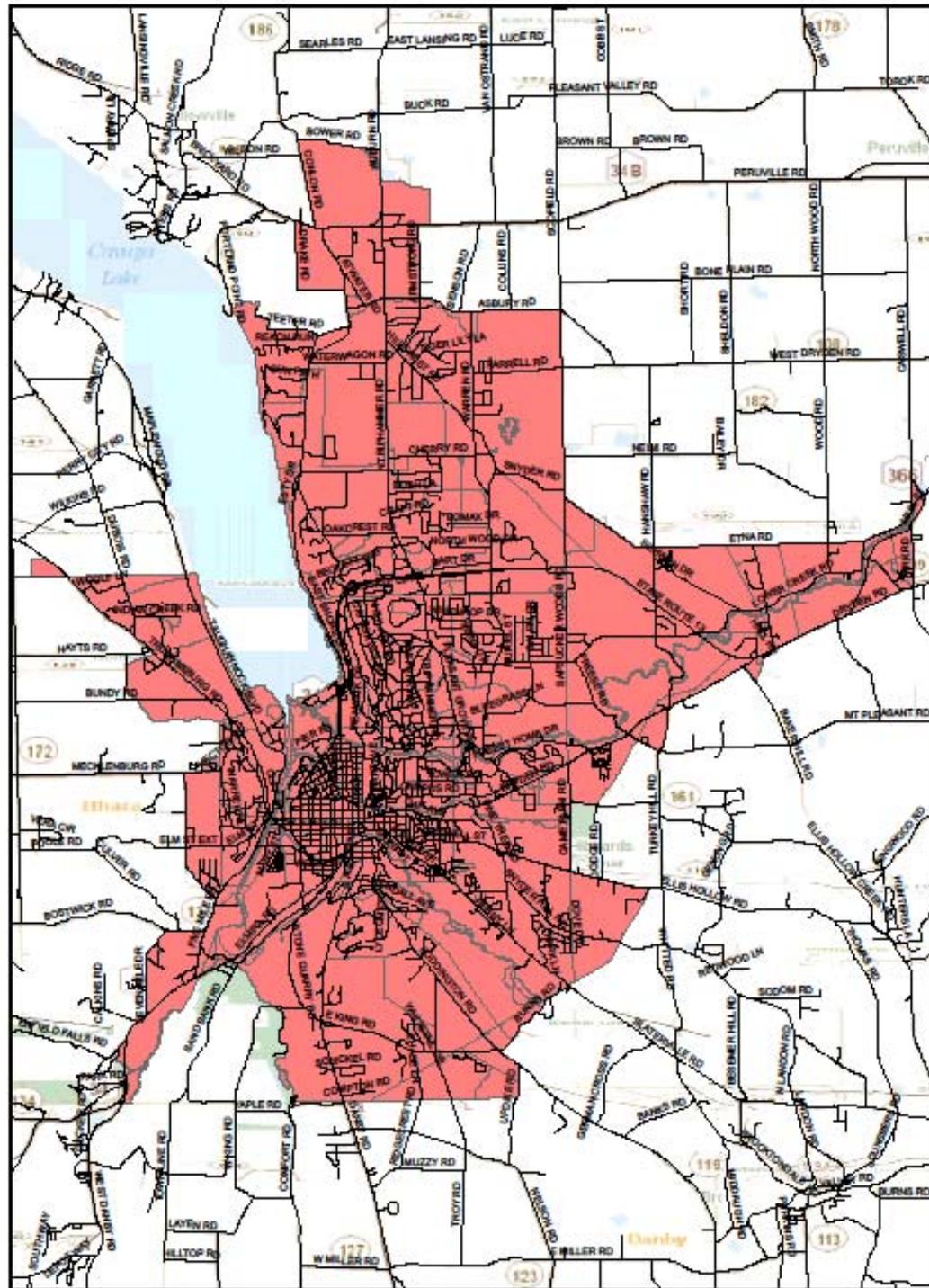
Metropolitan Planning Area

The Metropolitan Planning Area is the area for which the ITCTC will engage in transportation planning. For the ITCTC the Metropolitan Planning Area is all of Tompkins County. Any section of the planning area that is outside the Urbanized Area described above is considered rural for planning purposes. The urban/rural designation affects eligibility for certain programs and their associated funding sources.



Tompkins County Locator Map

FIGURE 1.1



Legend
 2010 Ithaca Urbanized Area

2010 FHWA Urbanized Area Boundary
DRAFT
Tompkins County, NY

Prepared by the Ithaca-Tompkins County
 Transportation Council 6/27/13



FIGURE 1.2

Metropolitan Planning Process

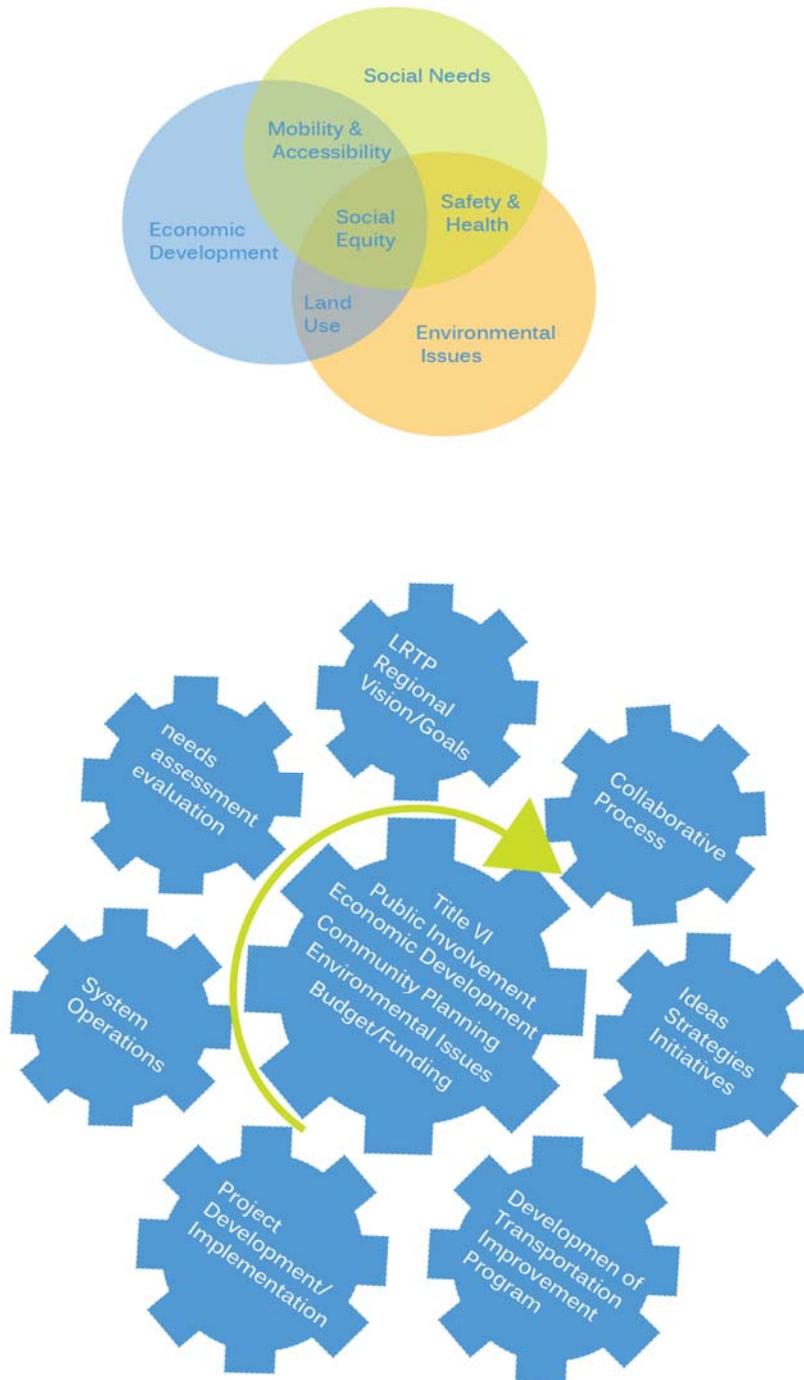


FIGURE 1.3