

Introduction

Federal law and regulations require that local and state officials work cooperatively to maintain a continuous and comprehensive long-range transportation planning program. In urbanized areas with populations over 50,000 persons, this federal mandate is carried out by a formal group called a "metropolitan planning organization (MPO)."

The Centre Region MPO was formed in 1982, succeeding the Centre Region Area Transportation Study (CRATS) as the entity responsible for conducting long-range transportation planning in the State College, PA area. The Centre Region MPO coordinated transportation planning efforts in a geographic area that included Benner, College, Ferguson, Halfmoon, Harris, Patton, and Spring Townships; Bellefonte Borough; and State College Borough. Effective January 2004, the Centre Region MPO was expanded to a countywide organization—the Centre County MPO (CCMPO). The CCMPO's geographic area includes all of Centre County, encompassing 35 municipalities. The CCMPO works closely with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) to identify and prioritize transportation improvement projects in Centre County.

CCMPO Structure

The policy-making body of the CCMPO is the Coordinating Committee, which is ultimately responsible for the transportation planning activities mandated in federal laws and regulations. The Coordinating Committee includes nineteen voting members from county and local government, public agencies, and PennDOT. A Technical Committee composed of members from the same organizations represented on the Coordinating Committee provides advisory comments and recommendations to the Coordinating Committee. A list of current CCMPO Technical and Coordinating Committee representatives is included as Appendix B.

Voting members include:

Centre County (2 members)
Benner Township
College Township
Ferguson Township
Halfmoon Township
Harris Township
Patton Township
State College Borough
PennDOT Central Office (Harrisburg)

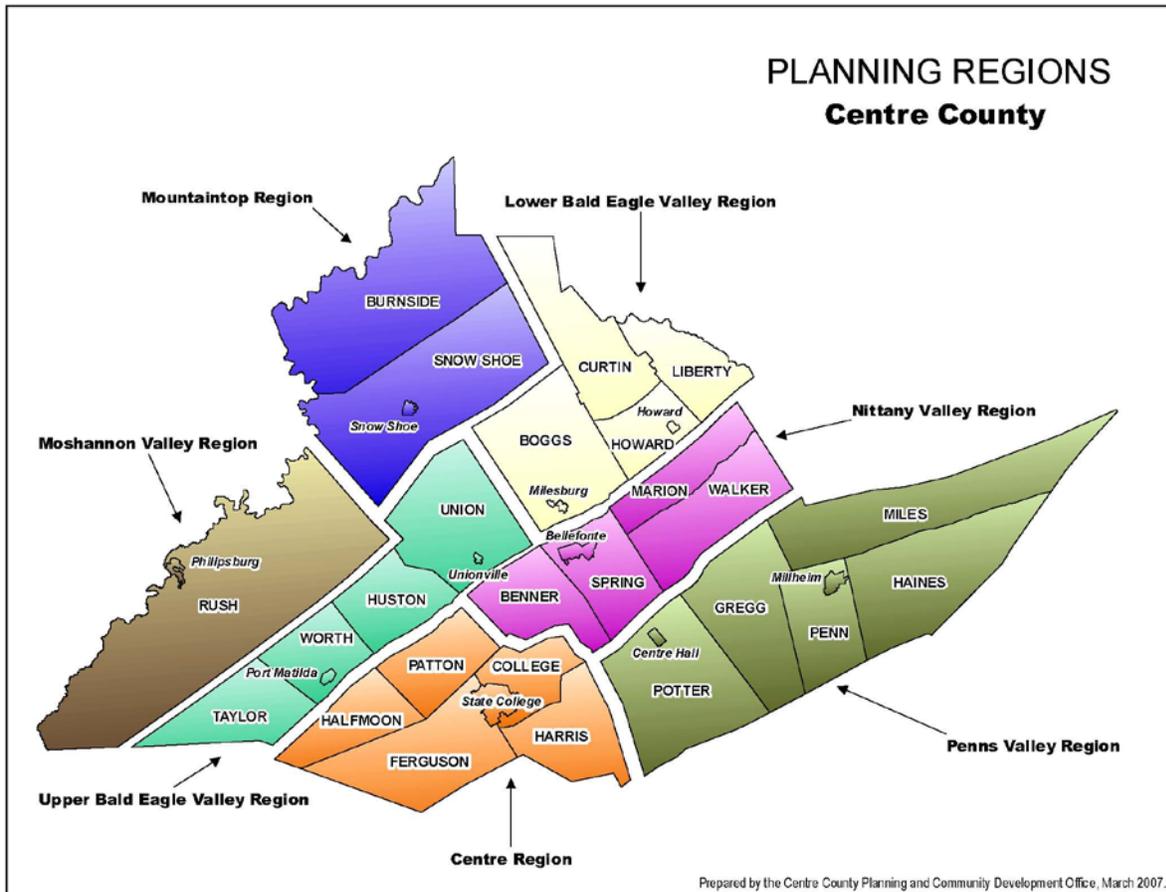
Lower Bald Eagle Valley Planning Region
Moshannon Valley Planning Region
Mountaintop Planning Region
Nittany Valley Planning Region
Penns Valley Planning Region
Upper Bald Eagle Valley Planning Region
Centre Area Transportation Authority
Centre Regional Planning Commission
PennDOT District 2-0 Office (Clearfield)

Non-voting members include:

The Pennsylvania State University
Federal Highway Administration
Federal Transit Administration

As noted above, some voting members of the CCMPO represent multi-municipal Planning Regions. The seven Centre County Planning Regions are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1



CCMPO Responsibilities

Federal transportation authorization legislation, such as the current Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and its predecessor, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), outline the primary roles and responsibilities of MPOs, which include the development of a Long Range Transportation Plan (minimum twenty-year horizon), the development of a short-range (four-year) Transportation Improvement Program, and public involvement efforts. This legislation also specifies MPO planning activities, and establishes the required processes for these activities.

One of the CCMPO's primary responsibilities is to approve the use of federal funds for highway and transit projects within Centre County. This responsibility is fulfilled through the development and adoption of the short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP details the proposed expenditure of federal funds and some state capital funds for specific projects during a four-year period, within specified limits of financial constraint. The TIP is updated every two years. The list of projects on the TIP is identical to the "First Four Years" segment of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Twelve Year Program (TYP), which is developed at the same time as the TIP and adopted by the State Transportation Commission.

In order to be included on the short-range TIP, projects must also be included on the MPO's adopted Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The adoption of the Centre County LRTP is another primary responsibility of the CCMPO.

The Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) of 1990 also specify planning activities for MPOs, particularly for areas exhibiting air quality that is not in attainment with acceptable standards. Because Centre County is in attainment under the 2008 Ozone Standard, no special planning activities or processes are required at this time. It is important to note that at the time of LRTP adoption, there were proposed changes to the ozone standard that may impact Centre County's attainment standing.

To facilitate citizen involvement in the planning process used to develop the LRTP and TIP, the CCMPO adopted a Public Participation Plan in 2007 and is updating it concurrently with LRTP 2044. The CCMPO is committed to a proactive public involvement process and supports early and continuing public involvement in the development of transportation plans and programs.

The efforts outlined in the Public Participation Plan focus on identifying, seeking out, and engaging populations that have traditionally been underserved by existing transportation systems, including minority populations, low-income populations, non-English speakers and those with limited English proficiency, older persons, and persons with disabilities.

To enhance opportunities for public involvement, the CCMPO coordinates its public involvement activities with those of PennDOT, CATA, the Centre County municipalities, other public agencies, and transportation stakeholders.

What is the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)?

The LRTP documents current and future transportation demand and identifies long term improvements and projects to meet those needs. The LRTP serves as the official plan for a metropolitan area. Federal regulations require that the LRTP:

- Consider all modes of transportation
- Cover at least a twenty year period
- Consider federal planning factors
- Be fiscally constrained
- Provide for public participation
- Be updated at least every 5 years (4 years for non-attainment areas)

The planning factors specified in federal regulations provide the framework for developing an LRTP. In addition, PennDOT provides guidance to help MPOs prepare LRTPs, and local policies and plans also play a role in the development of an LRTP that illustrates how transportation investments will address current and future needs.

Federal Planning Factors

Under the past federal transportation legislation, MPO's were provided eight (8) planning factors that specified the core elements that must be considered in LRTPs. The factors were as follows:

- Support the economic vitality of the United States, states, and metropolitan areas, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
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- Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation and improve quality of life.
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes throughout the state, for people and freight.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

In addition to maintaining the requirement to address the eight planning factors, MAP-21 included several other requirements for preparing LRTPs:

- Participation by interested parties, including citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties
- Consultation with various interested parties, including Native American tribal governments
- Consultation with other agencies, including state and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation
- Coordination with air quality agencies, for areas that are in nonattainment for ozone or carbon monoxide
- Analysis of equity and environmental justice

Along with the requirements specific to the preparation of LRTPs, MAP-21 greatly expanded the emphasis on performance-based planning. Performance-based planning involves a greater focus on data-driven analysis of needs, assessing the cost effectiveness of potential solutions, and evaluating the performance of investments in meeting those needs.

Implementation of the performance-based approach to date has been focused on MAP-21's highway program. As the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) transitions to a performance and outcome-based program, emphasis has been given to addressing the national performance goals established in MAP-21 for federal highway programs in LRTPs:

- **Safety** — To achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.

- **Infrastructure condition** — To maintain the highway infrastructure asset system in a state of good repair.
- **Congestion reduction** — To achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the NHS.
- **System reliability** — To improve the efficiency of the surface transportation system.
- **Freight movement and economic vitality** — To improve the national freight network, strengthen the ability of rural communities to access national and international trade markets, and support regional economic development.
- **Environmental sustainability** — To enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- **Reduced project delivery delays** — To reduce project costs, promote jobs and the economy, and expedite the movement of people and goods by accelerating project completion through eliminating delays in the project development and delivery process, including reducing regulatory burdens and improving agencies' work practices.

Moving forward, the Secretary of the US Department of Transportation, in consultation with states, MPOs, and other stakeholders, will establish specific performance measures for pavement conditions and performance for the Interstate and NHS, bridge conditions, injuries and fatalities, traffic congestion, on-road mobile source emissions, and freight movement on the Interstate System. States (and MPOs, where applicable) will set performance targets in support of those measures, and state and MPO LRTPs will describe how program and project selection will help achieve the targets.

Because MAP-21 final rulemaking is still underway, the CCMPO's LRTP 2044 attempts to strike a balance between the requirements of past legislation, and the requirements known and anticipated from MAP-21. Revisions to the LRTP 2044 may be needed after final rules are determined.

Key Tenets of LRTP 2044

Although the federal regulations and rulemaking provide the framework for preparing LRTPs, states and MPOs have flexibility in determining their approach to developing a Plan, and its final form. The LRTP 2044 represents the most recent refinement of the long range transportation planning approach that the CCMPO initiated with the preparation of the LRTP 2030 in 2010, and continued through the preparation of LRTP 2040 and now LRTP 2044.

The CCMPO has emphasized the development of goals and objectives, and the use of an in-depth project solicitation, evaluation and prioritization process to prepare LRTPs that include detailed project lists. The development of these core elements of the CCMPO's LRTPs has included the direct involvement of Technical and Coordinating Committee members in setting priorities for goals and objectives, establishing relative weights for factors used to evaluate projects, and approving policy changes to the technical ranking of projects in order to more effectively utilize scarce funding.

The LRTP 2044 represents the next step in the evolution of long range transportation planning in Centre County. LRTP 2044 includes refinements to the areas emphasized in prior LRTPs, and also includes new elements. One of the important new additions to LRTP 2044 is the establishment of five core questions that the CCMPO looks to answer when making programmatic and policy decisions.

These five questions were used as the framework for developing the implementation strategies and performance measures that are included in the LRTP 2044 for the first time.

- 1. Is the Centre County transportation system getting safer?*
- 2. Is the Centre County transportation system in a state of good repair?*
- 3. Does the Centre County transportation system have adequate capacity?*
- 4. Does the Centre County transportation system have an adequate mix of modes?*
- 5. Does Centre County's transportation system support existing and future community and economic development needs?*

The rapidly changing landscape of long range transportation planning in Centre County is illustrated by the fact that since the LRTP 2040 was adopted in 2010, the Plan has been updated several times to address changes in regulatory and fiscal environments at the federal, state, and local level. The number of amendments indicates the LRTP is more of an evolving process than a static document.

With the anticipated completion of new rulemaking for MAP-21 and ongoing integration of performance based planning, LRTP 2044 will likely need to be amended. With the added potential that successor legislation to MAP-21 will be approved within the five-year timeframe of LRTP 2044, the possibility exists that multiple amendments will be needed.

Through all the potential changes, the CCMPO will continue to refine the core elements of the Plan in an effort to reflect current conditions, and address future needs in order to help all stakeholders provide a safe, multi-modal transportation system that is maintained in a state of good repair.