



Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization

2040 Long Range Transportation Plan: Lessons Learned Report

DRAFT: January 9th 2015

Purpose of Lessons Learned Report

From the fall of 2011 to the spring of 2014, the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) focused most of its planning efforts on the updating of its Long Range Transportation Plan. For this update the MPO's approach was dramatically different for previous planning processes. While there were many benefits to this new approach, there were several issues that made this planning process less successful than MPO staff had hoped. This report outlines the approach the MPO took to update the 2040 LRTP and provides insight into the issues that occurred when implementing each of the "key decisions" that were part of the process. Furthermore, this report includes recommendations on how certain steps could be better implemented with future LRTP updates.

It should be noted that this report is developed by MPO staff for future MPO staff to provide some context into the development of the 2040 LRTP. This insight will, hopefully, allow future planning processes to utilize the benefits and avoid the pitfalls of the 2040 LRTP's planning process. This report is meant solely as a resource for future planning endeavors.

DRAFT

Background of LRTP

The 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is a package designed to improve the efficiency and interconnectedness of our facilities and services, and strives to plan for and develop a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive regional transportation system.

Purpose of the LRTP

Long Range Transportation Plans are required of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) by federal mandate. When the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) was passed in 1991, it not only allocated funding for transportation programs, it required that MPOs develop a regional transportation vision for the next 20 years. Ensuing reauthorization bills, TEA-21 in 1998; SAFETEA-LU in 2005; and, most recently, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) in 2012, maintained this mandate. The federal mandate also requires that LRTP's include financial plans. This means that the MPO must estimate the revenues for transportation improvements a region expects to receive over the life of the plan, and must ensure that the total estimated cost of these transportation improvements does not exceed the region's anticipated funding. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) develops the funding estimates for LRTP's and then provides those estimates to MPOs.

It is important to remember that the federal and state funds shown in the LRTP may not be available in exactly the same amounts or within the same funding sources indicated in the Plan. The actual funding amounts depend on the federal and state budget process for any given fiscal year. Given the long-term nature of the LRTP, and the degree of uncertainty in the estimation of both costs and revenues, a precise accounting is not required. The MPO's shorter term document, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), must demonstrate stricter fiscal constraint, ensuring that in the near term, as costs and revenues become easier to predict, fiscal accountability is maintained.

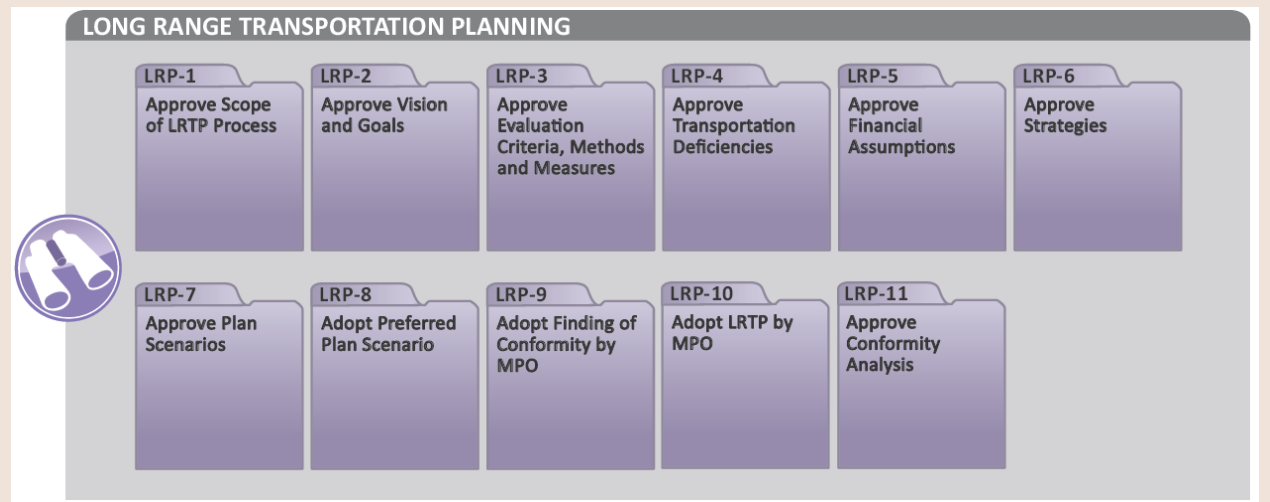
Finally, the MPO is required by federal regulation to review the long range plan every year and update it every five years. Furthermore, the FHWA and the FTA require that any transportation project receiving federal funding must consider specific planning factors. Currently, there are eight planning factors defined. LRTP 2040 has included these factors in its identification of priority projects along with other factors important to the region.

TCAPP Grant and Decision Guide

The development of a Long Range Transportation Plan is always challenging for an MPO. While Federal Regulations provide a list of requirements that must be achieved with the development of any LRTP, these regulations do not provide structure or advice as to how to achieve these required elements. Such flexibility is reasonable, as MPOs vary substantially in terms of size, needs, and resources—but it also means that while there is clarity regarding what a plan must have, there is no detailed guidance on how to achieve that content.

In November 2012, the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO was awarded a grant of \$192,885 from the Transportation Research Board's (TRB) Strategic Highway Research Program – Round 2 (SHRP2). For this grant the MPO pilot-tested the use of the *Transportation for Communities-Advancing Projects through Partnerships (TCAPP) Decision Guide*, which provided “key decisions” or anchor points for implementing a Long Range Transportation Plan (Figure 1).

Figure 1: TCAPP Decision Guide Key Decisions



The MPO used this guide as the process-basis for the development of its 2040 LRTP. The Decision Guide was useful because it laid out a logical process for moving through the development of a LRTP, specifically planning, prioritizing and developing a regional transportation vision. MPO staff chose to use the TCAPP guide in updating its LRTP because it offered both a structured process for developing the LRTP, and guidance for assessing projects using a more analytical, performance-based assessment.

With the implementation of previous LRTPs, the method of developing the plan was not typically structured with a beginning, middle and end clearly identified. The key requirements outlined by FHWA were always the focus, but the methods for achieving these requirements were developed as more of an ad-hoc process. With the 2040 LRTP update, MPO staff tried to focus the planning effort on the future transportation system and any needed improvements. The TCAPP Decision Guide provided the framework for such a focus. Regarding an analytical approach, MPO staff felt strongly that all projects under consideration for inclusion in the LRTP should be assessed using evaluation criteria, as performance measurement is becoming more commonplace in the development and later evaluation of transportation improvements.

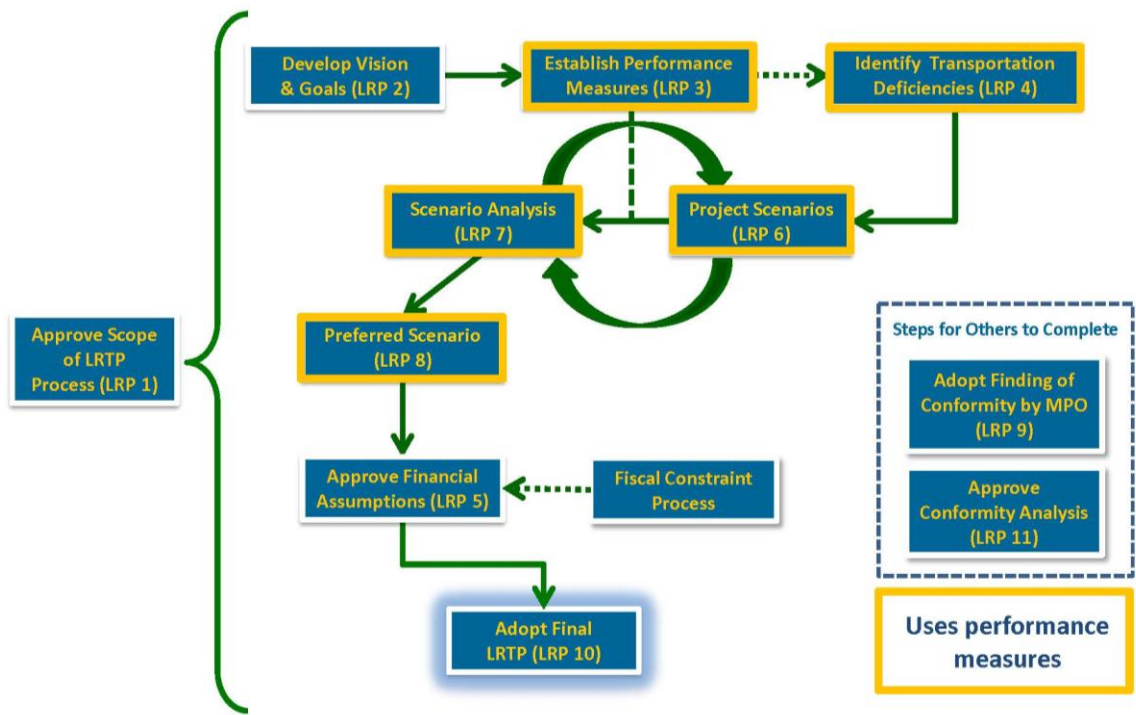
2040 LRTP Process and Lessons Learned

As discussed above, the MPO used the TCAPP Decision Guide as a basis for the development of its 2040 LRTP. The following chapter defines each of the key decisions of the TCAPP Guide, outlines the MPO’s implementation of each key decision, and discusses the lessons learned from the implementation.

TCAPP Key Decisions LRP-9 and LRP-11: Both these steps in the TCAPP Guide refer to conformity analysis. As the MPO is an air quality attainment area, we are not required to perform conformity analysis with the development of the LRTP (reference Figure 1).

The following graphic provides an overview of the MPO’s process for its 2040 LRTP and the implementation of the Guide’s “key decisions.” The graphic below illustrates the overall process used for the development of the MPO’s 2040 LRTP (Figure 2). The term LRP refers to the TCAPP Decision Guide.

Figure 2: Steps taken in the LRTP Planning Process



Approve Scope of LRTP Process (LRP-1)

TCAPP Key Decision

The scoping key decision involves a broad assessment of the data, decisions, and relationships to consider, acquire, or make throughout the entire LRTP process.

MPO Implementation

In the fall of 2012, staff informed MPO stakeholders about the MPO’s intent to pursue Pilot Test SHRP2 funding and to use the TCAPP Decision Guide as the anchor points for the development of the next LRTP. The MPO would implement the 2040 LRTP using the TCAPP Decision Guide and assess how MPO stakeholders interpreted that implementation using before and after surveys.

Lessons Learned

MPO staff made the decision to limit discussion regarding the use of the TCAPP Decision Guide in the development of the 2040 LRTP. At the time this decision was made because the MPO planned to survey MPO stakeholders as part of the TCAPP assessment process, and there were concerns that providing too much insight into the TCAPP Guide would bias the responses. This decision to limit the discussion of TCAPP resulted in some confusion among stakeholders regarding the process and some frustration that the process was different from previous updates of the 2040 LRTP. **For future Long Range Transportation Plans, MPO staff recommends that the process should be fully scoped and approved by the MPO stakeholders prior to implementation.**

Approve Vision and Goals (LRP-2)

TCAPP Key Decision

At this key decision, the community's values, whether stated as a vision and goals or simply agreed upon by the stakeholders for the planning area, are used to guide the transportation-specific vision and goals.

MPO Implementation

The development of the vision and goals for the MPO's 2040 LRTP began about a year prior to the implementation of TCAPP. The MPO adopted two sets of guiding principles: 1) the Regional Mobility Goals, established by the MPO's committees; and 2) the Eight Planning Factors: federally required goals used in all long range transportation plans.

Lessons Learned

MPO has firmly based previous long range transportation plans in community developed Regional Mobility Goals. These goals have a long-standing history in our region and were already under re-development when the TCAPP grant was awarded. MPO staff elected not to reevaluate the goals based on the TCAPP Guide. While the goals were extremely useful in helping inform the 2040 LRTP, they did not connect directly to the development of performance measures. Despite the fact that these goals did not lend themselves to the TCAPP process, the historical precedent for the MPO's Long Range Transportation Planning goals did further cement a regional transportation vision that has been crafted and developed for over 10 years. **For future updates of the Long Range Transportation Plans, MPO staff recommends that the goals should be structured to better inform the performance measures used to assess projects.**

Approve Evaluation Criteria, Methods and Measures (LRP-3)

TCAPP Key Decision

At this key decision the evaluation criteria, methods and measures are approved that will allow decision-makers to compare scenarios to the vision and goals and to one another.

MPO Implementation

A set of 16 performance measures were developed to produce quantitative values for transportation improvements regarding their performance in mobility, economic development, environment and community. With these tools, the MPO was able to objectively select the most optimal project combination for achieving the regional vision.

Lessons Learned

As the MPO was developing performance measures for the first time, stakeholders made recommendations on elements that should be considered. While these contributions were useful, many of them were impossible to implement due to lack of data or time constraints for analysis. It was difficult to convey to the stakeholders that some suggestions simply could not be accomplished. Another major challenge for developing these criteria was finding data to complete the analysis. For example, reliable crash data was difficult to acquire and manipulate into a useable format for the evaluation process. **For future Long Range Transportation Plans, MPO staff recommends working with MPO stakeholders to develop regional transportation goals and performance measures that more closely relate. MPO staff also recommends working with the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transit to ensure that the performance measures are consistent with the State's prioritization process for funding projects.**

Approve Transportation Deficiencies (LRP-4)

TCAPP Key Decision

The approved list of specific corridors, roads and areas which are deficient are identified as part of this key decision. This assessment serves as a basis for problems and opportunities addressed in both the corridor planning and environmental review processes.

MPO Implementation

The MPO began identifying regional transportation deficiencies about six months prior to the implementation of TCAPP. For roads, the process focused on identifying future sites of major and minor congestion issues using the MPO's Travel Demand Model. The MPO determined transit and pedestrian deficiencies based on access to facilities, and determined bicycle deficiencies by identifying areas which lacked connectivity.

Lessons Learned

The MPO stakeholders found it helpful to use the identification of deficiencies as a starting point for identifying which projects should be considered for inclusion in the 2040 LRTP. However, many stakeholders felt that the transportation deficiencies identified should have been more diverse. Assessing only congestion-related deficiencies for roads, and only accessibility-related issues for transit, for example, resulted in missed opportunities for addressing other issues. Furthermore, some stakeholders felt that the transportation deficiencies were not comparable across modes. **For future Long Range Transportation Plans, MPO staff recommends working with MPO stakeholders to develop a diverse system for analyzing regional transportation deficiencies. MPO staff also recommends relating the tools for analyzing deficiencies to the performance measures that are established.**

Approve Financial Assumptions (LRP-5)

TCAPP Key Decision

At this key decision information from the Fiscal Constraint Phase is introduced into the LRTP decision making process.

MPO Implementation

The MPO first considered the overall expected funding for the region, and then developed cost estimates for projects under consideration. The official fiscal-constraint process did not occur until after the approval of the preferred scenario (LRP-8) due to changes in federal and state funding mechanisms and the need to update financial assumptions prior to forecasting a funding figure for the 2040 LRTP.

Lessons Learned

As mentioned above, the MPO was not in control of the development of its overall LRTP funding estimate. Therefore, the MPO was unable to fully consider fiscal constraint until after the approval of the 2040 LRTP preferred scenario. MPO stakeholders and members of the public did have some concerns regarding the timing of the fiscal-constraint process. For example some stakeholders noted that without knowing funding estimate the MPO could be developing an LRTP that it then could not afford. **For future Long Range Transportation Plans, MPO staff recommends working with the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to create preliminary fiscal estimates earlier in the plan development process.**

Approve Strategies (LRP-6)

TCAPP Key Decision

Strategies are developed to address the deficiencies identified in LRP-4. A strategy is a specific tactic or policy employed or recommended by an organization. Strategies could include road or multi-modal improvements, land use changes, and other means of addressing deficiencies.

MPO Implementation

With the 2040 LRTP, the MPO implemented a new process for evaluating transportation projects; one which leverages the interconnectedness of our transportation system. The MPO structured its 2040 analysis of transportation improvements in scenarios, or groups of projects, and analyzed three rounds of scenarios from April to October of 2013.

Lessons Learned

For the first time in developing its LRTP, the MPO approached the development and selection of candidate projects using a highly structured process. Using a performance measurement based approach resulted in the more thoughtful and technically-grounded development of the LRTP. With previous plans, the process for choosing projects could, at times, be more politically driven and based on assumed needs. **For future Long Range Transportation Plans, MPO staff recommends the continued use of an analytical scenario-based approach to provide decision-makers with more resources and make the overall decision-making process more transparent. Staff should account for the State's prioritization process, to evaluate the likelihood of funding projects in those scenarios.**

Approve Plan Scenarios (LRP-7)

TCAPP Key Decision

Scenarios are based on approved strategies and are compared using the evaluation criteria, methods and measures.

MPO Implementation

The MPO created scenario analysis summary charts and compared each scenario's performance to a "no-build" base, which illustrated the 2040 regional transportation system if no new transportation improvements were made beyond projects that are fully-funded. The evaluation of each scenario using clear and accessible performance measures, as well as an apples-to-apples comparison approach, resulted in the development of a draft preferred scenario.

Lessons Learned

While addressing transportation deficiencies via project scenarios, many MPO stakeholders appreciated a more analytical approach, however others balked at the use of project scenarios. Some stakeholders were confused as to why projects were being considered in groups. Project groupings were particularly challenging for the general public, as this technical approach for transportation planning was structured for transportation planners, and not those outside of the profession. Furthermore, to truly understand this process, a stakeholder had to be fully invested. Casual investment or occasional review often resulted in confusion. While an analytical approach created a better LRTP, the planning process is now more challenging to access for participants outside of transportation planning. **For future Long Range Transportation Plans, MPO staff recommends that the MPO should maintain a more analytical approach to project selection, but work to develop a more transparent process and simplified analysis. The MPO should also work to engage the public earlier in project development.**

Adopt Preferred Plan Scenario (LRP-8)

TCAPP Key Decision

At this key decision, a preferred plan scenario is adopted for inclusion in the Draft LRTP.

MPO Implementation

The preferred scenario was developed from the findings of the three previous scenarios. The scenario development and analysis process allowed MPO stakeholders and the public to see how projects related and provided the most benefit. The preferred scenario was analyzed using the same performance measurement analysis as the previous scenarios.

Lessons Learned

The preferred scenario was approved by the MPO Policy Board, with relatively little discussion. The almost six-month process of assessing scenarios resulted in the MPO stakeholders having a clear understanding of the projects that were in this scenario and a clear understanding that this particular group of projects achieved regional goals. The MPO stakeholders, who had been most involved in TCAPP's implementation, understood each step in the decision-making process. When it came time to make that final decision, the MPO stakeholders were ready, and fully understood the choice they were making.

A tremendous amount of effort and guidance went into the development of the preferred scenario, which was approved in November 2013, but the scenario became threatened when new stakeholders came into the process who had not participated in the complete implementation of TCAPP. Following the approval of the scenario, the representation on the MPO Policy Board changed with local elections. This change in leadership resulted in some debate about the addition of new projects. Local staff also wanted to add improvements that they were hoping to implement quickly. MPO staff obliged by accommodating a few minor project requests based on these changes. Also, one of the major projects in the MPO that had been considered fully funded became uncertain due to recent elections and other factors. These political changes made the status of the preferred scenario, which had been a major achievement for the Long Range Transportation Planning process, ambiguous. **For future Long Range Transportation Plans, staff and stakeholders should develop a process that allows for flexibility in the LRTP's development, accounting for changes in the community and political conditions. Furthermore, MPO staff needs to fully document each key step in the process to help inform new comers to the process.**

Adopt LRTP by MPO (LRP-10)

TCAPP Key Decision

At this key decision a final plan is adopted by the MPO board. This plan includes the preferred scenario, and fiscal constraint.

MPO Implementation

Prior to the plan's approval by the MPO Policy Board, MPO staff hosted two public hearings; posted the draft plan on the MPO's website for a 60-day period. The 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, including the preferred scenario and the fiscally-constrained project list, was adopted by the MPO board on May 28th, 2014.

Lessons Learned

The approval of the 2040 LRTP served as the culmination of the two-year LRTP process. Through the fiscal-constraint process, all of the projects identified in the preferred scenario were included on the LRTP's fiscally-constrained project list. Two projects that were considered outer year improvements were moved into a separate funding section called "preliminary engineering studies." These projects, while considered community priorities in the LRTP process, will be reviewed further before the next update of the community's LRTP.

The approval of the plan coincided with a major transportation funding upheaval within the MPO. A very controversial bypass project, which was fully funded in both the MPO's LRTP and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), was deemed by the Federal Highway Administration to no longer meet its original purpose and need. This determination made it very difficult for the project to proceed as intended. In response to this, Virginia's Secretary of Transportation implemented the Route 29 Solutions process. This process is an advisory process for developing transportation improvements that would help achieve congestion relief and mobility goals in the MPO's Route 29 corridor. While the advisory panel includes an MPO representative, it was not an MPO-driven process. **For future Long Range Transportation Plans, MPO staff recommends that the planning process should be outlined carefully from the very beginning and should be structured in such a way that allows maximum flexibility to handle community shifts. Staff should also develop a communications plan at the beginning of the process, to prepare for and communicate contingencies.**

Comments Regarding the LRTP Process

During the development of the 2040 LRTP, MPO staff provided numerous opportunities for the public to comment on the 2040 LRTP. Other, more structured comments on the plan and planning process came during the final approval process for the plan. The following sections outlines the comments the MPO received during the planning process.

Opportunities for Input

MPO staff and staff from the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County and the University of Virginia have conducted various workshops to seek input from the public on transportation needs, provide citizens with an opportunity to review project scenarios and associated performance measure data, and provide input for consideration in structuring a preferred scenario. Public Input Sessions included:

- Workshop 1 (Oct 2011): brief on existing long range transportation plan
- Workshop 2 (Jan 2012): debut 2040 modeling & identify transportation deficiencies
- Workshop 3 (Aug 2013): input on improvement scenarios
- Workshop 4 (Oct 2013): input on prioritization of projects in preferred scenario
- Workshop 5 (Feb 2014): input on fiscal impact analysis
- First Public Hearing (Mar 2014): input of draft plan document
- Final Public Hearing (May 2014): final review and approval

Other opportunities for public input have existed throughout the 2.5-year process. These include:

- Committee meeting public comment periods
- Online comment box
- Office comment box

Input received at LRTP events and MPO meetings

Public input was systematically collected at three LRTP-specific workshops, all of which are summarized in Appendix B of the 2040 LRTP. The Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO kicked off its core 2040 LRTP public input process in August 2013, asking attendees for input on which major transportation projects are most important, and how they should be included in the 2040 LRTP. In total, 45 people attended the meeting, 22 of which filled out and submitted comment forms. Feedback focused on:

- Concerns with the existing at-grade intersections of railroad and arterial road in the Woolen Mills neighborhood;
- Congestion on US 29 and the adverse impacts of the proposed US 29 Bypass;
- Difficulty in understanding the impacts of projects and scenarios, especially should the Bypass be rejected; and
- The benefits of transit and bike improvements; Berkmar Drive Extended; and improvements at the Rio Road and Hydraulic Road Interchange.

The MPO held its second 2040 LRTP public input workshop in October 2013 to show its progress with the 2040 LRTP and to request input on the Draft Preferred Scenario of Capacity-building road and transit projects, as well as initial project lists for all non-capacity-building improvements like bike and pedestrian projects. In total, 13 people attended the meeting, 7 of which filled out and submitted comment forms. Feedback focused on:

- Concerns with the US 29 and US 250 widening;
- Issues related to transit-only lanes on Free Bridge;
- New crossings of the Rivanna; and
- The benefits of BRT and enhanced multimodal options; connections to the CHO airport; and the addition of Berkmar Drive Extended.

The MPO held its third 2040 LRTP public input workshop in February 2014 to show its progress with the 2040 LRTP and to request input on the fiscal-constraint process and project prioritization. In total, 22 people attended the meeting. Comment forms were separated by mode. MPO staff received: 11 Roadway forms; 8 Transit forms; 8 Bike/Ped forms; and 9 Intersection forms. Feedback focused on:

- Bike/ped or intersection improvements; and
- Specific projects mentioned in the questionnaires.

TCAPP Grant Close-out Meeting

In March of 2014, the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO held a Project Close-out Meeting with its stakeholders on the SHRP2 – TCAPP process. The meeting attendees had a number of comments regarding the TCAPP process. The main discussion threads and questions included:

- The use of transportation scenarios made this process challenging to follow;
- The performance measures were challenging to understand and in some cases a numerical valuable seemed to be forced into a measure that would have benefitted from a narrative approach; and
- The public input process needed to be more robust given all the new elements that the MPO was implementing for this Long Range Transportation Plan update.

Attendees felt that the 2040 LRTP process was well-conducted and liked the more technical perspective that TCAPP brought to the plan, but felt that, if this process were to be implemented in the future, the process should be more completely vetted with the MPO members and the community overall. Attached are summary minutes of the meeting for review. **MPO staff agreed with many of the concerns**

discussed at the close-out meeting. Many recommendations in the above report address how the process should be handled in the future in order to avoid these issues.

Additional comments regarding the 2040 LRTP

- 1) The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) offered the following suggestions for the Draft 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan:
 - Assuming that...the advisory panel meetings that Virginia Transportation Secretary Layne has convened [result in the termination of the Route 29 western bypass project], we urge the MPO to amend the LRTP and TIP to remove the bypass as soon as possible after the state has acted; this should help facilitate the transfer of funding between projects and the efficient sale of the portions of the bypass right-of-way the state currently owns.
 - Adding more background information on data trends, household transportation costs, and the environmental impacts of transportation systems;
 - Incorporating discussion of access management planning;
 - Adding a section on environmental and community impacts to the MPO's Regional Mobility Goals;
 - Recognizing more of the important connections between key performance measures and the Regional Mobility Goals and federal planning factors; and
 - Providing additional information on some of the performance measures evaluated in scenario planning, and assessing the greenhouse gas impacts of the proposed project list.

Attached is the full letter from SELC for review.

MPO staff agrees with the comments for the Southern Environmental Law Center and would encourage that future LRTP planning processes incorporate many of the features SELC has referenced.

- 2) The City of Charlottesville Planning Commission provided feedback to the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO Policy Board pursuant to the Commission's May 27th meeting with MPO staff. Complete comments from the Commission can be reviewed in the attached letter.

MPO staff agrees that there is significant merit in including local planning commissions more completely in the development process for future LRTPs. However, there was confusion about the roles of those groups. In future updates, staff should meet with planning commissions earlier in the process, to outline the planning process and responsibilities. Staff should ensure that planning commissioners are aware of their representatives on the MPO committees. Staff should also encourage those planning commission representatives to regularly report back to their commissions about the MPO and planning process.

SHRP2 – TCAPP Meeting Summary
Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO Project Close Out Meeting
Meeting Summary
March 26th 2014, 9:30 am

Attendees

Kristin Szakos	Charlottesville City Council, Chair of the Charlottesville- Albemarle MPO
Ann Mallek	Albemarle County Board of Supervisors
Mac Lafferty	Albemarle County Planning Commission, Chair of MPO's Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)
Julia Monteith	University of Virginia's Office of the Architect (Rep on MPO)
Cal Morris	Albemarle County Planning Commission
Donna Shaunesey	JAUNT (local para-transit)
John Jones	Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT)
Reena Mathews	Transportation Research Board
Sarah Rhodes	Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO Program Manager

Introductions

The attendees went around the table introducing themselves and describing their roles with the MPO's 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan and the implementation of the MPO's Transportation for Communities Advancing Projects through Partnerships (TCAPP) grant. Ms. Mathews noted that the TCAPP Project is now housed by Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) not TRB and is now called PlanWorks.

SHRP2 Discussion

Ms. Mathews discussed the SHRP2 program, specifically the history of the program and its current transition to FHWA. Ms. Mathews notes that the SHRP2 program still offers grant opportunities and that those potential opportunities can be reviewed in SHRP2 product chart pamphlet provided to attendees.

Overview

Ms. Rhodes gave a presentation on the MPO's Long Range Transportation Planning process and how that process implemented the SHRP2 TCAPP grant requirements. *This presentation is included with this summary for review.*

Discussion

The meeting attendees had a number of comments regarding the TCAPP process. The main discussion threads and questions are noted below.

1) The use of transportation scenarios made this process challenging to follow.

Several attendees noted that the TCAPP component of grouping projects into scenarios in order address strategies was confusing and hard to follow. There were some concerns that the scenario process eliminated too many options. While the process never eliminated projects it was challenging for staff to explain the process. One attendee suggested referring to the scenarios as clusters instead of scenarios, emphasizing the mobility of projects.

2) The performance measures were challenging to understand and in some cases a numerical valuable seemed to be forced into a measure that would have benefitted from a narrative approach.

Several attendees felt that the performance measures were challenging to understand while others felt that the measures provided valuable insight. All attendees felt that the process needed to be outlined more completely upfront and that the MPO should consider using less numerical measures in the future. Some of the attendees, who had been a part of the TCAPP process from the beginning, felt that they were very familiar with the information from the process, but did note that the process might have been inaccessible to those who were not included from the beginning.

Others noted that the use of performance measures was appreciated, but noted that it might be challenging for other small MPO's to execute some of these measures used, due to the fact that the MPO's modeling capabilities were in-house rather than run by the state DOT or consultants.

Some felt that the performance measures were too road focused and requested that in the future the measure be more multimodal, including more about bike/ped and transit.

3) The public input process needed to be more robust given all the new elements that the MPO was implementing for this Long Range Transportation Plan update.

Some attendees felt that the entire TCAPP process was directed toward transportation planners and experts and that more effort needed to be put in to making the information accessible to the general public. There was discussion about simplifying the performance measurement findings by enhancing the color-coding component that the MPO utilized with this iteration of the Long Range Transportation Plan process. Others felt including senior staff more directly in the process would avoid confusion as well.

Conclusion

Attendees felt that the 2040 LRTP process was well-conducted and liked the more technical perspective that TCAPP brought to the process, but felt that if this process were to be implemented in the future the process should be more completely vetted with the MPO members and the community overall.



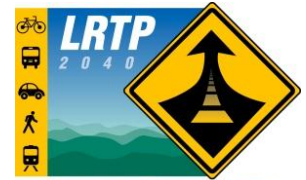
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Long Range Transportation Plan

Overview of the Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP2) Grant

Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO

MPO Program Manager, Sarah Rhodes

Grant Overview



Charlottesville/Albemarle MPO
Long Range Transportation Plan

Strategic Highway Research Program: Round 2 Grant

The Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO was awarded a grant in November 2012 to assess the Transportation for Communities – Advancing Projects through Partnerships tool or TCAPP tool. The TCAPP tool is a guide to transportation decision-making. The MPO is assessing the Long Range Planning Component of this guide.

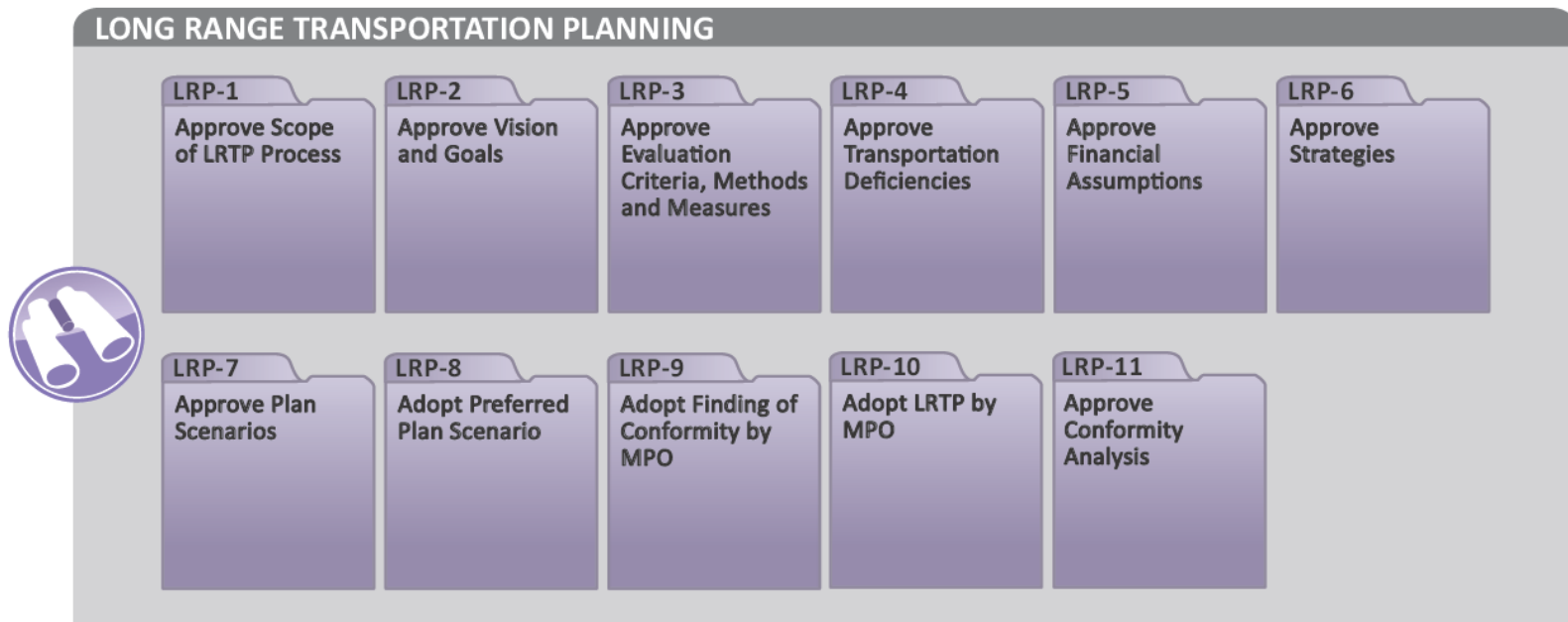
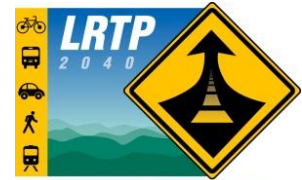


Figure: Long Range Transportation Planning Image from TCAPP Decision Guide (<http://www.transportationforcommunities.com>)

TCAPP Overview



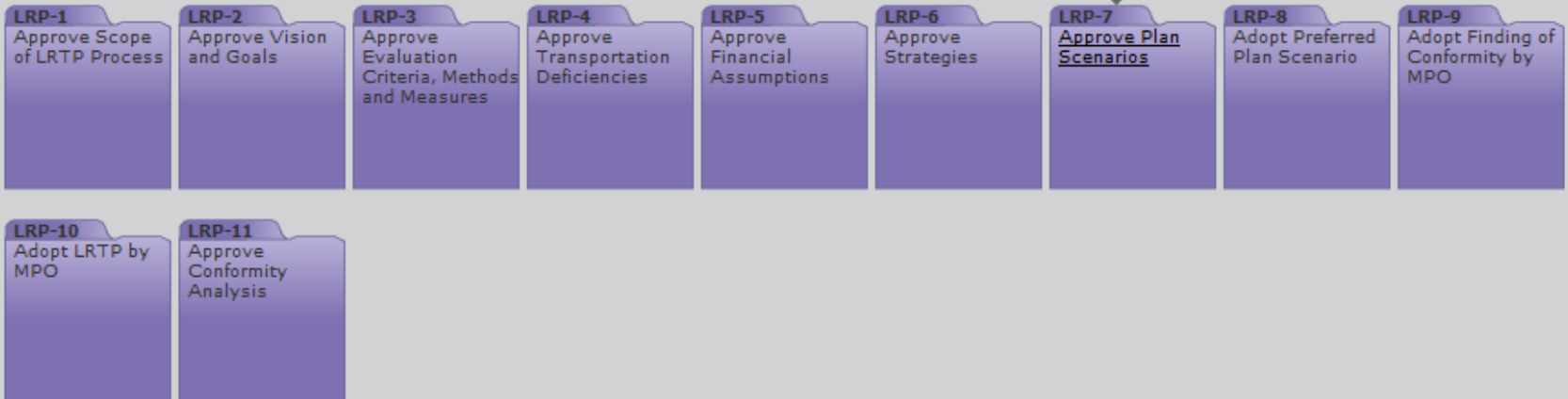
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TCAPP Decision-Making Guide

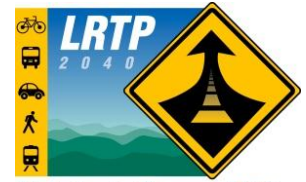
TCAPP is a decision support tool, built from the experiences of transportation partners and stakeholders, which provides how-to information when it is most needed.

Scenarios are based on approved strategies and are compared using the evaluation criteria, methodology and performance measures.

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING



Grant Assessment



Charlottesville/Albemarle MPO
Long Range Transportation Plan

What is TCAPP?

Transportation for Communities
Advancing Projects through Partnerships

Research Questions

Can we improve the execution of TCAPP?

Do we influence decision making?

Project

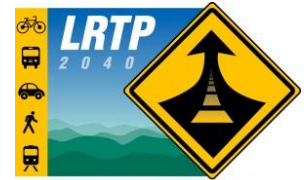
Do performance measures change
transportation priorities?

Methods

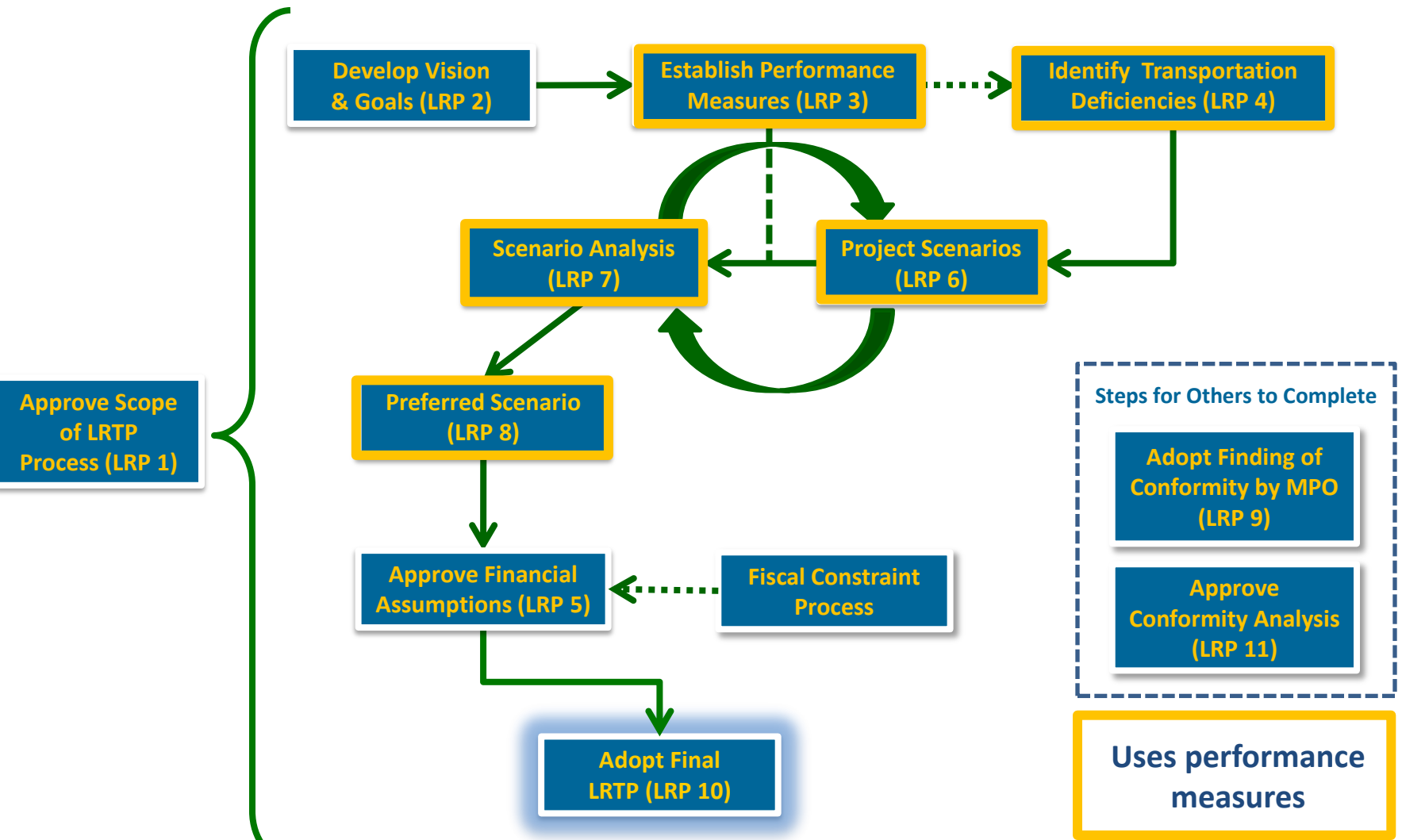
Survey 1: identify the most effective
performance measures.

Survey 2: UNDERWAY!

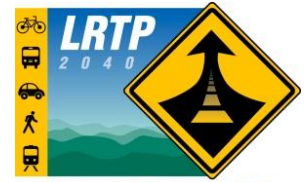
TCAPP Process



Charlottesville/Albemarle MPO
Long Range Transportation Plan

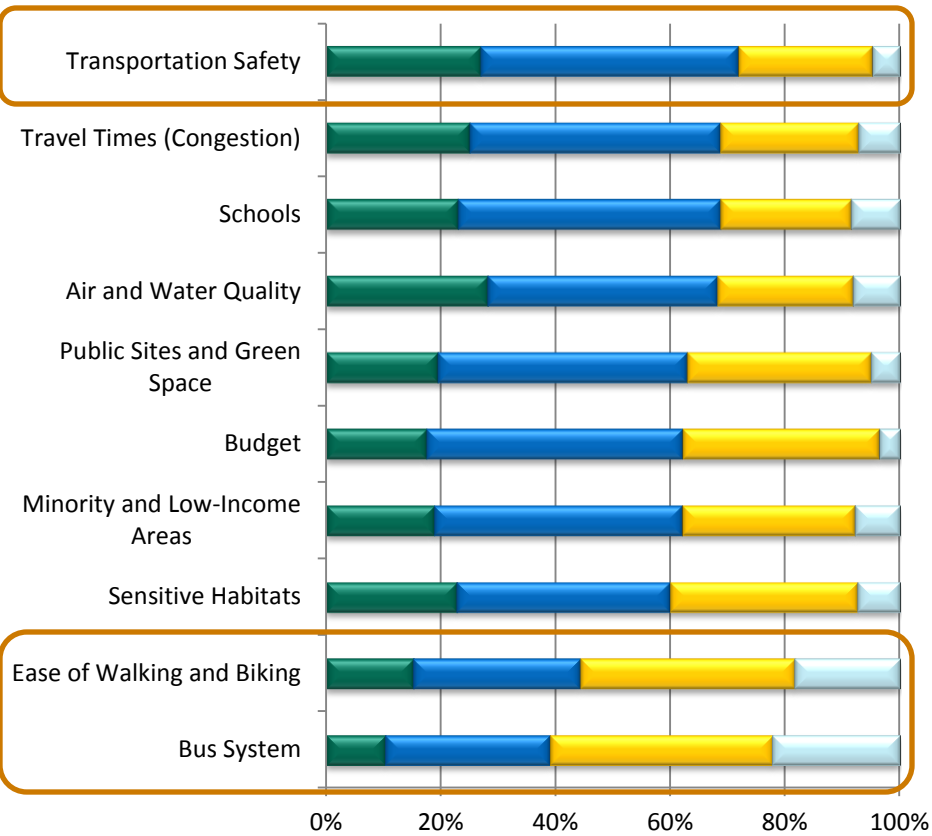


Performance Areas



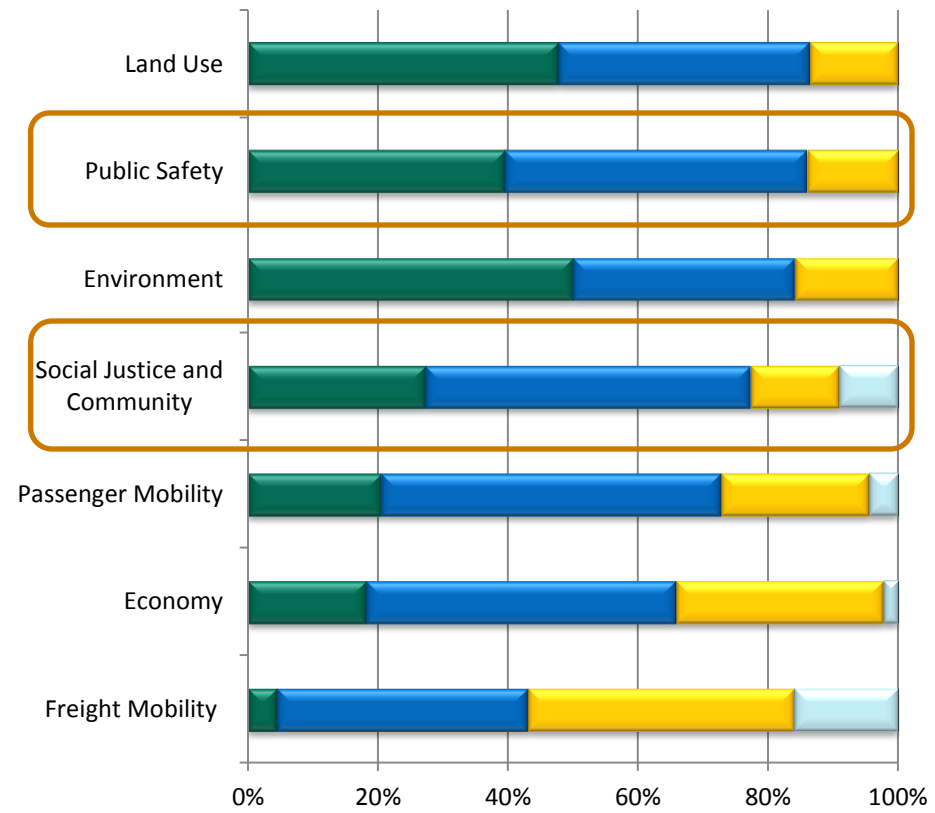
Charlottesville/Albemarle MPO
Long Range Transportation Plan

Jefferson Area Community Survey (JACS)



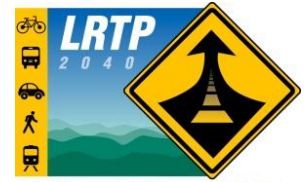
■ Extremely Important ■ Very Important
■ Somewhat Important ■ Not At All Important

Stakeholder Group Survey



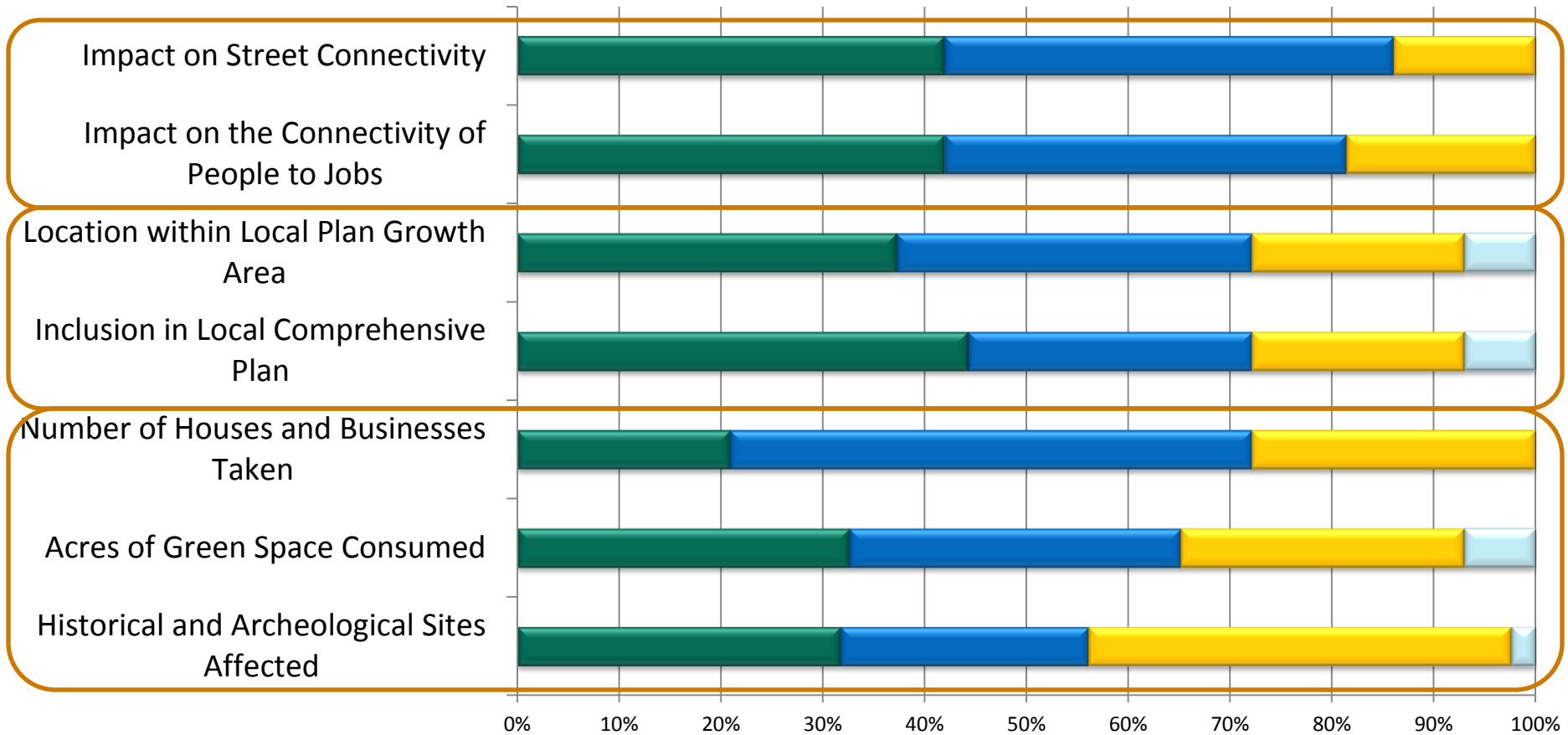
■ Extremely Important ■ Very Important
■ Somewhat Important ■ Not At All Important

Performance Measures



Charlottesville/Albemarle MPO
Long Range Transportation Plan

Land Use Performance Measures



Next Steps



Final Survey Implementation

Survey 2: UNDERWAY!

Measures' Influence on Decisions

Assess the degree to which the most important measures would have to change to affect a decision.

Scenario Questions

Assess the scenario structure for how it could have been made more accessible.

Final Steps

- Draft report due in March 2014.
- Grant closes out in June 2014.

Questions?

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE
"A World Class City"

Department of Neighborhood Development Services

City Hall Post Office Box 911
Charlottesville, Virginia 22902
Telephone 434-970-3182
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June 26, 2014

Kristin Szakos, Chair
Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO Policy Board
401 East Water Street
Charlottesville, VA 22902-1505

Dear Ms. Szakos,

Pursuant the Planning Commission's May 27th meeting with TJPDC Transportation Planner Sarah Rhodes, we are writing this letter to remark on the recently completed Long Range Transportation Plan process. We have shared a draft of this letter with Ms. Rhodes and she has offered comments, many of which have been incorporated.

In brief, although we were pleased to be invited to participate in the LRTP process and understand the challenges in making room for our participation this year, we respectfully request that both the Charlottesville City and Albemarle County Planning Commissions be more fully integrated into the process during the next five-year update of the plan. On the heels of a very exciting two-year joint planning effort to link the updates of each jurisdiction's Comprehensive Plans, our commission was left a little confused by our role in the development of the LRTP, and we are confident that we would add significant value in aligning the values and goals of the City's Comprehensive Plan with the LRTP should we be included earlier in the process and in a more intentional way.

During two joint work sessions last fall, the members of the two commissions were asked our opinion about four options for the LRTP, but we were unable to endorse any of the scenarios given that they all appeared to be largely inconsistent with goals embedded in multiple sections of the Comprehensive Plans (e.g. Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Economic Development, etc.). The sum of the projects listed for funding in the LRTP

express a vision that, in many ways, is inconsistent with the kind of walkable, bike-able, pedestrian-oriented City (and edges of the City) that the public expressed a preference for during the Comprehensive Planning process. In our opinion, the LRTP expresses a bias toward vehicular mobility over connection and place-making.

The LRTP work sessions came on the heels of an unprecedented two years' worth of joint meetings between the two commissions. At the time of the work sessions, both commissions were freshly energized by the recent adoption of two primary joint City-County goals as part of the Livability grant – i.e. creating connections at boundaries between the two municipalities and investing in the Rivanna River as the area's "front door" – and we were looking forward to moving these projects into the implementation phase. However, there was a collective sense of deflation once we realized that the vision expressed by the LRTP seemed in many ways to be in conflict with the key points of emphasis in the Comprehensive Plan, and, perhaps more disappointingly, that it was too late in the process to do anything about it.

We very much appreciate all the work put into the LRTP by staff, members of the public, members of the Citizen Transportation Advisory Committee and members of MPO Tech and the MPO policy board. We would appreciate your advice about how our Planning Commission may be of more assistance next time.

Thank you very much for your service, both on City Council and on the MPO Policy board. We look forward to working together with you on this to help insure a better alignment of the LRTP and the Comprehensive Plan, two crucial documents that need to be in synch for us to realize the wonderful, collective vision of this community.

Sincerely,

Dan Rosensweig, Chair

Kurt Keesecker, Vice Chair

Genevieve Keller

Michael Osteen

Lisa Green

John Santoski

Natasha Sienitsky

CC: Chip Boyles and Sarah Rhodes

April 25, 2014

Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization
Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission
401 East Water Street
Charlottesville, VA 22902**VIA EMAIL****Re: Comments on Draft 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan**

Dear MPO Policy Board Members, Mr. Boyles, and Ms. Rhodes:

The Southern Environmental Law Center would like to provide the following comments on the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization's draft 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). SELC is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that works throughout Virginia to promote transportation and land use decisions that protect our natural resources, strengthen our communities, and improve our quality of life. This includes a focus on maintaining and improving existing infrastructure, encouraging smarter growth patterns, and providing greater transportation choices.

I. The Proposed Route 29 Bypass

Recent events at the late stages of development of the draft plan are having a significant impact on the region's transportation planning and improvements. The Federal Highway Administration's February 18, 2014 letter raising serious doubts about the practicality of the proposed Route 29 western bypass project, and the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors' 5-1 vote on February 19 to reinstate the County's opposition to that proposal, have dramatically changed the planning and decision-making landscape. In addition to halting a wasteful project that would have done far more harm than good, it appears that the recent events surrounding the proposed bypass ultimately will allow the MPO to transfer the funding from that ill-conceived project to more viable and less damaging solutions for the Charlottesville-Albemarle portion of the Route 29 corridor.

In light of Virginia statutes regarding potential penalties for project termination by localities or MPOs, we understand the Policy Board's reluctance to remove the bypass from the current draft of the LRTP and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) until after the state has made a formal decision to terminate the proposal. However, assuming that is the decision that results from the advisory panel meetings that Virginia Transportation Secretary Layne has convened, and the review of alternatives to the proposed bypass by the Commonwealth Transportation Board, we urge the MPO to amend the LRTP and TIP to remove the bypass as soon as possible after the state has acted; this should help facilitate the transfer of funding between projects and the efficient sale of the portions of the bypass right-of-way the state currently owns.

II. New Planning Directions and Needed Improvements

Having reviewed the draft LRTP and participated in the public input process as different scenarios were evaluated, we continue to support the MPO's goal of planning for and establishing a truly multimodal transportation system that is effective, efficient, and accessible for all users, and that enhances rather than undermines the quality of life for Charlottesville and Albemarle residents. Among many other positives, the draft plan is this MPO's first that includes a quantitative performance measurement system to help prioritize improvements. The draft also devotes considerable attention to the needs of the non-driving population (bicyclists, pedestrians, and public transit users), focusing on more than just new highways and roads. We also acknowledge and applaud the MPO's efforts to gather and incorporate public input as part of its evaluation of transportation improvement scenarios under the new performance measurement system over the past year.

However, there are still a number of ways to strengthen this draft significantly before it is finalized. These improvements will be discussed below and include:

- adding more background information on data trends, household transportation costs, and the environmental impacts of transportation systems;
- incorporating discussion of access management planning;
- adding a section on environmental and community impacts to the MPO's Regional Mobility Goals;
- recognizing more of the important connections between key performance measures and the Regional Mobility Goals and federal planning factors; and
- providing additional information on some of the performance measures evaluated in scenario planning, and assessing the greenhouse gas impacts of the proposed project list.

We also note below some basic concerns with the limitations involved in using the MPO's regional travel demand model and region-wide scenario planning to identify transportation needs and select projects for inclusion in the long-range plan.

A. Background Information

Although the draft includes a wealth of information about *current* demographics and transportation system usage—a snapshot of where we are today—there are a number of areas in which information on recent trends would be very useful for planning purposes. For instance, the draft notes on page 19 that approximately 14.3% of Albemarle and 9.4% of Charlottesville residents are currently over the age of 65, but it does not indicate the extent to which their proportion is growing, and will continue to grow, as baby boomers continue to enter this age group. This is an important factor for transportation planning, as elderly residents often require access to public transportation and other alternatives to driving. Passenger rail is another good example. Although the draft notes that Charlottesville's West Main Street station is one of Virginia's most successful, it fails to note the significant growth in ridership that the station has

experienced in recent years. Indeed, ridership at the West Main station in fiscal year 2012 (127,524 passengers) was nearly 250% of that in 2009 (52,546).¹

In addition to describing relevant trends, it would be helpful to include additional background information on some important transportation subjects. For example, household transportation costs are a key indicator of how well our transportation plans sync with our land use plans, but they are not discussed in the draft. Transportation is a substantial monthly expense for most families, and one that good transportation planning can help alleviate by providing a multi-modal network that improves access to jobs and services, and by expanding the number of practical transportation options that residents have at their disposal.

In addition, background information about environmental conditions in the MPO area (such as air and water quality), as well as the transportation system's potential effects on these conditions, would help the public better understand this connection and the importance of factoring environmental costs into transportation decision-making. For example, 69% of the Albemarle County streams that have been assessed to date fail to meet state water quality standards,² and many of these impairments are largely due to urban runoff from impervious surfaces (roads, development, parking lots, etc.) in the region. Including this information would help provide context for the draft's inclusion of an impervious area criterion in its performance measurement system.

B. Access Management

Access management is a critically important tool for maximizing the efficiency of the main transportation corridors in our region, but it does not appear to be discussed in the draft. The capacity and effectiveness of highways such as Route 29, Route 250 East and West, and Route 20 are undermined by the large (and growing) number of access points from intersecting driveways and cross-streets. Significantly, the development of a comprehensive access management strategy for Route 29 North was a key part of the MPO's *US 29 North Corridor Transportation Study* and in Albemarle's *Places29 Master Plan*.

Although specific access management initiatives require the coordination of transportation and land use decision-making and may not fall within the scope of the LRTP's project selection process, access management strategies are indispensable to future transportation planning for the region, so some discussion of access management should be included in the plan. The discussion could include, at a minimum, a brief overview and explanation of access concerns in the MPO region, efforts to date to address these concerns, and potential opportunities for additional access management planning along highways such as Route 20 and Route 250 East and West, as well as ways to advance and strengthen implementation of the existing access management plan for Route 29.

¹ See Draft Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan 2014 at 10.27 (draft dated Jan. 23, 2014).

² *Id.* at 4.8.

C. Regional Mobility Goals

The MPO's Regional Mobility Goals—starting on page 40 of the draft—do a good job of balancing between various transportation modes (including automobile, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian) and strategies (such as Travel Demand Management and Intelligent Transportation Systems). They also reflect the importance of coordinating land use and transportation planning. But two essential aspects of transportation planning—specific goals related to environmental and community impacts—appear to be missing from the Regional Mobility Goals. Although several such goals are reflected in the draft's criteria for the performance management system (e.g., the reduction of vehicles miles traveled, the reduction of air and water pollution, and the minimization of impacts to habitat, historic and cultural sites, homes and businesses, and environmental justice populations), they should also be incorporated into the Regional Mobility Goals.

D. Relationship Matrices

The draft's inclusion of matrices—on pages 53 and 54—showing the relationship of various performance measures to the Regional Mobility Goals and the federal Eight Planning Factors is very helpful to inform the public of these connections and to provide justification for the performance measures selected. However, these matrices are missing a number of key connections, especially those regarding the relationship of the goals and factors to environmental and community impacts, and it would be beneficial to add them.

For instance, in both matrices, goals/factors pertaining to the maintenance and improvement of existing transportation systems are not shown to relate to any performance measurement criteria related to environmental and community impacts. This is an important relationship, as getting the most out of our existing transportation infrastructure is one of the most effective ways to minimize the damage and disruption to environmental and community resources that construction of new highways and transportation systems often entails. Similarly, the Regional Mobility Goals promoting diverse transportation options and improving walkability and bike-ability are not shown to relate to environmental performance measures, when they clearly play an essential role in reducing vehicle emissions and various other negative environmental impacts related to new road construction and overreliance on the automobile.

E. Performance Measurement System

We applaud the MPO's introduction of a quantitative performance measurement system and the substantial work that has gone into its development and evaluation over the past year. We understand it is a work in progress, and with that in mind, we offer some suggestions regarding additional information we think it would be helpful to incorporate, as well as a few concerns with the current scenario-based project evaluation system.

Regarding the environmental performance measures, we have some concerns with the limitations of the information being evaluated. For instance, the air quality measure appears to only estimate emissions from a general set of air pollutants, but federal and state air quality standards—under which the region's air quality attainment status is determined—are based on

individual pollutants, such as ozone and particulate matter. To the extent it is available, it would be helpful to include information indicating how the package of projects proposed for inclusion in the LRTP will affect emissions of individual air pollutants.

It is also surprising (and disappointing) that the draft does not include a measure specific to greenhouse gases, or even mention the phrases “climate change” or “greenhouse gas” anywhere in the 147-page document. The Charlottesville and Albemarle County Joint Vision and Goal language developed as part of the TJPDC’s Sustainability Grant specifically includes encouraging “multi-modal transportation facilities that will help to reduce emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases.”³ Further, Charlottesville’s City Council, Albemarle’s Board of Supervisors, and UVA’s Board of Visitors have all endorsed the implementation of initiatives designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in both the public and private realms, including the transportation sector. Notably, of the City and County’s collective carbon dioxide emissions in 2000, the transportation sector was the largest contributor, accounting for 38%.⁴ Our region’s LRTP should provide as clear an assessment as possible of how the package of projects proposed for inclusion will influence the region’s greenhouse gas emissions over the life of the plan.⁵

In addition, the scenario-based approach makes it nearly impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of, and identify the impacts specific to, an individual project, because a single project’s effects are greatly diluted by combination with a number of other projects and by comparison to the region as a whole.

Further, the region-wide nature of the current evaluation system makes it difficult to adequately account for the environmental impacts of scenarios. For example, this form of analysis fails to account for locational aspects of air and water quality impacts that can be very important. A scenario that reduces overall air pollution may be less desirable if it significantly increases harmful emissions in closer proximity to vulnerable populations (such as near schools, senior living centers, or hospitals). Similarly, a scenario that reduces overall stormwater pollution might be less desirable if it locates impervious surfaces close to sources of our drinking water supply.

Finally, the draft notes on page 94 that the regional travel demand model used to evaluate scenarios cannot model interchanges or intersection improvements. This can be a significant shortcoming for a region such as ours, where some of our worst congestion is caused by lack of capacity at intersections (such as at Route 29 and Hydraulic and Rio Roads) rather than on road segments. Recent modeling completed for the Route 29 Bypass Draft EA showed that building an overpass alone at Route 29 and Rio Road would reduce afternoon rush hour delays at this intersection by 3 minutes and 21 seconds in the year 2040—far more than the 47-second

³ Charlottesville & Albemarle County Joint Vision and Goal Language at 2 (Feb. 19, 2013), *available at* <http://www.tjpc.org/livablecommunities/3Joint%20Vision%20and%20Goals.pdf>.

⁴ Local Climate Action Planning Process Report at 2 (August 2011), *available at* <http://www.charlottesville.org/Index.aspx?page=3446>.

⁵ The Environmental Protection Agency has published guidance on using the Motor Vehicle Emission Simulator (MOVES)—the same model used by the MPO in the draft LRTP to determine general air pollutant emissions—to estimate greenhouse gas emissions from on-road vehicles at a local and metropolitan scale. The guidance document may be helpful and is available at <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/stateresources/420b12068.pdf>.

reduction in delay that the bypass would have generated at this intersection.⁶ As this example shows, intersection improvements can have a major impact on improving traffic flow and maximizing the capacity of existing highways, and we are concerned that the inability to account for this type of improvement could result in over-planning for costly new highways and other large projects that a different type of analysis that accounts for the benefits of more targeted improvements might show are unnecessary.

Thank you for your hard work on the draft plan and your consideration of these comments. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or would like to further discuss any of these issues.

Sincerely,



Morgan Butler
Director, Charlottesville-Albemarle Project



Travis Pietila
Associate Attorney

⁶ See VDOT, Traffic and Transportation Technical Report for Environmental Assessment Route 29 Bypass at 12 (Aug. 16, 2012).