Gainesville Urbanized Area Year 2025 Long-Range Transportation Plan Update

Community Involvement Strategy

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January
2004

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1. Community Involvement Strategy (CIS)

Someone once said: "all politics are local." So it is with good planning/engineering; all good plans are "local." Today's planning process is designed to be shared with the public so that good analyses of creative solutions yield a plan the people can and will endorse. To do so, this Community Involvement Strategy (CIS) is based on the following objectives:

- To establish trust and credibility among all participants in the program;
- To establish an open process which is responsive to the concerns of the community and provides for timely involvement that influences the decision-making process;
- To develop a process that creates an understanding of the issues and provides participants the opportunity to be sufficiently prepared to react with confidence to a project's deliverables; and,
- To assist the decision-makers in understanding the relationship to key technical issues to the community's overall concerns.

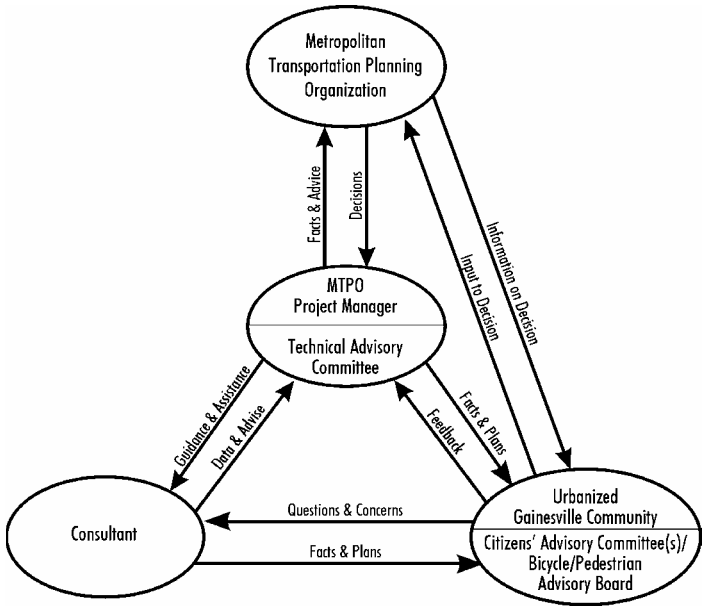
In effect then, the CIS can be viewed as a narrowing process wherein the many concerns and controversies involved in any study of transportation, land use and related issues are objectively reduced to a few so that the community, through its decision-makers, can reach a viable conclusion

The key to a successful CIS is communication. This means communicating with the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (MTPO) and its various committees (CAC, TAC, BPAB) and units of local government; with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and other units of state/federal governments; with key stakeholders affected by the project; and, most importantly, communicating with the public at-large. Outreach is essential to properly involve the elderly, persons with disabilities, minorities and the low-income community who are traditionally under-represented in the planning process. In this regard, a "Rolling Bus Tour" will bring the process to the citizens. And, a project Web site will be established on which all documentation is available and e-mail communication with the public is facilitated. A monthly calendar of public events will be maintained on the Web as well. Two newsletters (summer 2004 and winter 2005) will be produced and distributed. Finally, the public communication process will include a survey of households in the Metropolitan Area scheduled to be conducted in the last quarter of 2004.

1.1 CIS Structure

Perhaps the single most-significant step toward successful completion of this study is the decision-making process. Figure 1-1 identifies the structure envisioned at this time. Several key "players" are depicted: the MTPO and its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC); the community, including the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC)/Bicycle/ Pedestrian Advisory Board (BPAB); and, the consultant. The role of each is described below.

Figure 1-1
Gainesville Urbanized Area
Year 2025 Long-Range Transportation Plan Update
Study Process



The MTPO has the responsibility to make the decisions on the transportation alternative to be recommended to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for implementation in Metropolitan Gainesville. So, once the technical materials have been fully aired and the technical/political interactions have occurred, the MTPO, in cooperation with the TAC and the CAC/BPAB, will take a position on the alternative to be forwarded for final action. The consultant will support the entire communication/analysis process, and take the lead on the public engagement activities, transportation modeling and plan development.

1.2 Key Constituencies

Three key constituencies of the community involvement process have been identified. Each group's attitudes may influence the attitudes of the others; in some cases, individuals may be a part of more than one group.

Constituency 1—The general public with focused attention on special constituencies who are often absent from the planning process, including seniors and the disabled.

Constituency 2—Community "thought leaders," business leaders, and related interest groups such as historical and environmental organizations or neighborhood associations.

Constituency 3—Government officials such as County Commissioners, the Mayor of Gainesville, City Commission members, and appointed officials of governmental agencies.

To reach each group, direct mailings will be the first element of communication. More than 5,000 residences and businesses will be notified directly of each public meeting. Further, the members of the consultant team will visit groups/individuals with an interest in the project. This is particularly important to reach constituencies who are often not heard in the debate over government's actions.

As noted above, six public meetings will be held throughout the project (Table 1-1). The public meetings will take varied forms including workshops, roundtable discussions, formal presentations, and the like. Each will be preceded by TAC and CAC meetings (BPAB will also be invited to attend these meetings). As now contemplated, there will be 11 TAC/CAC/BPAB meetings plus 10 MTPO meetings. And, there will be monthly meetings with the MTPO's project management team.

1.3 Media Relations

It is very important to identify the appropriate media contacts and keep them informed about the progress of the study. Media coverage will increase the public's awareness and help gather public input regarding the analysis. The consultant will assist the MTPO in pursuing coverage by all types of media, including print, television, radio, special interest publications and magazines.

The consultant will develop basic materials to background the news media, as appropriate. The consultant will assist the MTPO in meetings with key reporters and editors to explain to them the purpose and products of the study and to answer any questions.

If deemed appropriate by the MTPO, the consultant will also assist in speaking to special interest groups, trade, civic, social and religious organizations.

1.4 Proposed Public Meetings

The consultant will advertise and conduct at least six public informational meetings in the planning process. Two of these public meeting events (April and September 2004) will be conducted in each quadrant of the Gainesville Metropolitan Area. The other four public meetings will be rotated among these four quadrants. Invitations to each meeting will be sent to at least 5,000 addresses (homes and businesses) at least ten days prior to each meeting. The consultant will provide key groups with postage-free invitations to be mailed to their constituencies. Upon request in advance of each public meeting, sign language interpretation will be available.

Each meeting will inform the public of the status of the LRTP update. As now contemplated, a period of each meeting will be devoted to questions and answers and the public will be asked to identify and provide information about key issues that are the focus of the meeting. The latter part of each public session will involve a "workshop" process to facilitate one-on-one discussions. Large laminated maps/graphics will be used to assist the public in identifying their needs.

The following is the tentative schedule and content of the six public meetings (Table 1-1).

Table 1-1
Gainesville Urbanized Area
2025 Long-Range Transportation Plan Update
Proposed Preliminary Schedule of Meetings

MONTH	MTPO Date	TAC/CACs Date	Public Meeting Date	Public Hearing Date
January 2004	January 28, 2004	NA	NA	NA
February 2004	NA	NA	NA	NA
March 2004	March 16, 2004	March 17, 2004	March 18, 2004	NA
April 2004	NA	April 28, 2004	April 19-22, 2004[1]	NA
May 2004	June 3, 2004	NA	NA	NA
June 2004	NA	NA	NA	NA
July 2004	NA	NA	NA	NA
August 2004	NA	August 25, 2004	NA	NA
September 2004	September 2, 2004	NA	September 20-23, 2004[2]	NA
October 2004	NA	October 20, 2004	NA	NA
November 2004	November 4, 2004	NA	November 18, 2004	NA
December 2004	NA	December 1, 2004	NA	NA
January 2005	January 2005	January 2005	NA	NA
February 2005	NA	NA	February 17, 2005	NA
March 2005	March 2005	March 2005	NA	NA
April 2005	NA	NA	NA	April 14, 2005
May 2005	May 2005	May 2005	NA	NA
June 2005	NA	NA	NA	NA
July 2005	NA	NA	NA	NA
August 2005	August 2005	August 2005	August 18, 2005	NA
September 2005	NA	NA	NA	September 29, 2005
October 2005	October 2005	October 2005	NA	NA

[1]Rolling bus tour on April 3 and 4, 2004.
[2]Rolling bus tour on September 11 and 12, 2004.

Meeting 1: Introduce Project – March 18, 2004

The MTPO/consultant team will introduce the project's work program/schedule and present an overview of transportation issues (like Level of Service and use of non-motorized transportation). Goals and objectives will be reviewed and a preliminary list of evaluation factors will be discussed. At this meeting, 100 disposable cameras will be provided to attendees to provide to the project visual images of issues that make them proud of and concerned about the transportation system in Metropolitan Gainesville. These photos will be lodged on the project Web site and be input to the second public meeting.

Meeting 2: Define Key Issues/Vision – April 19 to 22, 2004

This meeting will involve a set of four submeetings, one in each quadrant of the urbanized area. Prior to this set of meetings, a "rolling bus tour" will be conducted on a weekend. Shopping centers and centers of worship will be visited to reach out to a broad segment of the community and invite their participation in the planning process. The public will engage in a process to define those issues about their community of which they are proud and concerned, leading to the expression of a vision for the Gainesville transportation system.

Each meeting in a subarea will begin with a brief presentation of the area's history, the history of the long-range planning process with an emphasis on the current vision statement included in the Livable Community Reinvestment Plan, and the preliminary list of goals and objectives discussed later. Following that presentation, participants, working in small groups to which they are randomly assigned (usually no larger than eight people), will articulate those items that make them proud of the area as well as concern them. The issues articulated will be summarized for the entire meeting before moving to a discussion of a "transportation vision." Facilitators for each working group will be drawn from the consultant and the MTPO.

During the visioning portion of the meeting, participants will be asked to describe what they see in their "mind's eye" for the area's transportation system in 2025. Each person will be asked to describe what pleases them and what makes them feel good. Then, by using a simple scoring process, the group will sift through all vision issues to frame out a composite and concise vision statement. This will then be used to initiate the development of transportation alternatives and the process by which they are evaluated. The latter will be the subject of Meeting No. 3.

Meeting 3: Explain Evaluation Process/Define Factors – September 20 to 23, 2004

This will also be a set of four meetings – one in each quadrant of the urbanized area preceded by a weekend of rolling bus tour events. Evaluation factors will be presented to the public after being confirmed by the MTPO and the TAC/CAC/BPAB. These factors will be weighted by the public participants at Meeting No. 3. Weighting of the factors through the project Web site will also be invited.

Meeting 4: Define System Alternatives – November 18, 2004

The public will provide help in defining the alternative transportation system scenarios for the Gainesville Urbanized Area at this fourth public meeting. Large wall maps will allow "Post It" notes

to define their needs. Graphics/drawings will be used to illustrate alternative transportation modes to stimulate conversations about options.

Meeting 5: Present Evaluation Results – February 17, 2005

Preliminary evaluation results of alternatives to establish the Transportation Needs Plan will be presented to the public. Input will allow a final draft plan to be established.

Public Hearing No. 1: Draft 2025 Needs Plan – April 14, 2005

The MTPO will conduct, with consultant assistance, the first of two public hearings in April 2005. Hearing No. 1 will address the draft 2025 Needs Plan. Upon request, the agenda for each public hearing will be available in Braille or large print, as well as a recorded (s) version of same. The results of the public hearing will allow the Needs Plan to be finalized and acted upon by the MTPO.

Public Meeting No. 6: Present Draft Cost Feasible Plan – August 18, 2005

Upon approval by the MTPO of the Year 2025 Needs Plan, the 2025 Cost Feasible Plan will be presented to the public. Input will allow a final draft Cost Feasible Plan to be developed.

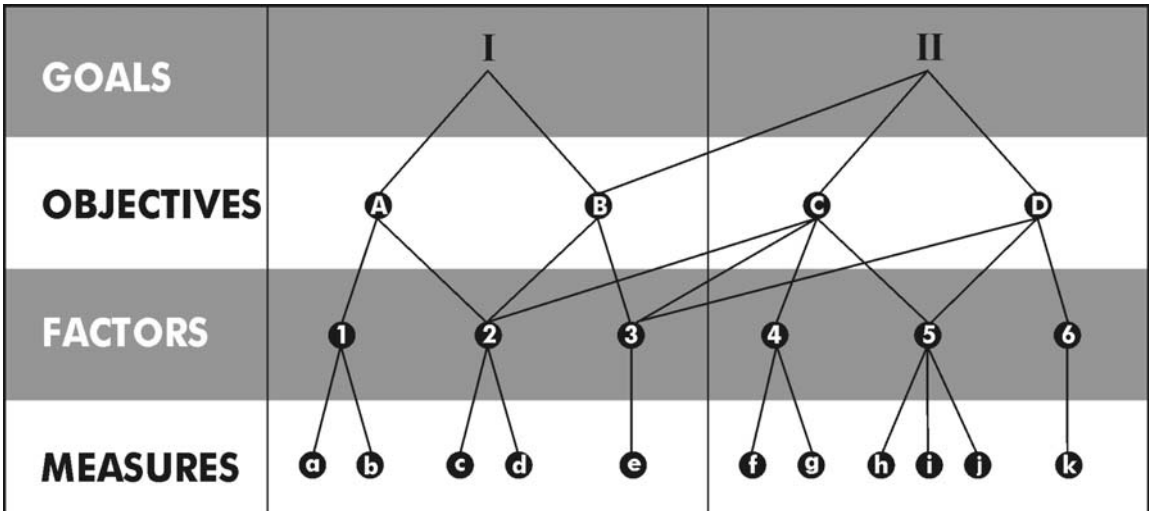
Public Hearing No. 2: Draft 2025 Cost Feasible Plan – September 29, 2005

The MTPO will conduct, with consultant assistance, a second public hearing, this one on the draft Cost Feasible Plan. The results of the hearing will allow the MTPO to take official action on the Plan.

2. Evaluation Process

A community-based evaluation technique helps build consensus for projects. It begins with defining goals and objectives, evaluation factors, and performance measures and their inter-relationship (Figure 2-1).

Figure 2-1
Conceptual Relationship Among Goals, Objectives, Evaluation Factors, and Performance Measures



The following set of goals and objectives is believed to encompass these complementary efforts and represents a starting point for the Gainesville Urbanized Long-Range Transportation Plan Update.

2.1 Preliminary Goal Statements

In proposing a set of goals and objectives for this transportation planning process, those developed for the current 2020 Transportation Plan are believed to provide a starting point. They are cited in the following section. Those *italicized* sections are additions by the consultant after a review of the current set of goals/objectives.

First Goal Statement

Develop and maintain a balanced transportation system that supports the economic vitality and quality of life in the Gainesville metropolitan area through expanded transportation choice, improved accessibility for motorized and non-motorized users and the preservation of environmental, cultural and historic areas.

Objectives

1.1 Improve regional accessibility to major employment, health care, commerce and goods distribution centers.

1.2 Improve the viability of alternatives to the single-occupant automobile (bicycle, walking, public transit, carpooling and telecommuting) as options for all users of the transportation system through accessibility, convenience and comfort.

1.3 Improve access for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users to public places and centers of activity.

1.4 Establish an interconnected and continuous system of off-road trails and greenways.

1.5 Coordinate transportation and future land use decisions to promote efficient development patterns and a choice of transportation modes.

1.6 Improve access to transportation facilities and services for elderly, children, disabled and economically disadvantaged individuals.

1.7 Reduce the adverse impacts of transportation on the environment, fragmentation of natural areas and wildlife.

1.8 Minimize the adverse impacts of transportation on established neighborhoods through development of a balanced transportation system.

1.9 Preserve the intended function of the Florida Interstate Highway System (FIHS) and other appropriate corridors for intercity travel and goods movement, but minimize adverse impacts resulting from this policy that are inconsistent with other goals and objectives.

Second Goal Statement

Develop and maintain a sustainable transportation system that supports and preserves the existing transportation network through compact development patterns, improved system management and operations, coordination and communication.

Objectives

2.1 Minimize travel distances for work, shopping and recreation.

2.2 Encourage infill and redevelopment in areas that have existing and adequate infrastructure in place.

2.3 Improve the interconnectivity of streets and other components of the transportation system, including sidewalks, bikeways and transit ways.

2.4 Create opportunities for access by all forms of travel at centers for jobs, services, commerce and housing through land use strategies and urban design principles that minimize travel distances and allow for a mix of uses.

2.5 Enhance connectivity between different forms of travel by creating multimodal access hubs within new development or redeveloping areas.

2.6 Implement transportation demand management and system management strategies before adding general purpose lanes to a roadway.
2.7 Improve the operational efficiency of the existing transportation system for all modes of travel based on a balance of needs within the corridor.
2.8 Phase in new vehicle fleets for public agencies that make use of alternative fuels that reduce air quality impacts.
2.9 Coordinate transportation plans and programs with all stakeholders in the transportation system, including the public, public agencies, transit, emergency management, police and fire, etc.
2.10 Develop a balanced transportation system that includes a dispersion of traffic across multiple smaller roads rather than concentrating traffic on a few major roadways.

Third Goal Statement

Develop and maintain a safe *and secure* transportation system for all users and neighbors of transportation facilities and services.

Objectives

3.1 Address existing and potential safety *and security* problems on or adjacent to transportation corridors through an interagency planning and prioritization process.
3.2 Implement techniques to calm traffic in residential, educational and commercial areas where walking and bicycling are common.
3.3 Establish criteria and performance standards for roadways to maintain their residential or rural character, as appropriate.
3.4 Ensure roadways are pedestrian/bicycle friendly.
3.5 Improve the pedestrian/bicycle connections between commercial centers and surrounding neighborhoods.

Fourth Goal Statement

Invest strategically in transportation infrastructure to enhance the vitality of the community.

Objectives

A. Give priority to preservation and maintenance of the existing transportation system.
B. Develop a financially responsible plan that allocates available resources.
C. Preserve current and planned rights-of-way for transportation system improvements.

2.2 Evaluation Factors

To build upon these goals and objectives, if adopted for this project, evaluation factors will be developed from a list of issues to be covered in a transportation plan that is to gain federal approval (Table 2-1). (These issues are summarized in Attachment A.) A preliminary list of evaluation factors will be formed at the fourth public meeting.

Table 2-1
Possible Evaluation Factors

1. Air Quality
2. Coastal Zone
3. Community Cohesion and Community Services
4. Construction Impacts
5. Cultural Resources
6. Development (including secondary development)
7. Energy
8. Environmental Justice
9. Floodplains
10. Geology, Soils, Utilities and Other Engineering Considerations
11. Land Acquisition and Displacements
12. Land Use and Zoning – Consistency with Planning
13. Maintenance of Traffic
14. Noise
15. Prime and Unique Farmlands
16. Socioeconomic Impacts
17. Traffic and Transportation
    - + Traffic Volumes
    - + Level of Service
    - + Accidents/Safety
    - + Pedestrians/Bicyclists
18. Water Quality
19. Wetlands
20. Wild and Scenic Rivers
21. Wildlife and Threatened and Endangered Species

Source: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) 6640.8A and The Corradino Group

Performance measures will be developed to explain the evaluation factors quantitatively and qualitatively. Two examples are: the quantitative measure of congestion along key roadway links or at intersections; and, the qualitative assessment based on professional judgment of the degree to which a community's cohesiveness is affected. Development of the final list of performance measures will involve a trade-off of the desirability of a measure with the difficulty of obtaining data for it. This trade-off will be based on the consultant's and the MTPO's experiences.

Throughout the examination of performance measures, community participation needs will always be in focus. The following question will be asked throughout in the process: How can data, particularly graphics generated in the analysis, be designed for use in public presentations? Coordination of the collection and presentation of data will ensure efficient allocation of the study's resources.

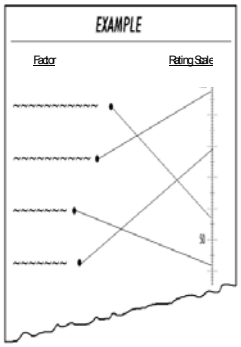
A Michigan-based project provides an example of how this process has been used successfully in the past.

Performance Measures

Once the evaluation factors have been established, measures of how the alternative transportation plans perform are defined. Again, Table 2-2 presents an example of performance measures by the factors listed in Figure 2-2. As the Gainesville transportation plan update proceeds, measures, such as these, will be developed for review by the TAC, CAC, B/PAB, the MTPO and the public.

Figure 2-2

Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal Project
Scoring Form – Evaluation Criteria



How Important Are These Items?

We want to know how you value the eight evaluation criteria/factors listed below. To provide us your opinion, please rate them on the scale of "1" through "100", with the highest rating indicating the item you believe is most important. Draw a line from the dot (·) following each factor on the left, to the scale on the right, to indicate your opinion. When finished, return your form to a project representative, or by email, or by fax at the addresses listed at the bottom of this form.

Your opinions will be used to evaluate the Illustrative Alternatives of the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal Project. Thank you.

Factor		Rating Scale
Air Quality	●	100
Community Cohesion	●	
Displacements	●	
Engineering Difficulty	●	
Environmental Justice	●	50
Historic Properties	●	
Noise	●	
Traffic Flow	●	0

www.mdot.state.mi.us/projects/DIFT
Hotline: 313.964.4543
Fax: 313.964.1984

Table 2-2
Example Performance Measures

Evaluation Factor	Performance Measure
Air Quality	CO concentrations at W points in the network (selected in cooperation with TAC and CAC/BPAB) and consistent with noise, community cohesion, and safety analysis.
Community Cohesion	Projected traffic volumes/speeds on X sensitive (environment, aesthetics, social) roadway segments.
Displacements	Number of residential and business properties taken.
Mode Choice	Percent transit, non-motorized, multiple occupant, and single occupant trips by TAZ and area total.
Environmental Justice	Direct (taking) and indirect (number of projects by mode) that are in areas of expected concentration of low income and/or minority populations, as defined by the U.S. Census.
Open Space	Number of acres of public and non-public park potentially lost. New impervious surface.
Noise	Expected "significant change" in noise due to traffic volume change at Y points.
Traffic Flow/Level of Service by Mode	Level of service in major corridors of non-motorized, transit and motorized modes. Change in travel time from baseline system for up to Z origin-destination pairs (selected in cooperation with TAC and CAC/BPAB).

3. Next Steps

This memorandum is to be reviewed first by the MTPO and members of the TAC and CAC/BPAB. Once reviewed and refined, it will be presented at the first public meeting, now scheduled for March 18, 2004. Public input will allow further revisions in the communications strategy. Contact with the project can be made by visiting the Web site at www.ncfrpc.org and click on the "Transportation" button.

Attachment A

Summary of Analysis Issues

Summary of Analysis Issues

Introduction

A summary definition of the analysis issues presented on Table 2-1 of the main body of this report is provided here. Not all apply and others of lesser effect on developing the 2025 transportation plan for the Gainesville Urbanized Area will be screened out of the process beginning at the March 18 public meeting.

Air Quality – The US EPA sets standards to protect health and human welfare. For transportation projects, concentrations of carbon monoxide (CO) near "hot-spot" intersections, and the total annual amount of pollutants generated in an area, with and without a project, can be estimated.

Coastal Zone – Where a project is within or likely to affect land or water uses within an area covered by a state Coastal Zone Management Program, the project must be determined to be consistent with planning under the program. This is an issue that does not apply to the Gainesville situation.

Community Cohesion/Community Services – Transportation corridors can provide a focal point for a community, or divide a community by the magnitude of their presence and/or their position as a barrier to safe pedestrian movement. Emergency services need good access to those they serve and community services must be accessible. A transportation project can enhance or inhibit such access.

Construction Impacts – These impacts, generally of a short term, can include air quality (especially dust) issues, noise from construction equipment, the need to maintain traffic, and erosion from earth moving activities.

Cultural Resources – These are sites or objects that yield information about history or prehistory that are above and below ground. If they are eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, based on established criteria, they are protected by law. They may be archaeological sites, historic sites, and architectural examples. They may be individual sites or multiple adjacent sites that together form a district.

Development (including secondary development) – There is a recognized relationship between development and transportation systems (along with other systems, especially water and sewer). Good planning develops transportation improvements in concert with expected growth.

Energy – Transportation improvements, once built, change energy consumption by making travel more or less efficient, encouraging longer trips and the like.

Environmental Justice – Consideration must be given to whether facilities are sited in a manner that does not place a disproportionate burden on low-income and minority persons.

Floodplains – Areas that flood with some frequency are mapped so that development there, including transportation facilities, is avoided to the extent possible. Filling floodplains can cause water levels to rise, putting persons and property at risk, and affect biological resources often associated with these areas.

Geology, Soils, Utilities, and Other Engineering Considerations – Special challenges are posed by natural and manmade features such as: areas where there are special groundwater considerations; the

presence of peat or other soils that offer a poor foundation for roads and buildings; and, the presence of high power electrical lines. The cost-effectiveness of construction versus avoidance must be weighed.

Land Acquisition and Displacements – An important consideration when planning transportation improvements is the effects on displacing (acquiring) homes and businesses.

Land Use and Zoning – Transportation improvements need to be consistent with other planning efforts, particularly local and regional land use plans. Zoning defines the kinds of development allowed presently. Comprehensive plans (which may have a transportation element) depict a community's vision of the future and offer a means of addressing zoning change requests.

Maintenance of Traffic – Short-term changes in access due to construction can have economic effects. How access is maintained, where detours are placed, and how long construction continues are related to construction cost, convenience to the public, and business viability. Normally, these impacts are addressed in a preliminary way during planning, and then specifics are developed later during the design stage.

Noise – Noise from transportation sources increases in a perceptible way when traffic doubles or the distance to the noise source (e.g., a road) is halved. Where defined noise levels are exceeded, noise mitigation must be considered, if federal dollars are involved in a project. Where reasonable (cost-based) and feasible (can it be built?) mitigation is possible, it is implemented.

Prime and Unique Farmlands – Federal law helps protect farmland, especially flat productive land, so that alternatives to its use must be considered, if significant amounts are to be taken for a federal project.

Socioeconomic Impacts – Changes in travel patterns may affect special groups, such as the elderly and/or disabled. Such issues must be assessed in developing a transportation plan.

Traffic and Transportation – Transportation projects are designed to improve travel. The measures of these improvements include:

+ changes in traffic volumes;
+ changes in vehicle occupancy;
+ changes in public transit usage;
+ the Level of Service, meaning travel time and maneuverability;
+ changes in accidents; and,
+ provision of adequate facilities to serve pedestrians and bicyclists.

Water Quality – Runoff during construction is normally regulated by specifications written into construction plans. After construction, concern for water quality is related to effects on sensitive water resources such as reservoirs, ground water recharge areas, high quality streams, wetlands and lakes. Stormwater running off paved surfaces carries a variety of pollutants and is usually not discharged directly into such areas.

Wetlands – Because of their ability to improve water quality and support biological systems, state and federal laws protect wetlands. Wetlands may be used sparingly for projects, but if they are used, then a careful program of mitigation must be developed, approved and then monitored to replace the wetlands lost.

Wild and Scenic Rivers – Federal law protects certain nationally designated rivers.

Wildlife and Threatened and Endangered Species – State and federal law protect such species, and in some cases their habitat. A biological inventory may be performed during a study if, after coordination with state and federal resource agencies, there is concern that species that are threatened or endangered may be present.