PlanIt

TRANSPORTATION OVERVIEW

Presented by Michael Larson and Mark Filipi
Thursday, August 18, 2016
12:00 – 1:00 PM

Webinar Summary: This webinar will cover the minimum local comprehensive planning requirements for all transportation modes resulting from Thrive MSP 2040 and the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan. The topics will cover everything including forecasted growth allocations by transportation analysis zones, highways and transitways in the plan that need to be reflected in local plans, the new Regional Bicycle Transportation Network, and requirements for communities impacted by airports. Your transportation basics start here and this event will be a helpful introduction to the transportation requirements for comprehensive planning. Future events or instructional materials will cover these topics in more detail.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

1. **What if a county is proposing something that is not in the TPP, does the community then need to show that as a part of the increased revenue scenario to be consistent with the County Plan?**
   The Metropolitan Council reviews plans for consistency with our Transportation Policy Plan and the material that was submitted to the communities in their System Statements last year. We do not review it for consistency between jurisdictions. Though, certainly we hope that the two jurisdictions do talk to one another and they are required to submit their comprehensive plans to one another. But we'll be looking at the city/community comprehensive plan update for consistency with the Transportation Policy Plan, not the County Plan.

   One thing I would add is that if the counties are including facilities that are not a part of the current revenue scenario, that they're probably working with local cities, and that it would be helpful to collaborate and have them be consistent with the County Plan.

2. **You mentioned earlier the TOD density required for areas identified for redevelopment, who identifies that?**
   It is cities that identify locations for new development and redevelopment in their comprehensive plan. Cities allocate growth by TAZ and guide land use at various density ranges. The TPP establishes a minimum residential density expectations for areas near transit stations. However, this applies only to locations that the city has identified for future residential growth and redevelopment. Furthermore, not all residential development needs to meet this minimum. When we evaluate this, we will look at an overall average. Some areas can be lower, some can be higher, depending on context that happens to the community planning process. In addition to minimum density, the TPP also identifies targeted ranges, which are higher, and we encourage cities to explore. The minimum expectations are intended to preserve the market for future housing near transit, and to ensure that the transit system is effective at connecting people with destinations in the region.

3. **The RBTN map shows that many of the corridors and alignments overlap regional trails. What does this mean for requirements for coordination with the park implementing agencies?**
   Planning and implementation of the RBTN will require coordination between the various levels of government that may have jurisdiction over an alignment, parts of the alignment, or a search corridor where different levels of government and stakeholders identify more a specific alignment. That would include the regional park implementing agencies for segments that overlap with the regional trail network. We would strongly encourage collaboration between your community and the Park implementing Agency. We'll have a chance to discuss this in greater detail and related issues in the webinar on the RBTN in October.

4. **Are all the Service Improvement Plans a part of the current revenue scenario? A city has been told that certain routes are being considered for expansion and increased frequency, but we don't know what routes will be expanded or increase in frequency, so how do we include the transit information in our plan?**

Metro Transit's Service Improvement Plan, or SIP, requires additional revenue that Metro Transit does not currently have. The SIP identifies opportunities to add new routes to increase the frequency and span of service on existing routes, through the year 2030. However, Metro Transit also continually evaluates the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing system. This could result in changes to, or improvements in service. The best way that communities can support transit, or to improve transit within existing resource constraints that we have, is to understand <u>potential</u> changes in service, to understand the fundamentals or conditions that make transit cost-effective, and to engage Metro Transit during the comprehensive planning process. Communities that build a better foundation for transit will be stronger candidates for improvements regardless of the funding scenario.

5. **You noted that noise issues form aviation sources; my community has issues with road noise. Does the TPP offer potential solutions and funding sources for that?**

Road noise is governed and regulated by state and federal regulations. When there are improvements to a road, there's a very well defined process by which MnDOT has to review the improvements and the impacts on noise, and what is to be done to mitigate or minimize the noise impacts. It involves a very heavy public involvement process, a voting process by the landowners and residents along the affected area where they decide whether or not noise walls are to be implemented. So there is a process, there are funds available through the regular funding procedure for projects to deal with noise so that it can be dealt with.

6. **We have been told that making local roads transit ready will increase our likelihood of receiving and increasing better transit. Can we include these proposed bike and ped improvements in our plan to show commitment to transit through our facilitation of higher ridership through bike/ped improvements and future land use changes?**

Yes, you could. I would encourage you to do so. Making the road network friendlier to biking and walking are certainly supportive of transit. The likelihood of specific increases in service, or altogether new service, will also depend on other things as well. These include your transit market area and the potential impact in demand that the specific efforts your community have on transit demand. For example, something that is also important is the amount and density of development that is within walking or bicycling distance is very important as well. Again, I really encourage communities pursing these improvements to be in touch with us through the Sector Rep program. We can also connect you with Metro Transit's Service Planners to have a discussion about maybe details about the SIP (Service Improvement Plan) that I had mentioned as well as the possibility of adjustments. We appreciate the interest and can explore the feasibility these, based on the support that your community has provided.

7. **What are some funding mechanisms if a community wants to construct a local bike trail system? Is there any?**

Funding is much more available if the trails have a regional role. Projects that incorporate portions of the RBTN, or connect to the RBTN, are eligible for Regional Solicitation Funds. However, Safe Routes to School is another funding category through the Regional Solicitation, so that could be used if the local bike trail plan is focused on connecting children with schools. Use of state aid funds is another possibility along state aid routes in your community; that doesn't increase the amount of state aid funding, you're just allowed to use the funding for trails. And of course, city's property tax levy is another option.

The only other things that is a funding source for bike trails in general is the routes which are shown on the Regional Trails Plan as part of the Regional Parks Network are eligible for the typical parks funding sources as well. But only those road trails.

8. **If a city does not include the county's increase revenue scenario ideas, will their plan be considered incomplete and thus not get approved?**

Well as I had said in the original response, the communities are responding to the information they were provided in the System Statements that the Transportation Policy Plan is testing against the current revenue scenario—the fiscally constrained scenario. That will be the test for consistency. If a community submits a plan that is consistent with the Transportation Policy Plan findings, that will be what we are looking for.

So the short answer, is no. I think that what people need to think about is, showing any increased revenue project in their plan is an option. It's certainly not mandatory, the current revenue scenario plan is the plan that people will be held to. So if they choose to show any increased revenue project either on their own accord or because it's in the County Plan, they need to be very clear that this is not a project that the region is planning to fund or bill.

9. **Is there a minimum density or minimum intensity requirement for non-residential sites along transit-oriented development? For example, is there a FAR (floor-area-ratio) minimum?**
There is no FAR requirement for non-residential development or other measure of density for non-residential development near transit stations. One thing that I did touch upon briefly during the presentation, that I can briefly talk about now, but will also be covered in next month's webinar, is the TPP's Activity Level policy, which encourages communities to plan in a way where the station areas become a focal point for growth in the community. As part of that policy, we suggest a minimum benchmark of at least 7,000 people, students, and/or jobs. Many existing transit stations already surpass this threshold. We encourage communities to think long-term, encourage more intensive uses of land around transit stations, and to inform their station area planning with market studies that could shed light on the potential for station areas to become focal points of activity. That 7,000 is a benchmark. Throughout the planning process, communities can explore what the potential might be for the stations in their communities. Again, we'll discuss this in greater detail and how this policy will be applied in next month's webinar.

10. **You mentioned about minor airports, but can you elaborate a little on reliever airports?**
All of the minor airports are reliever airports. A reliever airport is any regional airport that is not MSP. Our commercial airport would be slowed down serving our commercial uses if we had a lot of general aviation and business aircraft coming in there. And since under the federal rules and constitution, we aren't allowed to ban those airports. We tried to develop the reliever airports to be an attractive enticement for those types of aircrafts to keep them out of the traffic flow at MSP. So basically any minor airport plus Downtown-St. Paul which is considered and intermediate airport, would be part of our reliever airport system.

11. **There's an airport in our community but most of the airport is located in the adjacent community. Should we just let the adjacent community address the airport?**
If there is an airport in your community, you have to address it—whether it's a bit of it or all of it. Don't ignore it just because it's a corner of the airport. One of our most important concerns is how you deal with land use around the airport because the airport typically will impact that adjacent land use. So even if the airport is not at all within your community but is very close by and in an adjacent community, you should be looking at what kind of impacts it may have on your land uses and community.

12. **What is the difference between the RBTN and the Regional Trail Plan shown in the Council's Regional parks Policy Plan?**
The RBTN is primarily a transportation network and the network of Regional Trails are primarily a recreational system. However during the planning process, not as many people recognize, because many regional trails provide very good, uninterrupted connections across the region, they work very well and has been used as transportation routes for bicyclists. Consequently, we do have parts of the system that overlap. Fortunately, we have another webinar scheduled on the RBTN, with a greater distinction between these facilities, funding sources, and processes will be covered there.

Please send additional questions or comments to angela.torres@metc.state.mn.us.