

## **TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE FOR THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX REGION**

### **SCOPE OF WORK**

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requires a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Plan update at least every four years, effective January 1, 2007. The Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO) adopted its Transportation Plan in 2003; therefore, this Plan must be adopted by September 2006.

### **PLAN UPDATE ACTIVITIES**

The purpose of this scope is to outline a framework to proceed with the required update to the Northern Middlesex region's Transportation Plan. The development of the 2030 Transportation Plan will take place over the next 11 months. This scope will describe all plan development activities that the Northern Middlesex region will complete, and will describe strategies for engaging the public and appropriate interest groups. Also, this scope will describe a set of review procedures to ensure appropriate MPO guidance and oversight during each phase of the Plan update. All products associated with the Plan update will be presented to NMMPO members for their review and approval.

The final product resulting from the process established by this scope will be a Regional Transportation Plan that:

1. Complies with all applicable environmental and planning regulations;
2. Furthers the statewide smart growth and sustainable development policies;
3. Offers multimodal strategies to address the region's transportation needs;
4. Fosters economic development in the Northern Middlesex region;
5. Is financially constrained to available and projected funding sources; and
6. Reflects the NMMPO's goals and policies.

### **Task 1 Public Outreach Plan**

The 2000-2025 Transportation Plan update was adopted in September 2003. As part of developing the update, the NMMPO conducted an extensive outreach process to solicit public comments regarding the guiding principles of the Plan, land-use policies, project evaluation and selection, and environmental justice issues. The Northern Middlesex region will further expand the public outreach activities conducted during the 2000-2025 Plan update.

#### ***Products for Task 1***

Development of a public outreach plan for the Northern Middlesex region.

Prior to initiating the public process, a draft public outreach plan will be submitted to the NMMPO for their review and comment. The public outreach process will be conducted in two phases: pre-plan development and post-plan development. Pre-plan development activities will consist of soliciting transportation issues from NMCOG, LRTA, and from the communities. Post-plan development activities will involve the circulation and presentation of the draft Plan to the NMMPO, NMCOG, LRTA, and at public workshops to solicit comments on the document. Listed on the following page are the anticipated public outreach activities to be undertaken

**Pre-Plan Development Activities**

- The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) will discuss the Plan updates at Council meetings. Because Council members include locally elected officials and planning board members from each respective community, NMCOG will offer the NMMPO considerable insight into local transportation issues and priorities.
- NMCOG will initiate the formation of an MPO advisory committee to be an additional avenue for public comment during the Plan update process. The committee will consist of representatives from member communities in Northern Middlesex region, locally elected officials, and interested organizations and/or community groups. This committee will further assist the NMMPO in identifying regional transportation issues and priorities.
- NMCOG staff will solicit input regarding transit issues from the Lowell Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board.
- NMCOG staff, in cooperation with the NMMPO, will attend meetings in the respective communities to solicit input on transportation issues from local boards (Planning Board, Selectmen etc.), chambers of commerce, economic development committees, public works department, and other community groups. The purpose of attending these meetings will be to identify transportation issues in the respective communities before moving forward with drafting the Plan.

**Post-Plan Development Activities**

- NMCOG staff, in cooperation with the NMMPO, will hold a public information workshop to solicit public comments on the draft Plan. NMCOG staff will ensure that the copies of the draft Plan are available in libraries and City/Town halls so residents from member communities will have ample opportunity to review the draft Plan prior to attending the public information workshop.
- NMCOG staff will post the draft Plan on the Council website. The website will be formatted to allow for the electronic submission of comments. NMCOG will also utilize the website to announce upcoming events and meetings associated with the Plan update.
- NMCOG staff will create an electronic distribution list to contact municipal officials, legislators, local and regional transportation interest groups, and other interested citizens regarding Plan update activities and workshops.
- Press releases will be issued to local media outlets announcing public workshops and meetings associated with the Plan update.

## **Task 2 Document Existing Conditions and Review Goals, Objectives and Policies**

The documentation will include descriptions of the region, its land-use, demographic and economic characteristics, the transportation system, and the goals, objectives and policies of the NMMPO.

### ***Subtask 2.1 Document Existing Conditions and Future No-build Conditions***

This subtask will include the review and update of existing conditions as documented in the 2003 Transportation Plan and projection of the future no-build conditions. This information will include descriptions of the NMMPO, the region, past and present demographic, land-use, and economic conditions, and the existing transportation system. Information required to project future no-build conditions will be derived from the Central Transportation Planning Staff's transportation model and/or the state wide transportation model.

### ***Subtask 2.2 Review and Update NMMPO Goals, Objectives, and Policies***

This purpose of this task is to update the regional transportation goals and objectives to include all legislative mandates and other pertinent policy changes that will affect investment and management decisions in the Northern Middlesex region. The goals and objectives will be revised as appropriate in order to conform with the provisions of the recently enacted SAFETEA-LU legislation and to be consistent with the following Commonwealth planning policies: "Fix-it-First," "Communities First," and the Office of Commonwealth Development's ten smart growth principles. Moreover, the updated regional goals and objectives will reflect the eight guiding transportation planning principles articulated in the Commonwealth's Long-Range Transportation Plan.

### ***Products for Task 2***

- Statement of goals, objectives and guiding policies for the NMMPO
- Summary of existing conditions for the Northern Middlesex region
- Summary of future no-build conditions for the Northern Middlesex region

## **Task 3 Financial Analysis**

Federal regulations require that the Regional Transportation Plan contain a financial statement comparing the estimated revenues from all existing and available sources. Also required, is an estimation of the cost for constructing and maintaining the existing and planned transportation system. This task will involve forecasting the amount of federal and state spending over a thirty-year planning horizon, taking into consideration the recent SAFETEA-LU legislation and the new Massachusetts Transportation Bond Bill. A formula, developed by the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies, will be utilized to determine the amount of funds reasonably expected to be available to the Northern Middlesex region over the life of the plan.

### ***Products for Task 3***

A financial statement containing the estimated highway funds available through 2030, estimated available funding for roadway projects in the Northern Middlesex region through 2030, and a listing of Federal and State costs for transit operating assistance (fixed-route and paratransit), planning assistance, and capital assistance.

**Task 4 Project Evaluation and Prioritization**

This task entails applying the Executive Office of Transportation's Evaluation Criteria to evaluate and prioritize regionally significant projects for inclusion into the Northern Middlesex Regional Transportation Plan. The recommendations will include the costs, potential funding source, and if applicable, air quality conformity status. It is anticipated that the selected recommendations will be categorized as ongoing project recommendations, current and short-range recommended projects, and future study and long-term recommendations.

***Products for Task 4***

Preparation of a listing and prioritization of recommended short-range and long-range projects based on the evaluation criteria, which will be presented to NMMPO for their review.

**Task 5 Public Workshops**

NMCOG staff will conduct a series of public workshops in the Northern Middlesex region to solicit comments regarding the goal and objectives, evaluation criteria, and the recommended projects for inclusion into the Plan.

***Products for Task 5***

- A summary of public comments from the public outreach efforts.

**Task 6 Preparation of Draft version of the Plan**

NMCOG staff will prepare a draft version of the Plan, incorporating the comments from the public workshops and from the website. The draft version will be circulated to NMMPO, NMCOG Board, and the Lowell Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board for their review.

***Products for Task 6***

- The draft Transportation Plan
- The environmental justice analysis
- The Air Quality Conformity Determination

**Task 7 Plan Adoption**

After completing the public review process for the Draft Plan, the NMMPO will endorse a Transportation Plan for the years 2006 through 2030. The NMMPO will submit an endorsed document to the appropriate federal agencies for their review and approval by September 30, 2006. The approved document will serve as the source document for all future projects and work programs in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIPs) and Unified Planning Work Programs (UPWPs).

**Products for Task 7**

- 2006-2030 Transportation Plan containing an Air Quality Conformity Determination and an environmental justice analysis.
- Completion of the required 30-day public comment period.
- An executive summary of the Plan for distribution.

**ESTIMATED SCHEDULE**

The project is anticipated to be completed over an 11-month period subsequent to approval from the NMMPO. The proposed project schedule is illustrated in Figure 1.

**ESTIMATED COST**

The 2006 Northern Middlesex UPWP allocates \$91,830 for the update of the Transportation Plan. Table 1 below shows the funding sources and the approximate staff time to carry out the tasks outlined in this scope.

**Table 1: Budget for Transportation Plan Update**

Funding Source	Budget	Estimated Staff Effort
MassHighway	\$90,600	43.0 weeks
FTA §5303	\$984.00	.5 week
LRTA Match	-0-	-0-
NMCOG Match	\$246.00	.2 week

*Source: Northern Middlesex 2006 Unified Planning Work Program*

Figure 1: Estimated Schedule for 2006-2030 Transportation Plan Update

