



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the ECTC

The Federal Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1973 required the formation of a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000. An MPO is a transportation policy-making organization made up of representatives from local government and transportation authorities. MPOs were created in order to ensure that existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs were based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive (3-C) planning process.

The Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council (ECTC) was designated by the Governor of New York as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Elmira Urbanized Area (Chemung County) in December 1974. The mission of the ECTC is to help build regional agreement on transportation investments and to balance highway, transit and other needs, leading to cost effective solutions to transportation problems. The ECTC is responsible for the planning and programming of any transportation project or program that includes United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding.

In accordance with U.S. DOT Metropolitan Planning Regulations, the ECTC develops three key products:

- Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP): A statement of the direction a region will take in making transportation system investments over the next twenty years.
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): A three to five year program of transportation projects and strategies drawn from the LRP.
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP): An annual document that coordinates the overall comprehensive transportation

planning in the urban region and includes specific information on which planning activities will be undertaken by the ECTC and its partner agencies during the upcoming year.

The ECTC has a policy committee of seven members, a planning committee, two professional staff, and is assisted by staff from cooperating agencies. Members of each committee and the agencies they represent are listed at the front of this document.



1.2 The Long Range Transportation Plan

1.2.1 DESCRIPTION

The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP) provides a blueprint for the transportation system in the Elmira-Chemung region over the next twenty years. It includes a discussion of all surface transportation modes including highways, bridges, roads, transit, bicycling, pedestrian, aviation and freight. As noted above, the ECTC is responsible for determining the investments to be made in the surface transportation system that utilize FHWA or FTA funds. Freight and aviation needs not directly on the surface transportation system are funded through



programs administered by the Federal Aviation Administration and Federal Railway Administration, among others.

1.2.2 FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The FHWA and FTA require that all MPOs prepare a long-range transportation plan that considers transportation investment needs over a minimum of a twenty-year forecast period. The transportation plan must be updated every five years. The U.S. DOT issues Metropolitan Planning Regulations that guide the development and updates of transportation plans and include certain requirements as noted below.

1.2.2.1 Seven Planning Factors

The metropolitan planning regulations require the MPO to consider seven planning factors in their transportation plans, as appropriate to the area. Specifically, the MPO must establish a process to consider projects and strategies that will:

- (1) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- (2) Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
- (3) Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight;
- (4) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life;
- (5) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- (6) Promote efficient system management and operation; and
- (7) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

1.2.2.2 FHWA Emphasis Areas

In addition to the planning factors noted above, the FHWA has adopted a number of emphasis areas and supports their inclusion in the transportation planning process. These emphasis areas include safety, environmental stewardship, and operation and management considerations. With respect to safety, FHWA considers safety issues to be important in the project and program development process. Environmental stewardship involves MPOs developing a routine practice to incorporate environmental decision-making in the planning process. This includes consideration of all environmental impacts of projects and programs on both the human and natural environment. Examples include noise, wetlands, historic resources, air quality, endangered species, and water runoff. Emphasis on regional operations includes ensuring that the existing transportation system is operating most efficiently and that technologies such as Intelligent Transportation Systems applications are implemented to increase system operational flexibilities and response to accidents or incidents.

1.2.2.3 Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Environmental Justice Requirements

Transportation plans must address the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Environmental Justice Executive Order of 1997. In short, these requirements ensure that transportation investments, services and benefits are fairly distributed to all people, regardless of race, national origin, or income, and that they have access to meaningful participation in the transportation planning process. As specific programs and projects are advanced through the planning stage, the ECTC will ensure that Title VI and environmental justice issues are considered. Title VI/environmental justice in transportation programs is achieved through:

- Avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority and low-income populations.



- Ensuring the full and fair participation in the transportation decision-making process by all potentially affected communities.
- Preventing the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

1.2.2.4 Public Involvement

The MPO must meet the FHWA/FTA public involvement requirements by actively involving all affected parties in the planning process and providing meaningful opportunities for affected parties to influence transportation investment and service decisions. The ECTC must consider the social, economic, and environmental consequences of their actions, and assure the public that transportation programs and services support mobility needs, community values, and land use plans of local jurisdictions.

Key features of effective public involvement include:

- Early and continuous involvement;
- Reasonable public availability of technical and other information;
- Collaborative input on alternatives, evaluation criteria, and mitigation needs;
- Open public meetings where matters related to transportation policies, programs, and projects are being considered; and
- Open access to the decision-making process prior to closure.

Throughout the development of this plan, the ECTC has made extensive efforts to provide opportunities for public involvement and comment, and this is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.2.2.5 NEPA

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) established a national policy to promote the protection of the environment in the actions and programs of federal agencies. The Metropolitan Planning Regulations require that projects funded with U.S.DOT funding comply with NEPA requirements. The NEPA process is designed for transportation officials to make project decisions that balance engineering and transportation needs with the consideration of social, economic and environmental factors. This process allows for involvement and input from the public, interest groups, resource agencies and local governments.

The NEPA process is intended to promote environmentally sound transportation decisions and cannot be used as a justification for decisions already made. Therefore, a coordinated approach between planning and project development contributes to the selection of transportation investments that reflect community needs, have benefited from an active public involvement process, and are sensitive to the environment. As projects are advanced through the planning and project development process, the NEPA requirements are addressed by the project sponsor, which in the ECTC region is usually the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT).

1.2.3 NEW YORK STATE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to FHWA/FTA planning requirements, the NYSDOT has adopted policies that will effect the ECTC LRP and investments throughout the state. The state is currently in the process of developing its statewide transportation plan --the New York State Transportation Master Plan, that will be completed later this year. In parallel with the development of the Master Plan, NYSDOT is undergoing a "transformation" process to reorganize the agency to better serve future transportation needs within the state.



1.2.3.1 Five Emphasis Areas and Transformation Strategies

As part of the development of the NYSDOT statewide Master Plan, "Transportation for 2025," five emphasis areas have been developed. These emphasis areas are as follows:

- Mobility and Reliability
- Economic Sustainability
- Safety
- Environment
- Security

In preparing this plan, the ECTC has been careful to ensure consistency with the NYSDOT emphasis areas. In addition, as part of the transformation of NYSDOT, the agency adopted several strategies to provide the backdrop for future transportation investments on statewide facilities. Among these strategies, several may impact the ECTC's proposed future transportation investments. These are listed below:

- Focus on key corridors
- Alter customer behavior
- Promote land use/transportation planning
- Apply "asset management" to infrastructure
- Promote sound environmental/energy practices

As NYSDOT implements the strategies adopted as part of its transformation process, the ECTC and the other twelve MPOs in the state will be better equipped to ensure that regional transportation investments and planning are consistent with the NYSDOT strategies.

1.2.3.2 State Energy Plan

New York State adopted an Energy Plan in 2002 that includes specific recommendations on ways to reduce energy consumption related to transportation facilities and services. Transportation

measures included in the plan are generally referred to as transportation demand management measures and many of the investments that the MPO regions have long been implementing are included in the plan. Examples include development of bicycling facilities, improvements to transit services to attract discretionary riders, and promotion of carpooling, vanpooling, and telecommuting programs to reduce peak period traffic and congestion in urban areas. In addition, NYSDOT has developed a methodology for estimating the energy impacts of transportation plans and programs and has required the MPOs to demonstrate that transportation plans and programs address the Energy Plan goals.

As reported in the 2003 Annual Report on the Energy Plan, significant progress has already been made to address the energy efficiency and greenhouse gas reduction goals in the Energy Plan, to reduce emissions from mobile sources and to improve mobility.

In the ECTC region, much progress has been made in addressing Plan goals through specific projects. These include the Catherine Valley Trail, the Horseheads Marsh Trail, the Lackawanna Trail, the Riverwalk, and other bike and pedestrian oriented transportation facilities. Federal funds from STP and FTA have also been used to purchase new buses, install and replace bus shelters, create marketing media campaigns, study the transit system efficiency, adjust schedules, and establish Sunday service in an effort to attract new riders.

The MPOs throughout the state continue to incorporate Energy Plan policies and goals in their decision-making on investments. In addition, the MPOs continue to incorporate projects consistent with the State Energy Plan in their transportation plans. As part of the development and implementation of the State Transportation Master Plan, it is expected that NYSDOT will begin to address Energy Plan goals in statewide projects and programs and on investments on state-owned or operated facilities (e.g. NYS Thruway). In Chapter 9 (Implementation of the Plan), there is a summary of how energy



impacts of this Plan's recommendations were evaluated. Plan goals.

1.3 Organization of the document

This document is organized in nine chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 discusses the relationship of this plan update to the 2001 Long Range Plan and demonstrates that much progress has been made in implementing the recommendations included in the 2001 Long Range Plan.

Chapter 2 also discusses the ECTC-adopted goals for the transportation plan, how these goals relate to federal and state requirements, objectives and specific information on how to measure progress in the future.

Chapter 3 includes an overview of the public participation process that has been used in the development of the Long Range Plan. An appendix summarizes public comment and participation at various meetings leading up to development of the Draft Long Range Plan.

Chapter 4 provides a profile of the ECTC region, including socioeconomic and demographic information and projections based upon past trends.

Chapter 5 includes a discussion of current transportation system conditions, based upon accepted NYSDOT practices in rating road and bridge conditions.

Chapter 6 presents future needs based on current conditions and projected trends.

Chapter 7 provides recommendations on potential investments to address future needs.

Chapter 8 is the Financial Element of the Long Range Plan and includes estimates of funding in the future. These estimates were provided by NYSDOT, the City of Elmira and Chemung County.

Chapter 9 shows how the plan will be implemented and describes next steps, including a discussion of prioritization and selection of future investments.



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