

Chapter 3: 2040 LRTP Overview

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► Overview

The Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO's 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is a federally mandated plan that looks ahead three decades to assess future transportation projects vital for the region. The plan considers all modes of transportation including roadways, transit, rail, bicycle, pedestrian and air. This planning process updates the previous plan, 2035 United Jefferson Area Mobility Plan (UnJAM 2035), which was approved by the MPO Policy Board in May 2009.

► Purpose

The 2040 LRTP is a fundamental document for the Charlottesville-Albemarle community. Not only does it outline the region's long-range transportation vision, it also lists all future projects that the region anticipates undertaking in the next twenty to thirty years in an effort to attain that vision. The plan contains a project list, which is one of the more critical elements in that federal funding cannot be obligated to transportation projects unless they are included on this list. Additionally, this list of transportation projects must be fiscally constrained, meaning that the MPO cannot plan to spend more money than it expects to receive for transportation improvements.

Requirements from FHWA and FTA

In order for transportation projects to be eligible for federal funding, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) require that they be listed in a long range transportation plan. The plan must consider the interaction between land use and transportation planning, as well as the environmental impacts of proposed projects. For urban areas, long range plans must be fiscally-constrained. That is, only including those projects for which funding is projected to be reasonably available. The MPO is required by federal regulation to review the long range plan every year and update it every five years.

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 in the United States Code 23 USC 134 (h). LRTP 2040 has included these factors in its identification of priority projects along with other factors important to

the region. The eight Planning Factors (listed in Chapter 4, the Vision and Goals Section) are outlined in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), signed in 2005, as well as its successor: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), signed in 2012.

According to the metropolitan planning requirements Titles 23 and 49 U.S.C, LRTP 2040 must also contain a financial plan that demonstrates how it may be implemented using both public and private resources that are reasonably expected to be available over the life of the plan. The purpose of the fiscal constraint requirement is to ensure that the total estimated cost of projects and programs included in the plan (the estimated cost of constructing, operating, and maintaining the transportation system) does not exceed the reasonably available estimated revenues. For the purpose of financial forecasting, historical trends are used with respect to estimating resource availability in the context of an uncertain budgeting process. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the MPO cooperatively develop estimates of funds that will be available to support plan implementation.

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. Shorter term documents, such as 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.

Local Input

Realizing the regional vision of a "transportation system providing safe, sustainable, efficient, and attractive multimodal choices which support the movement of people, goods and services, and protect the environment, the communities and quality of life" requires public involvement and a prior understanding of and attention to the diverse and far-ranging needs of the community.

Giving a local voice to federal and state requirements has been central to the planning process. 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 district comment box
- Office comment box

The Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) for the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO has also been central in communicating with the public. CTAC reviews, comments, and provides recommendations on transportation plans, programs, studies and other appropriate documents, and on regional transportation issues. These recommendations proceed to advise and aid the MPO Policy Board in their decision-making. The committee is composed of representatives appointed by the City of Charlottesville, the County of Albemarle, and the MPO Policy Board. These members represent themselves, their areas of interests, and/or groups in the MPO area, and strive to represent a diverse range of interests.

Equally important, the TJPDC recognizes that not all communities and its members have enjoyed the same level of access or representation in transportation and other

decisions made by public agencies. Therefore, as part of its public participation strategy, the TJPDC takes steps and measures to reach and engage minority, low-income, and other underserved groups in Charlottesville and Albemarle.

► Discussion of TCAPP Grant

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) was awarded a \$192,885 grant through the second round Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP2) of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) to develop new ways to improve understanding of transportation issues by the public and decision makers. TJPDC partnered with research groups from the University of Virginia and the Virginia Department of Transportation to test the use of advanced analytical techniques to enhance the public's awareness of transportation issues that affect Charlottesville and Albemarle County.

As part of this process, UVA's Center for Survey Research (CSR) conducted surveys at the beginning and end of the project to determine how much the LRTP process improved and affected community understanding of transportation plans. VDOT's Virginia Center for Transportation Innovation and Research (VCTIR) provided input to the CSR on the transportation issues covered. Several methods were identified as useful for effectively evaluating transportation issues, including a system-wide performance measurement analysis and comparison with a "no build" base to show the impacts and improvements of each scenario.

The Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) had the opportunity to review the analytical techniques that evaluated proposed transportation projects. The TCAPP process has promoted a visual representation of these concepts and ideas, making our stakeholders more aware of, and involved in, the 2040 LRTP, and has minimized some of the political nature of previous LRTP decision-making, with its focus on data and results. The analytical component of this process has been key in identifying the most appropriate improvements. It has aided in identifying problem areas and potential improvements that were not previously considered. The project, entitled "Additional Pilot Projects to Improve TCAPP," began in January 2013 and concluded in June 2014.

► Conclusion

The Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO's 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan updates the existing 2035 United Jefferson Area Mobility Plan (UnJAM 2035). To develop this plan, MPO staff worked with the localities and residents to establish future transportation needs for the region between 2020 and 2040. Transportation improvement projects identified during this process cannot receive federal funding unless they are included in the LRTP. Projects listed in the plan must take into account the Eight Planning

Factors and be fiscally constrained. Staff relied heavily on public input as well as recommendations from its committees to prioritize which projects should be funded during the life of the plan. In addition, the TJPDC received a grant that tested the use of advanced analytical techniques to enhance the public's understanding of transportation issues that affect Charlottesville and Albemarle County. The subsequent chapters of this document outline the process utilized to develop the list of projects funded through 2040.