Chapter 12: Work Program

The Metropolitan Council will carry out or participate in many studies and plans over the next two to three years. These studies will be used to gather additional information and perform further analysis to inform the development of future revisions to the *2030 Transportation Policy Plan*. The next scheduled update of the *Transportation Policy Plan*, as required by state and federal law, is due in 2014.

Two categories of work program items are listed below. The first category lists and describes studies to be completed by the Metropolitan Council, working with stakeholders in the region. The second category lists important studies of interest to the Council, but these studies will likely be completed by other agencies. The Council will seek active participation on these studies.

Studies Led by the Metropolitan Council

Working with stakeholders, the Metropolitan Council will lead studies that will inform plan amendments and updates, and other important regional transportation planning work. These include:

Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI)

The last TBI was conducted in 2001. A comprehensive TBI is usually done every 10 years in conjunction with the Census; therefore a complete TBI will be done in 2010 and 2011. The data collected includes information on regional travel patterns, and data on individuals' travel behavior collected through interviews and surveys. The data will be used to recalibrate the region's travel forecast model and also analyzed to provide a better understanding of travel patterns.

Transit Service Improvement Plan

Every two years, regional transit providers will prepare a short-term Service Improvement Plan that identifies their priorities for transit service expansion over the following two to four years. A regional committee will review and prioritize proposed transit expansion projects on the basis of efficiency and effectiveness in meeting regional transit goals. The committee will recommend a Regional Service Improvement Plan for approval by the Metropolitan Council.

Transit Service Performance Evaluation

All providers will review their transit service annually based on regional transit performance standards to ensure operational efficiency. Providers will annually submit their performance data to the Council for inclusion in a regional service performance analysis.

Arterial Transitways Study

A study of potential transitways identified for Arterial Bus Rapid Transit in this plan will evaluate potential improvements, costs, and benefits of BRT on arterial street corridors as identified in this document's Transit Chapter. The study will also consider strategies to integrate local bus service with

BRT investments, develop a branding strategy for Arterial BRT, and prioritize system improvements and implementation.

Figure 12-1: Non-motorized travel modes will play an important role in the region.

Transit System Financial Analysis

This plan identifies preservation of existing transit service as a top priority for the region. It also sets a goal of doubling transit ridership by 2030 which will require expansion of both the bus system and implementation of a system of Transitways. The transit system has experienced substantial change and volatility in the type and level of revenues available for transit purposes over the past decade. The Council will conduct a long-term (20-year) analysis of the revenues and expenses required to both maintain and expand the regional transit system. The analysis will evaluate a number of alternative financial scenarios, identify issues and make financial recommendations regarding the accomplishment of these two goals.

Commuter Rail Evaluation

This plan recommends a re-evaluation of commuter rail corridors when Northstar Commuter Rail is operational and travel patterns resulting from commuter rail implementation are more fully understood and incorporated into the regional travel demand forecasting model. Gathering this data and incorporating relevant factors in the regional forecast model must be completed prior to a system wide evaluation of potential additional commuter rail lines. Completion of the update of the regional travel demand forecast model based on travel pattern data gathered by the Travel Behavior Inventory and the 2010 Census is scheduled for mid-2013.

Bicycle Route Information and Signing Plan

The Council is updating the regional bikeways map with information from local comprehensive plans, which should provide the most current inventory of what local governments are planning and what exists today. The Council will be the lead agency in the regional mapping partnership to improve the dataset. In addition, the Metropolitan Council will work with local trail implementing agencies, Mn/DOT, the DNR, counties and cities to develop and implement a signage plan, including guidelines for sign content and placement to help bicyclists navigate the network within and between jurisdictions and to transit connections.

Regional Bicycle System Inventory and Regional Bicycle System Master Study

This project includes an inventory of existing and currently planned bicycle facilities in the seven county Twin Cities metropolitan area, followed by a Regional Bicycle System Master Study that will include

an analysis of existing conditions, connectivity and levels of use of the bikeway system with a special emphasis on connectivity to regional transitways and major travel generators.

Coordinated Action Plan for Public Transit and Human Services Update

In 2010 and 2011, the Council is updating the Plan to establish goals, strategies and criteria for delivering efficient, coordinated services to elderly, underemployed or otherwise financially disadvantaged persons and persons with disabilities. The Council will work with regional transportation agencies, human service agencies, and Mn/DOT to update the information in the existing plan, adopted in 2007. This Plan will be used to direct future funding solicitations for FTA Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom program funding in 2012 and 2014.

Evaluation of Active Traffic Management (ATM) Applications

The region has and will be implementing many ATM strategies in the I-35W South (UPA) and I-94 (between the two downtowns) corridors. While there is European data on the effectiveness of ATM strategies, there is little documentation on the North American experience and effectiveness. Comprehensive before and after studies should be carried out in these corridors to assess the costs and benefit of ATM applications both with and without a managed lane component. This evaluation will also provide input to the on-going regional Congestion Management Process.

Use of Additional Federal Transportation Funds

Congress typically passes a transportation authorization bill every six years. The most recent bill expired in 2009 so a new transportation bill is expected at some future point. Since 1991, every new federal transportation authorization bill has increased the level of funds available for the regional solicitation. Some comments received during the MHSIS outreach suggested that additional federal funds received by the region should be used to support larger highway projects than are possible given the current $7 M regional solicitation cap. The Council proposes to work with the TAC and TAB to evaluate a modified or parallel solicitation for larger highway projects, while still attempting to provide the highest system-wide benefit at the lowest cost. This analysis will begin once a new Transportation Act is passed, reflecting the specific requirements of the bill.

Figure 12-2: The UPA is one example of congestion management.

Evaluation of Regional Solicitation Criteria

This Policy Plan sets a new direction and vision for the expenditure of funds on the Metropolitan Highway System emphasizing ATM applications, lower-cost / high-benefit projects and the implementation of managed lanes system-wide. It emphasizes that investments on the non-freeway trunk highway system sought by local entities should also be consistent with the policy direction of this plan. However, the Regional Solicitation for highway projects to date has to a large degree emphasized funding for expansion. This policy direction should be revisited to ensure that, in accordance with this plan and federal policy, adequate preservation investments are being made on the federally eligible highway system. The Transit chapter also emphasizes system preservation as the top priority, with additional revenue (when available) used to expand the bus system and grow the system of bus and rail

transitways. The Council and TAB/TAC should work to evaluate the regional solicitation criteria for all funding categories and determine whether the existing criteria and evaluation process adequately emphasizes the policies articulated in this plan and if needed, recommend modifications to the criteria and process. The recommendations will most likely be incorporated into the solicitation beginning in 2012 for funds awarded in 2017 and 2018.

Managed Lane Implementation Policy and Design Issues

The managed/priced lane system development will reach a new level of implementation with the adoption of this plan. In the past, a number of policy issues have been addressed on a project-by-project basis as the I-394 and I-35W MnPASS lanes were implemented. For example, the distribution of MnPASS revenue and daily operational parameters differs between the existing projects. Another policy issue that must be addressed relates to the treatment of two-person high-occupancy vehicles. Currently these vehicles travel in the MnPASS lanes without paying a fee. As the MnPASS lanes become more congested in the future, this policy should be reevaluated to determine the appropriate treatment of these vehicles. In addition, there are managed lane design issues that directly impact transit operations and the efficiency of managed lanes for transit. As managed lane projects move toward implementation, the Council/Metro Transit and Mn/DOT must work together to assure that the lane designs provide the best advantage for transit operations. The issues enumerated above should be addressed by a joint work group and study by the Council and Mn/DOT.

Evaluation of RALF to Help Implement the New Transportation Policy Plan

The RALF program has existed in relatively the same form since it was established in 1982. TPP Policy 7b.supports the use of RALF funds for projects that are consistent with the policy direction of this plan. There is a need to evaluate the RALF program policies and procedures and make any necessary changes to help implement the new policy direction. The Council, working with Mn/DOT and the TAC/TAB, will review the RALF program and make recommendations for needed changes

Metro District Freight Study

Mn/DOT and the Council are working with USDOT's Volpe National Transportation Systems Center on a metropolitan freight study. This will strengthen the ability of Mn/DOT and Metro Council to address the highest priority freight issues in the state's major metropolitan region, by bringing freight planning more fully into on-going statewide and metropolitan planning processes and by promoting institutional arrangements that match the complexity of and funding requirements for an efficient regional freight system.

Evaluation of Methods and Technology Applications for Monitoring System Aircraft Activity

The Council is committed to improving aviation system data and forecasts. Not all airports have air traffic control towers to document aircraft operational activity, nor are all air traffic control towers open 24 hours per day. Activity is usually estimated using number of operations per based aircraft, but this methodology should be re-examined to take advantage of newer technology, such as a video imaging or a multi-latera-

tion system. The Council proposes to work through the TAC Aviation Technical Task Force to prepare an evaluation and assess steps for improving data and forecasts before the next system plan update.

Studies to be Conducted by Other Agencies, with Council Participation

Mode and Alignment Studies - as recommended in Transit Chapter

Interregional Corridor System Review – Mn/DOT lead

The Interregional Corridor System is a priority network of trunk highways designed to provide safe and timely travel connections between the major trade centers and regions of the state. As such, it supports the continued economic vitality/competitiveness of the state in the changing global economy, serves both people and freight, and connects to or accommodates other modes of transportation. The system was established over ten years ago and was designed to help guide priority highway investments and management efforts. Mn/DOT is currently reviewing the system to determine whether modifications to the network itself or the measures and targets used to evaluate its performance should be considered in light of current trends and conditions in transportation and the future outlook for Minnesota's economy and livability. This work will be completed in approximately a year. Any proposed changes to the system will be formally considered in the next update of Mn/DOT's 20 Year Highway Investment Plan.

Reassess Trunk Highway Non-Freeway Principal and "A" Minor Arterial Plans – Mn/DOT lead

Mn/DOT, working with the Council and TAC/TAB will develop a process to reassess the policy guidance and plans for improvement to these trunk highways. This work will begin once Mn/DOT Central Office has completed the IRC Study (noted above). The intent is to develop lower-cost approaches to manage and improve these trunk highways consistent with Council and Mn/DOT plans.

MSP Long-term Comprehensive Plan Environmental Assessment – Traffic Analysis

The Council indicated in its review of the MSP 2030 LTCP that "The MAC shall continue to work with all appropriate agencies to implement the I-494/34th Ave, and TH5/Glumack Drive – TH5/Post Rd. interchange modifications included in the 2030 Concept Plan, including preliminary environmental scoping and analysis, since these proposed modifications are not included in the region's fiscally-constrained 2030 highway plan." MAC, MnDOT and city of Bloomington have recently agreed to share the cost of further work on traffic forecasting and concept development for these interchanges. The LTCP environmental work is estimated to take up to two years to complete.