

a citizen's guide to
**Transportation
Decision Making**

TSCMPD

Topeka-Shawnee County
Metropolitan Planning Department



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Introduction

Have you ever wondered how decisions are made about transportation projects that affect your life? How do government officials decide where to put a bus stop, road, or bridge? How are these and other transportation projects planned? And how can you make sure your opinions are heard and considered by the planners, road designers, elected officials, and other citizens?

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) wrote this guide to give you the answers to these and other transportation-related questions. The Topeka-Shawnee County Metro Planning Department (Metro Planning) has added specific information about the process in the Topeka Region. We hope this guide will help you understand how transportation decisions are made at the local, state, and national levels. We believe that the better citizens understand the transportation decision-making process, the more certain it is we will have a transportation system that is safe, efficient, and responsive to the public's needs and concerns about its community and the natural environment.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are part of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT).

USDOT is a federal agency that funds, sets policy for safety, and provides other guidance for transportation by air, highways, rail, transit, and water.

The Topeka-Shawnee County Metro Planning Commission serves as the planning board and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Topeka Metropolitan Area.

How the Decision Making Starts

For many of us, transportation projects seem to come from nowhere. Others may vaguely remember a project “promised” years ago. Too often, too many people have negative impressions of how transportation projects come about.

Instead, try comparing the transportation decision-making process to the creative process for producing a piece of pottery. The potter begins with a mass of clay and an idea for the final creation begins to take shape, there are changes and adjustments that have to be made, with some clay added here and there.

You, the public, are involved in the shaping and adding to make the creation as beautiful and useful as possible. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), and the Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Department (Metro Planning), are your planning partners in this process. We want, and look forward to, your involvement from the beginning to the end of each transportation project.

With your help, this planning partnership can do its part to keep the transportation system as safe and efficient as possible. We also want the system to be environmentally and community-friendly. Please read this guide, and contact us with any questions you may have.

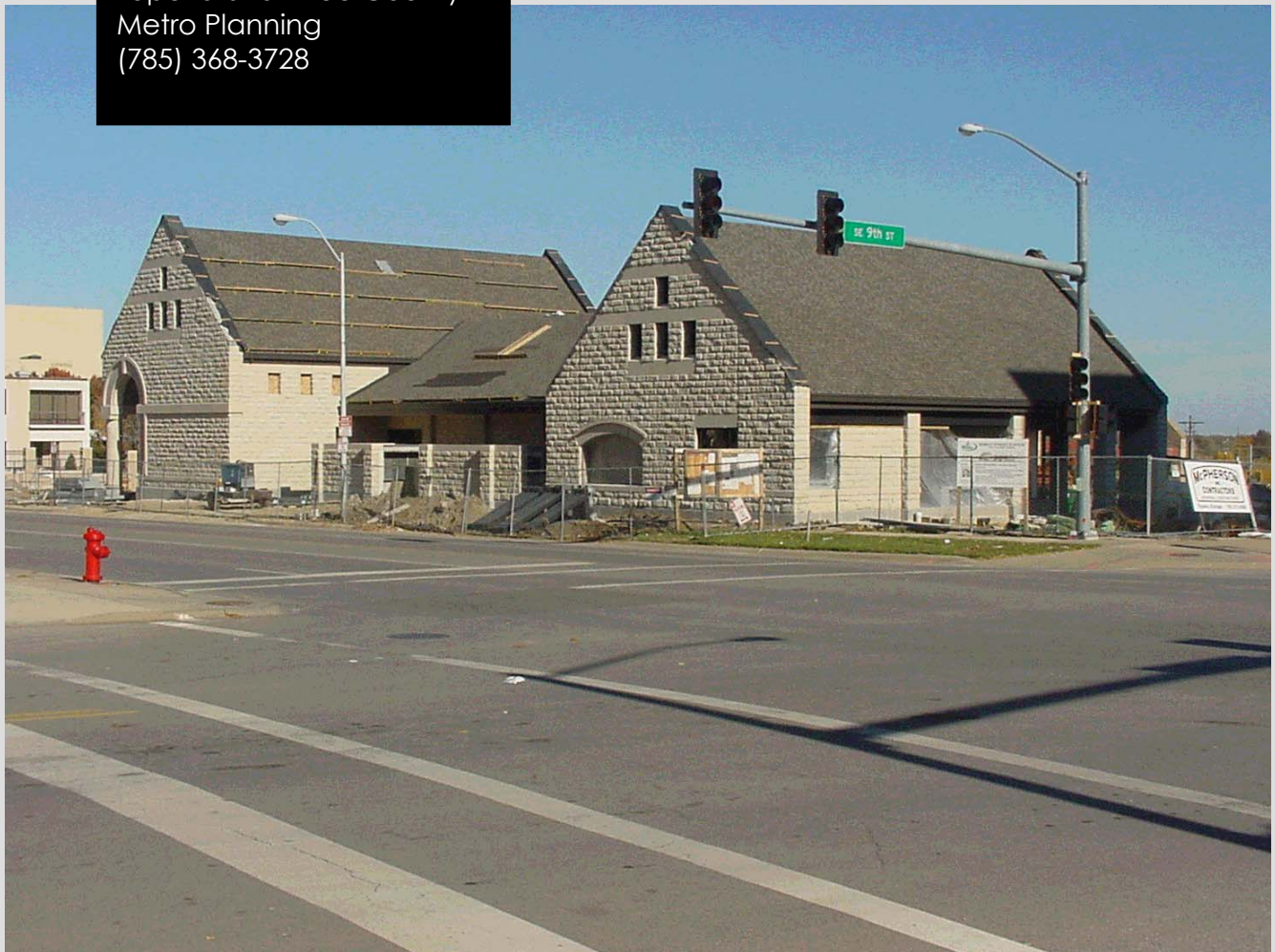
**Transportation
Contact Information:**

FTA Regional Office
(816) 329-3920

FHWA
Kansas Division Office
(785) 267-7290

KDOT
Bureau of Transportation
Planning
(785) 296-3841

Topeka-Shawnee County
Metro Planning
(785) 368-3728



The Basics of Transportation Decision Making

Imagine any ground transportation: train, car, bicycle, wheelchair, or foot. Now, think about your favorite way to travel. Which would you use to get to your destination? Are you satisfied with your choice? Will you have any problems using this method? Would you like more options?

The process of identifying transportation problems and looking for solutions to those problems is called transportation planning.

Transportation planning is the job of professionals who study and work out the best ways to get you to...

- where you live,
- where you work,
- where you shop,
- where your kids go to school,
- anywhere else you need to go.



Transportation professionals place a high priority on getting you to and from your destination safely and on time. They are also committed to preserving our communities and farms, and keeping our air and water clean.

Transportation decision-making looks for ways to solve current transportation problems while avoiding future problems. Transportation planners try to figure out how to get you to and from your destination safely and on time not only today, but also five, 10, and even 20 years from now. To give you the best transportation choices, transportation planners work with many different public and private groups that provide housing, schools, jobs and parks.

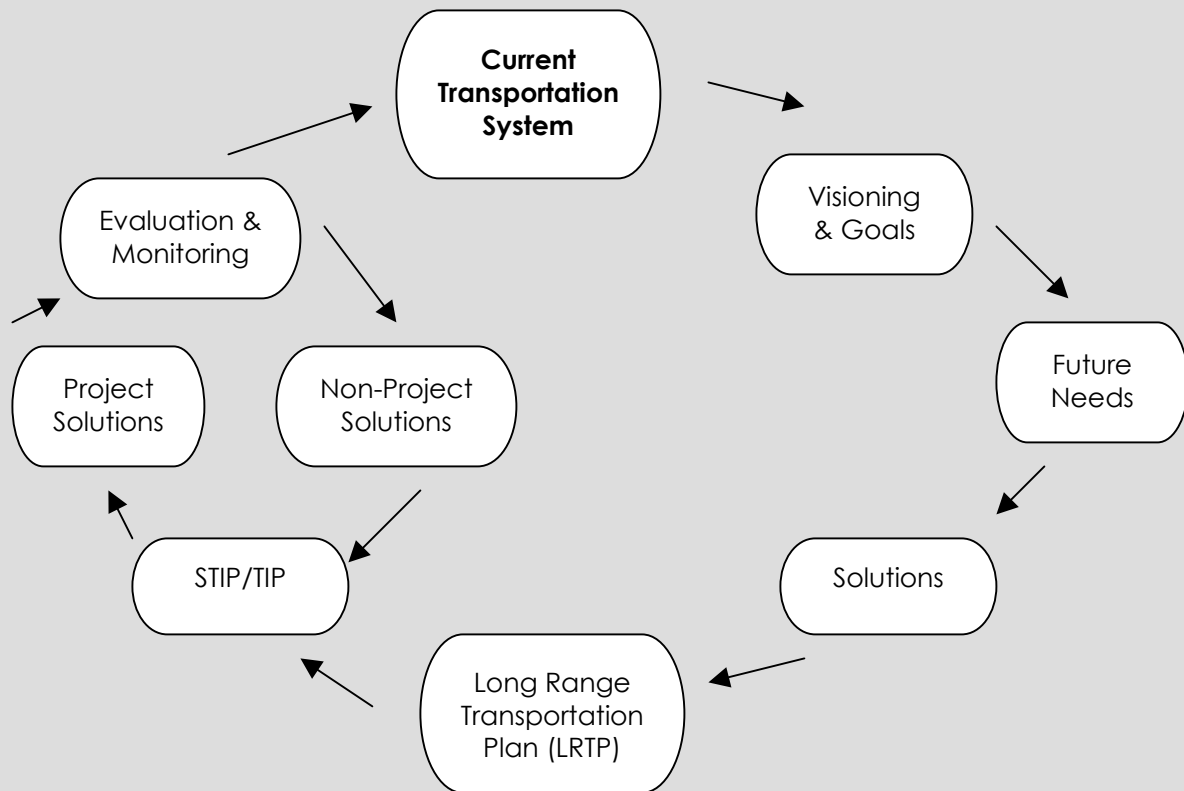


The Government and Transportation Decision Making

Transportation decision-making is carried out on several levels.

- **State Departments of Transportation (DOTs)** are the largest units of government that develop transportation plans and projects. They are responsible for planning safe and efficient transportation goals for the state. To do so, they work with all of the state's transportation organizations and local governments. They are responsible for planning safe and efficient transportation between cities and towns in the state. The Kansas Department of Transportation has responsibilities in the Topeka Metropolitan Area.
- **Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)** represent areas with an urbanized area population of 50,000 people or more. An MPO may have "council of governments" or "regional planning commission" in its official name. Each MPO is different because individual metropolitan areas are so different.

A policy board, which is comprised of local appointed and/or elected officials, set an MPO's policy; but other groups, such as non-profit organizations, community organizations, or environmental organizations can influence the direction an MPO follows. The MPO's mission is to provide short and long-term solutions to transportation and transportation related concerns. The Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Commission is the MPO for the Topeka Region.



- **Local governments** carry out many transportation planning functions, such as scheduling and maintenance for local streets and roads.
- **Transit agencies** are public and private organizations that provide transportation for the public. Public transportation includes buses, subways, light rail, commuter rail, monorail, passenger ferryboats, trolleys, inclined railways, and people movers. The Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority (TMTA) is the public transit organization in the Topeka Region.
- **The Federal Government (USDOT)** reviews the transportation planning and project activities of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and Department of Transportation (DOT) in each State. The Federal Government also provides advice and training on transportation topics, ranging from pavement technology and design to efficient operations of highway and transit systems. The Federal Government also supplies critical funding needed for transportation planning and projects. At least every two years, the Federal Government approves projects planned for construction by the State and other local agencies using federal funds. The two main USDOT agencies that work with the Topeka MPO and the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), and local governments in the Topeka Region are the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Different Transportation Plans and Programs

Before transportation planners start, the citizens and officials of a region or a state must have a long-term vision for transportation in that area. A vision plan provides broad goals for what the region or state will look like and reflects what is important for the future. To develop a vision, you need to consider several characteristics of your region, state, or metropolitan area and how you expect these characteristics to change over the next several years. Here are some characteristics to consider:



- Projected population growth
- Projected economic changes
- Current and future transportation needs (air, bicycle, bus, rail, roads, pedestrian and water)
- Safety
- Maintenance of transportation facilities
- Preserving the human and natural environment
- Quality of life

Some transportation plans focus strictly on transportation, while others are more general, with transportation just one part of a larger plan for green space, parks, and other uses. Transportation planning processes often are complicated because of the need to cover entire state and metropolitan transportation systems. A state plan will also include regional, metropolitan, and other local transportation plans.



Once you have reviewed and established goals for your vision, you have a foundation for plans to improve the transportation system in your area. These long-range plans provide transportation solutions that cover 20 or more years. The solutions can include a new traffic signal system, a pedestrian pathway, a new bus line, or a completely new road project.

Putting the Plans in Place

Transportation planners help the public and elected officials translate the vision into long-range transportation plans. Planners look at different transportation alternatives and work with the public to select the alternatives that make the most sense for their areas. Sometimes they use mathematical models to predict future travel; sometimes they lead public discussions to get the opinion of the public and experts.

These transportation solutions must be able to keep the air quality of a state or region safe for all people in the community. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets maximum safe amounts of pollution that a region or state can have in the air. How much pollution is allowed from cars, trucks, and buses will vary depending on the area's climate, wind, and other pollution sources and factors.



Usually, the first product after the long-range transportation plan is a **Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)** or an MPO's **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**. These improvement programs are developed at least every two years. They contain individual transportation improvements and projects to be implemented in the next three to five years. All regionally significant projects must be part of an improvement program to be implemented and projects using Federal funds must be listed in a TIP and STIP. The following chart illustrates which organizations tend to use the various plans and projects.

ORGANIZATION	VISION-PLANNING	LONG-RANGE PLANS	TIPs	PROJECT PLANNING
MPOs	X	X	X	X
STATE DOTs	X	X	X	
TRANSIT AGENCIES		X	X	X
CITY/LOCAL TRANS. DEPT			X	X

In the Topeka Region, the Metro Planning Department produces a TIP that identifies projects for the upcoming five-year period.

Funding Transportation Projects

Before the State DOT's and MPO's can make improvements to an area's transportation system, they must identify funds that will be readily available over the three-to-five-year life of the Transportation Improvement Program. Just as an individual would budget money for short-term family and home expenses, MPO's and States allocate funds for specific transportation projects. STIP's and TIP's are important documents for budgeting the funds needed to make these transportation improvements possible.



Communities and the Environment in Transportation Planning

Transportation planning must reflect the desires of communities, and it must take into account the impacts on both the natural and human environments. Moreover, transportation plans should help regions and communities reach their goals. As previously mentioned, a project must be included in a TIP for it to be funded, and plans and programs must comply with air quality standards established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



Your Role in the Planning Process

So how do you fit into the transportation planning process? Your role in the process is very important. Without your input and ideas the state and local governments cannot have a true understanding of your community's needs.

Although some people may think that transportation officials can get all needed information on their own, that is not the case. You may know information that is more current or detailed than is available to transportation professionals. You may also see things differently than transportation officials. This is why it is so important for you to be involved.

The transportation planning process is ongoing, nonstop, and can take many years. So there are several ways to make transportation planners aware of your needs and concerns and also help develop transportation solutions.

The transportation planning process needs and welcomes public input. However, it is important to understand the process and how projects move through the process from ideas to construction plans to built projects in order for citizens to have the most effective input. In order to help shape the region's transportation system and have an impact on what transportation improvement projects are built and how they are designed, it is best to have public input early in the process and often. It is generally easier to influence transportation decision making if public input is received before all of the project's design, funding, and scheduling decisions have been made and the project is ready for bid letting or construction.

The regional transportation planning process is continuous – it is constantly gathering more data and information to use in the updating of the Long-Range Transportation Plan and related documents. Public comments are always welcome in this process, but they might be more timely and effective if comments are received earlier when transportation plans, project designs and funding issues are being discussed. The following graphic portrays the relationships between the Long-Range Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, the Unified Planning Work Program, and public input. Public input can occur at anytime in this process and is welcomed. But it is always needed and sought during the update of the region's Long-Range Transportation Plan.

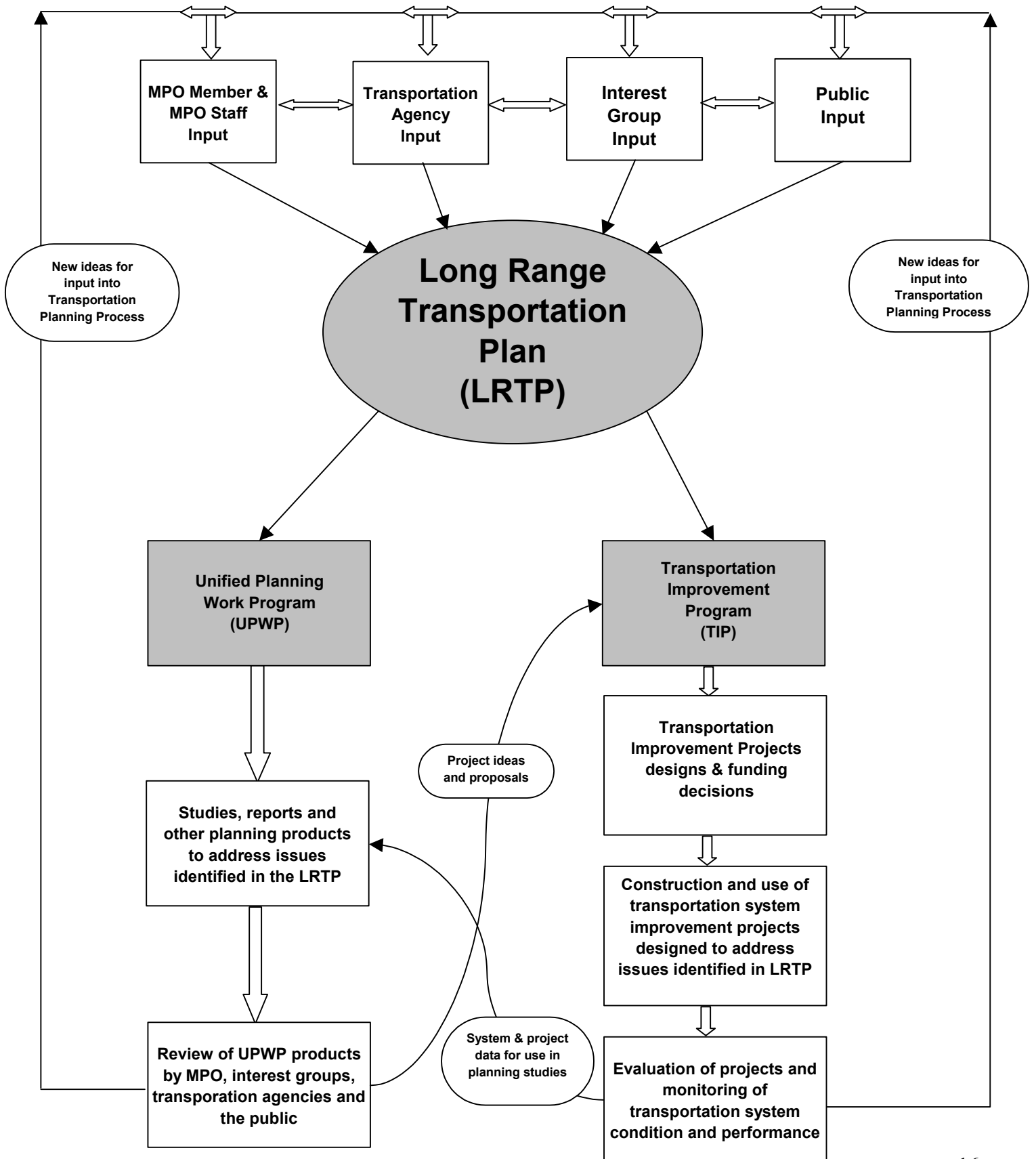
Remember that vision plans, long-range transportation plans, and transportation improvement programs are the key documents that come from transportation planning. These documents are used to build the foundation for individual projects. They are all part of the big transportation picture and are important to your transportation future.

Get involved!



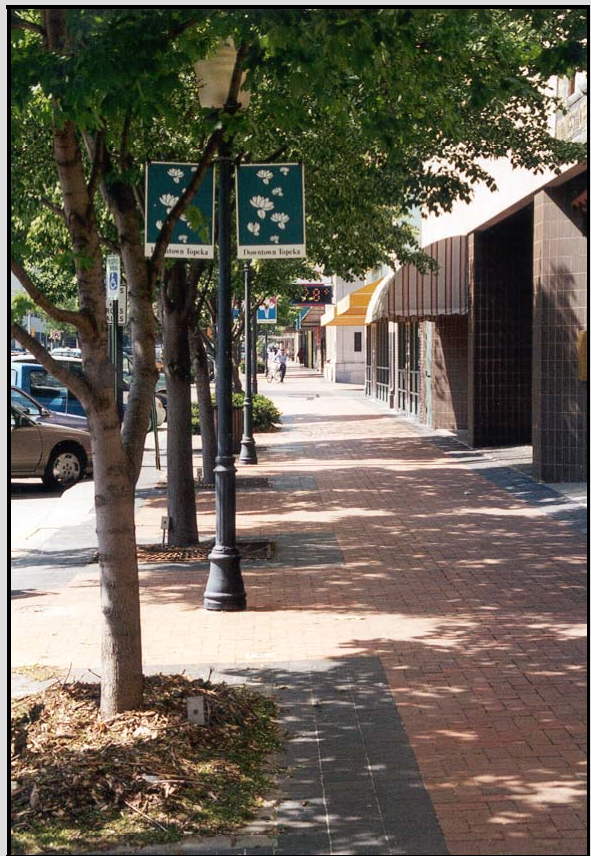
To make sure that you are following the latest developments, you can:

- **Provide your input** on transportation plans.
- **Volunteer to serve** on a citizen focus group or citizen's advisory committee.
- **Ask a transportation official** to attend meetings of your service clubs, community organizations, school groups, and other civic organizations and explain the process.
- **Find out** what specific public involvement opportunities are available in your area by contacting your MPO, State DOT, transit agency, local government, and Federal Government transportation agencies (see page 4 for contact information).
- **Put your name on a mailing list** to receive newsletters, updates and other information from the MPO's and State DOT's in your region.
- **Monitor web sites** of transportation organizations.



Project Development

The next step after transportation planning is **project development**, which is also known as **project planning** in many areas. Project development occurs on individual projects, ranging in size from small (such as new lane striping) to very large (for example, a new transit project or highway). But whether small or large, most projects must first go through the transportation planning process, appear in the TIP and/or STIP, have some citizen involvement, and be approved by transportation officials. The project development process is critical because it links the planning process with the actual project location, design, and eventual construction.



Goals of Project Development and the NEPA Process

The goals of the project development stage are to find out where a project is located and what it looks like.

Projects that come through a transportation planning process will eventually be closely looked at to see how they might impact the community, the natural environment, and our health and welfare. Before any project can move forward to construction, the FHWA and FTA may address and comply with more than 40 laws related to safety and the environment. These laws cover social, economic, and environmental (SEE) concerns ranging from community cohesion to threatened and endangered species. To get through this detailed process, FHWA and FTA use the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to evaluate all SEE concerns for each individual project.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), enacted in 1969, requires that any activity or project receiving federal funding or other federal approvals (including transportation projects) undergo this analysis of potential impacts. Under NEPA, the FHWA and FTA work closely with other federal agencies, state and local governments, tribal governments, and the public to understand a project's impacts. This process involves striking a delicate balance among many factors – mobility needs, economic prosperity, health and environmental protection, community and neighborhood preservation, and quality of life for present and future generations.

Documenting Decisions

It is important for governmental officials to carefully evaluate the choices available to them when making transportation decisions. This is why the FHWA and FTA (along with your State DOT and MPO) always document their work and decisions for the public and government agencies to review and provide input. They prepare documents before and after decisions are made so everyone can also provide input.

In addition to the documentation just mentioned, the FHWA and FTA also prepare documents to meet NEPA requirements. Since every transportation project is different, and some are more complex than others, FHWA and FTA prepare one or more of the documents listed on the next page for a proposed project to conform with NEPA requirements.

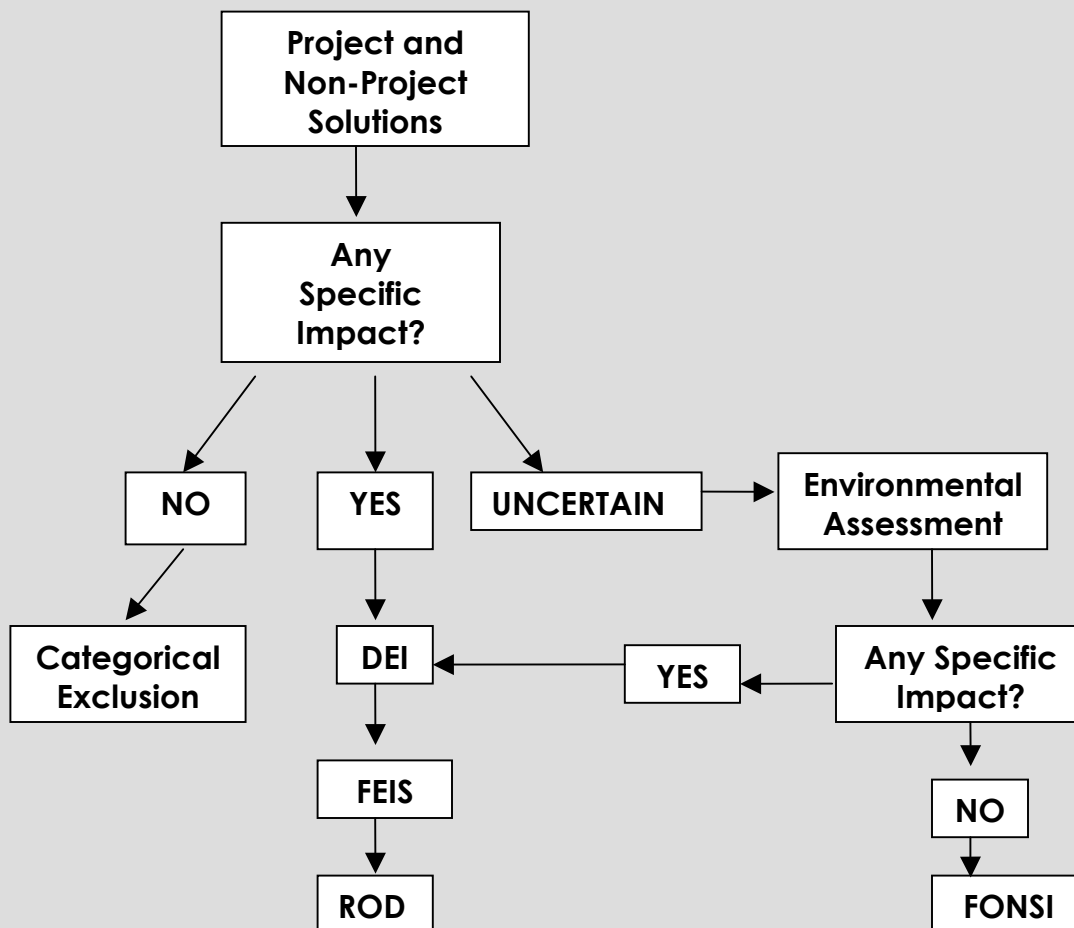


- **Environmental Impact Statements (EIS)** are prepared for federal actions that have a significant effect on the human and natural environment.
- **Draft EIS (DEIS) and Final EIS (FEIS)** are disclosure documents that provide a full description of the proposed project, the existing environment, and analysis of the anticipated beneficial and adverse environmental affects of all reasonable alternatives.
- **Categorical Exclusions (CE)** are prepared for federal actions that do not have a significant environmental effect.
- **Environmental Assessments (EA)** are prepared for federal actions where it is not clearly known how significant the environmental impact might be. If, after preparing an Environmental Assessment, it is determined that the project's impact is significant, an Environmental Impact Statement is then prepared. If not, a finding of "no significant impact" is documented.
- **Record of Decision (ROD)** is a concise decision document for an environmental impact statement that states the decision (selected alternative or choice), other alternatives considered, and mitigation adopted for the selected alternative or choice.
- **Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)** is a statement indicating that a project was found to have no significant impacts on the quality of the human environment. As a result, an environmental statement will not be prepared.

In preparing an EIS, CE, or EA for projects, the FHWA and FTA must consider all of the relevant social, environmental, and economic (SEE) impacts and pursue public involvement. In considering the potential SEE impacts of a project or activity, FHWA and FTA work with other federal, state, and local agencies to consider their interests.

Although the size and complexity of the three levels of NEPA documentation are different, they all serve the same purpose: to achieve better decisions by making the impact of choices known and by involving you, the public, in making transportation decisions.

Project Development and the NEPA Process



Example Timeline for Transportation Projects

Most major transportation projects have a long history before they get to the construction stage. The following paragraphs outline the steps projects typically follow on their way from idea to construction. Major projects often take 18 months or more, to go from project proposal to construction completion. This may seem like an inordinate amount of time. However, several review and design issues must be considered. Transportation projects typically spend about twice as much time in the planning and project development stages as they do in the actual construction stage. Some projects with Environmental Impact Statements and/or complex design issues can be in planning and project development for much longer.

Problem or Issue Identification (Ongoing Effort – part of regional transportation planning process)

First, a need or problem is identified. This often takes place in the development or update of a region's Long-Range Transportation Plan. Issues like congestion at certain intersections, the widening of arterial roads, the desire for transit service to a new development area, or improved bicycle facilities are discussed during the Transportation Plan update process. Once a transportation problem or issue is identified then discussion on the subject, as well as some brief investigation of the matter, is made. At this point the projects are still just conceptual ideas with little or no design or funding details completed. Public involvement is solicited by the MPO during this time.

Project Proposal (months 1-3)

Second, a particular project to address an identified transportation problem or issue is proposed. At this point a project sponsor is identified, some rough estimates of project costs are made, and a proposal for the project is submitted to the governing body. In the case of a City project, the City Engineer would draft the project proposal and submit it to the Mayor and City Council for consideration. For County, State and transit authority projects a similar process is used. The governing body can act to place the project in the Capital Improvements Plan, reject the project proposal, or request more information. At this point the project is beginning to take shape and has some design and many of its proposed funding details developed. Coordination between the project sponsor and the MPO should be occurring by this stage. The project sponsor and the MPO should be discussing how the project relates to the Long-Range Transportation Plan, whether this project is regionally significant, and whether this project sponsor will be requesting federal funding for the transportation improvement. Opportunities for public comments and education about the project should be available during this period. Public comments should be considered in the refinement of the proposal now and project design later.

Project Funding Approval (months 4-6)

Third, a project needs to have some funding approved so it can be put into the local Capital Improvement Plan and also into the regional Transportation Improvement Program if using federal funds or regionally significant. Funding for the entire project can be approved first or just the design stage. The right-of-way and construction funding may be approved later. Coordination between the project sponsor and the MPO should be continuing at this stage. Opportunities for public involvement should continue during this stage of the project.

Project Development (months 7-12)

Fourth, a project enters into the engineering design stage and all of the details about how the project will be completed are worked out. Construction design plans are developed and reviewed by the project sponsor and funding agencies, right-of-way plans are completed and acquisition of land needed for the project is begun, utility relocation details are completed and coordination between the project sponsor and utility providers continues, environmental reviews are under development and impacts are being studied and documented, and schedules are being developed for the letting and construction stage of the project. At this point the transportation-planning step is completed and the implementation of the transportation improvement is underway. Coordination between the project sponsor and the MPO should be continuing through this stage. Public education about the project should be apparent during this stage and opportunities for public comments should continue.

Project Construction (months 13-18)

Fifth, the design work is done and the project is finally under construction. In most cases the project sponsor has put the project out for bid and accepted a contractor to actually build the project. The project sponsor (and sometimes other funding agencies) oversees the construction of the project. In the case of some projects the sponsoring agency uses its own staff and equipment to build the project. Public education about the project should continue during its construction.

Project Opening, Public Use and Evaluation (Ongoing Effort – part of regional transportation planning process)

Sixth, the project is finally completed and open for public use. Comments about the project are often received at this stage as people get used to using a new facility. The project sponsor, funding agencies and the MPO should review comments. The project at this stage is incorporated into the inventory of transportation system facilities and its use is monitored (e.g., traffic counts are taken, pavement condition is rated, etc.). The project may also be used in the traffic modeling efforts of the MPO and used in discussion during the update of the Long-Range Transportation Plan.

Your Role in Project Development

Your participation in each step of the transportation planning process is key to finding good solutions. You also have an important role in project development. You will have history and knowledge about your local area that transportation officials might not have, and you know what is important to you about your community. Your views and ideas about proposed transportation solutions at the project development stage are critical.

Remember, project development is about finding a location and developing a design for how the project will look and work. Perhaps you can recommend ways to avoid, lessen, or compensate for an impact. We call this **mitigation**. Or you may be able to recommend some special features that may benefit your community. These are called **enhancements**. Mitigation and enhancements are discussed during project development.

We recommend that you get involved early to have the greatest impact on developing transportation solutions. Your input, whether verbal or written, is needed early in the transportation decision making process to help shape the quality of life for your community.

Visit Our Web Sites

Planning

FHWA www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/index.html
FTA www.fta.dot.gov/office/planning
TSCMPD www.topeka.org/departmt/metroplanning.html
www.co.shawnee.ks.us/departments

NEPA

FHWA www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/nepa.html
FTA www.fta.dot.gov/office/planning/ep/index.html

Public Involvement

FHWA www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/pubinv2.html
FTA www.fta.dot.gov/office/planning/pi.html

You Can Make a Difference

You are essential to the transportation decision-making process. The earlier you get involved, the greater your influence will be.

We want you and your family to get to and from work, school, and play safely and on time. Please, help us serve you better.

Thank You!

To find out where you can get involved, contact your FHWA and FTA office, the Kansas Department of Transportation or the Topeka-Shawnee County Metro Planning Department.

Glossary

Citizens Advisory Committee – representative stakeholders that meet regularly to discuss issues of common concern, such as transportation, and to advise sponsoring agency officials. These groups effectively interact between citizens and their government.

Categorical Exclusion (CE) – an action that does not individually or cumulatively have a significant impact on the human environment. This Categorical Exclusion does not require an Environmental Assessment nor an Environmental Impact Statement.

Enhancements – activities that assist communities reach social, cultural, aesthetic, and environmental goals as well as help harmonize the transportation system with the community. Enhancements are part of the mitigation for project impacts and can include bike and pedestrian trails, renovating streetscapes, and scenic beautification.

Environmental Assessment (EA) – an interim decision document prepared for an action where the significance of social, economic, or environmental impact is not clearly established. If the action is determined to have significant impact, an Environmental Impact Statement is then prepared. If no significant impact is determined, a finding of no significant impact is prepared.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – a document, required under the National Environmental Policy Act, prepared for an action that is likely to have significant impact. This document summarizes the major environmental impacts, outlines issues, examines reasonable alternatives, and arrives at a record of decision, identifying the selected alternative for the project.

Environmental Justice – actions taken to avoid or lessen disproportionately high and adverse human health, social, economic, and environmental effects on minority and low-income populations. The assurance of full and fair participation by residents of affected communities in the transportation decision-making process is fundamental to environmental justice.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – a branch of the United States Department of Transportation that administers the Federal Aid Highway Program, providing financial assistance to states to construct and improve highways, urban and rural roads, and bridges. The FHWA also administers the Federal Lands Highway Program that provides access to and within national forests, national parks, Indian reservations and other public lands. The FHWA is headquartered in Washington, D.C. with field offices across the country, including one in each state capital.

Federal Transit Authority (FTA) – a branch of the United States Department of Transportation that is the principal source of federal financial assistance to America's communities for the planning, development, and improvement of public or mass transportation systems. FTA provides leadership, technical assistance, and financial resources for safe, technologically advanced public transportation to enhance mobility and accessibility, to improve the nation's communities and natural environment, and to strengthen the national economy. The FTA is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Kansas City, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Seattle.

Financial Capacity – plans and programs must include a financial plan that demonstrates the consistency of proposed transportation investments with already available and projected sources of revenue. This will ensure the plans are financially realistic and achievable.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) – a statement indicating that a project was found to have no significant impacts on the quality of the human environment and for which an environmental statement will therefore not be prepared.

Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) – the arm of the Kansas State Government responsible for transportation. The agency's primary activities include road and bridge maintenance; transportation planning, data collection and evaluation; project scoping, designing and letting; contract compliance; inspection of material and labor; federal program funding administration; and administrative support.

Long-Range Transportation Plan – a document resulting from a regional or statewide process of collaboration and consensus on a region's or state's transportation system. This document serves as the defining vision for the region's or state's transportation systems and services. In metropolitan areas, the plan indicates all of the transportation improvements scheduled for funding over the next 20 years.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – a forum for regional planning, collaboration, and decision making; MPO's are designated agencies for metropolitan areas larger than 50,000 in population that conduct regional transportation planning.

Mitigation – means to avoid, minimize, rectify, or reduce an impact, and in some cases, to compensate for an impact.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – a law enacted in 1969 that established a national environmental policy requiring that any project using federal funding or needing federal approval, including transportation projects, examine the effects the proposal and alternative choices have on the environment before a federal decision is made.

Project Development – the phase a proposed project undergoes once it has been through the planning process. The project development phase is a more detailed analysis of a proposed project's social, economic and environmental impacts, and various project alternatives. What comes from the project development phase is a decision reached through negotiation among all affected parties, including the public. After a proposal has successfully passed the project development phase, it may move to preliminary engineering, design and construction.

Public Hearing – a formal event held prior to a decision that gathers community comments and positions from all interested parties for public record and input into decisions.

Public Meeting – a formal or informal event designed for a specific issue or community group where information is presented and input from community residents is received.

Record of Decision – a concise decision document for an environmental impact statement that states the decision (selected alternative or choice), other alternatives considered, and mitigation adopted for the selected alternative or choice.

State Department of Transportation (State DOT) – a statewide agency that is responsible for conducting transportation planning activities in non-metropolitan areas of the state, and assisting MPOs in transportation planning for the metropolitan areas. State DOTs are also responsible for developing, designing, and constructing most of the projects on major highways in most states.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) – prepared by the State DOT, the STIP is a staged, multiyear listing of projects proposed for federal, state, and local funding encompassing the entire state. It is a compilation of the TIPs (see TIP) prepared for the metropolitan areas, as well as project information for the non-metropolitan areas of the state and for transportation between cities.

Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Commission/Metropolitan Planning Organization – This is a 15-member board that acts as the Planning Commission for both the City of Topeka and Shawnee County. This group is also the designated MPO for the Topeka Metropolitan Area and as such acts as the policy board governing the regional transportation planning process in Shawnee County.

Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Department – this is the staff that conducts comprehensive planning, current planning, and transportation planning services for the City and County. This department provides staff to the MPO for the regional transportation planning process.

Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) – a law enacted in 1998, TEA-21 authorized federal funding for transportation investment for the time period spanning fiscal year 1998 to fiscal year 2003. Approximately \$218 billion in funding was authorized, the largest amount in history, and is used for highway, transit, and other surface transportation programs.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – a staged, multiyear (typically three to five years) listing of surface transportation projects proposed for federal, state, and local funding within a metropolitan area. MPO's are required to prepare a TIP as a short-range programming document to complement its long-range transportation plan. TIPs contain projects with committed funds over a multi-year period.

Transportation Planning – a collaborative process of examining demographic characteristics and travel patterns for a given area. This process shows how these characteristics will change over a given period of time, and evaluates alternatives for the transportation system of the area and the most expeditious use of local, state, and federal alternatives for the transportation funding. Long-range planning is typically done over a period of 20 years; short-range programming of specific projects usually covers a period of three to five years.

Unified Planning Work Program – an annual work program for the MPO and MPO Staff that outlines what work tasks are being planned and budgeted for in the upcoming year. This document indicates what transportation planning work will be done in a given year, and it is also used to program planning assistance funds provided to the MPO by the USDOT.

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Topeka-Shawnee County



Metropolitan Planning Department