CHAPTER 3

Where We Want to Be

This section of the MTP 2050 update reaffirms our regional vision and lays out our shared goals for our communities, economy, and environment. We track our progress towards meeting these goals, and how well we are carrying out our objectives, by looking at key performance measures.
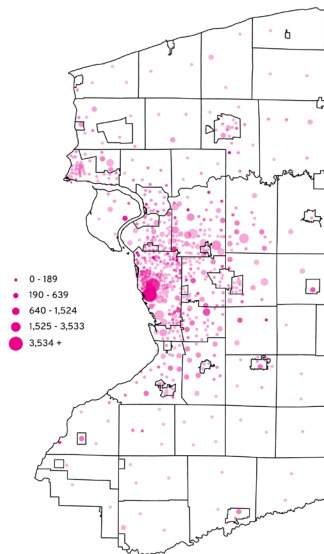
Image Source: GBNRTC (2020)

Where we'll be in 2050

As in the previous 2050 Plan, the total increases in people and jobs were allocated to different areas across the region consistent with One Region Forward, the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development.

A review of the current employment forecasts indicated that forecasts were still valid for the MTP update and that no wholesale changes needed to be made to the regional employment growth estimates. A review of 2020 decennial population data, however, deviated from previously assumed inter-decennial (2010-2019) trend therefore population forecasts were updated to reflect current trends based on the most current data available.

The approach to develop the update was designed to be consistent with the land-use-based forecasting approach developed in the previous Moving Forward 2050 Plan, which was the basis for the current set of demographic forecasts.

Our economy will continue to grow and provide more opportunities by focusing jobs near existing communities.

Our communities will grow stronger as we continue to invest in areas where infrastructure already exists.

Figure 3.1 │ Areas of Employment Growth by 2050
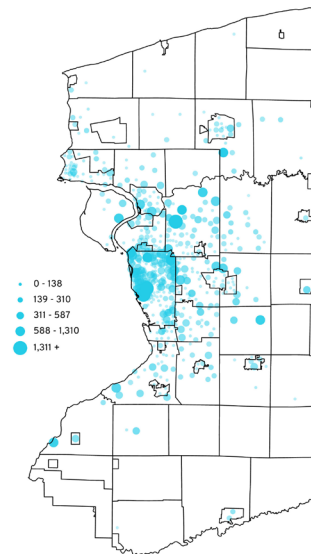
Figure 3.2 │ Areas of Population Growth by 2050

Table 3.1 │ Forecasted Change in Employment and Population

	2020	2050 Vision	Change	% Change
EMPLOYMENT	696,286	791,271	94,985	+13.6%
POPULATION	1,166,902	1,267,392	100,490	+8.4%

Source: Transpo Group, 2050 Projects by Block Group (2020)

A key component of a Metropolitan Transportation Plan is establishing a vision for the future and the goals and objectives that set the stage for achieving that vision.

The vision for Buffalo Niagara region is to provide a transportation system that connects residents and visitors with a variety of convenient options to promote opportunity, health, and safety for all. At the same time, the system will bolster a globally competitive economy with shared prosperity by encouraging efficient use of our resources and collaborating to make smart, forward thinking decisions that harness changes in the future. The goals identified in this chapter, as in the previous Plan, continue to guide future investment decisions towards that shared strategic direction.

The 2050 MTP update process reaffirms the vision of the 2018 Plan. Our goals, substantially unchanged since the previous plan, were refined to reflect an additional emphasis on equity, safety and resilience of the transportation system. Other changes were made to better align our regional goals with national goals and to incorporate new federal planning requirements. Our progress as a region towards meeting national goals using federal performance measures is documented in Appendix J.

Goals

A goal is a broad statement that describes a desired end state. Transportation planning goals represent key priorities for desired outcomes for the transportation system and/or for region as a whole. Goals are typically broad, visionary statements focused on key priority topics.

Objectives

An objective is a specific, measurable statement that support the achievement of goals. Transportation objectives describe an achievable outcome within constraints (timeframe, funding). Objectives are more specific than goals and there often are multiple objectives for every goal.

Performance Measures and Targets

Performance measures and associated targets serve as the basis for measuring objectives. Performance measures are used to track performance over time. More information on the plan's performance measures and targets can be found in the appendix.

Strategies

Strategies describe actions that can or will be taken to address goals and objectives. Strategies describe the role of programs, policies, and priorities in determining a list of projects and services for investment. Strategies can also address guiding principles for how implementing partners will act to progress toward goals and objectives. The Plan's strategies are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Measuring System Performance

Seven National Performance Goals for the Transportation System

Safety

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

Congestion Reduction

To achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the National Highway System.

Infrastructure Condition

To maintain the highway infrastructure asset system in a state of good repair.

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

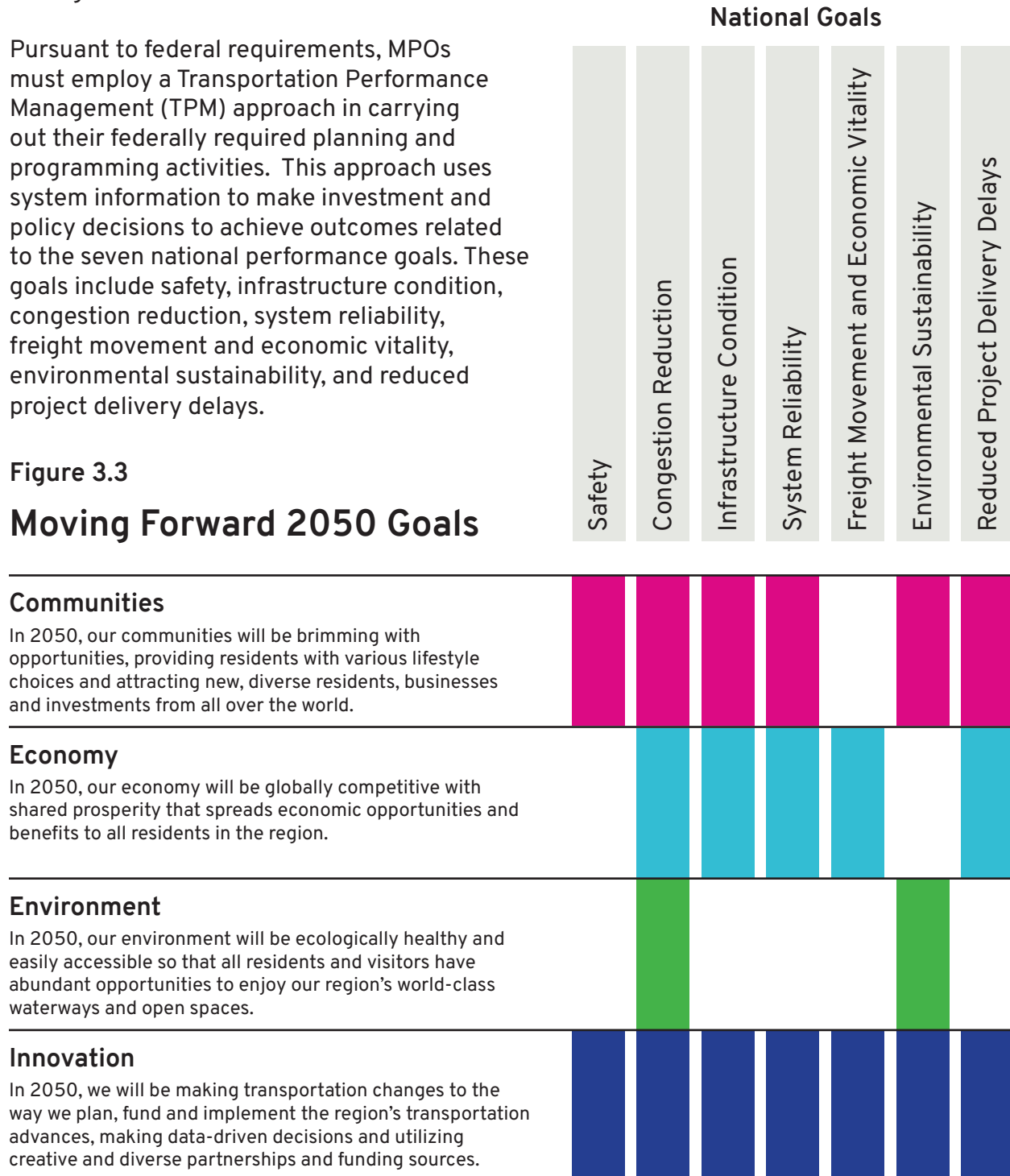*To enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.*

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.

The National Transportation Goals were considered in Moving Forward's shared goals and, by extension, in the strategies and actions that guide GBNRTC's activities as described throughout this document.

Pursuant to federal requirements, MPOs must employ a Transportation Performance Management (TPM) approach in carrying out their federally required planning and programming activities. This approach uses system information to make investment and policy decisions to achieve outcomes related to the seven national performance goals. These goals include safety, infrastructure condition, congestion reduction, system reliability, freight movement and economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and reduced project delivery delays.
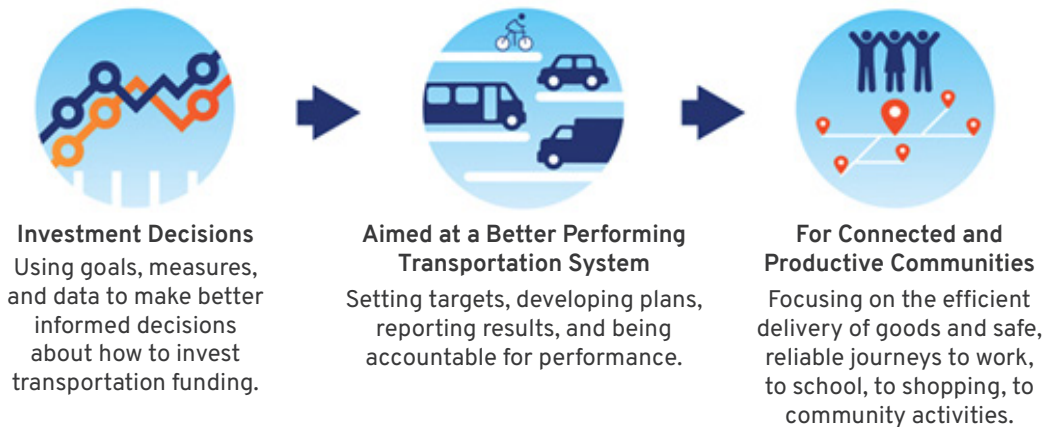
Figure 3.3

Moving Forward 2050 Goals

Figure 3.3 below shows how the MTP goals relate to the federal transportation goals.

National Goals

	Safety	Congestion Reduction	Infrastructure Condition	System Reliability	Freight Movement and Economic Vitality	Environmental Sustainability	Reduced Project Delivery Delays
Communities	■	■	■	■		■	■
Economy		■	■	■	■		■
Environment		■				■	
Innovation	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Communities
In 2050, our communities will be brimming with opportunities, providing residents with various lifestyle choices and attracting new, diverse residents, businesses and investments from all over the world.

Economy
In 2050, our economy will be globally competitive with shared prosperity that spreads economic opportunities and benefits to all residents in the region.

Environment
In 2050, our environment will be ecologically healthy and easily accessible so that all residents and visitors have abundant opportunities to enjoy our region's world-class waterways and open spaces.

Innovation
In 2050, we will be making transportation changes to the way we plan, fund and implement the region's transportation advances, making data-driven decisions and utilizing creative and diverse partnerships and funding sources.

Transportation Performance Management (TPM)

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) defines Transportation Performance Management (TPM) as a strategic approach that uses information to make investment and policy decisions to achieve national performance goals.

Investment Decisions
Using goals, measures, and data to make better informed decisions about how to invest transportation funding.

Aimed at a Better Performing Transportation System
Setting targets, developing plans, reporting results, and being accountable for performance.

For Connected and Productive Communities
Focusing on the efficient delivery of goods and safe, reliable journeys to work, to school, to shopping, to community activities.

The FHWA defines TPM as a strategic approach that uses system performance information to make investment and policy decisions to achieve national performance goals.

TPM:

• Is systematically applied providing key information to help decision makers understand the consequences of investment decisions across transportation assets or modes

• Improves communication between decision makers, stakeholders, and the traveling public

• Ensures targets and measures are developed in cooperative partnerships and based on data and objective information.

MTPs must include performance targets for the measures associated with the following performance management rulemakings:

• FHWA Safety
• FTA Transit Asset Management
• FHWA Pavement & Bridge Condition
• FHWA Performance of NHS, Freight, & CMAQ
• Transit Safety

Summary of System Performance Report

An emerging aspect of activities by GBNRTC and peer metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) across the country is to incorporate Performance-Based Planning principles. Standards for Performance-Based Planning were first introduced by federal legislation in 2015 (the "FAST Act"), and are being brought into practice nationally over time.

Put simply, Performance-Based Planning is about identifying key performance indicators, establishing the baseline performance of the region's transportation system, setting targets, monitoring progress towards the targets, and over time adapting the region's investment plans to help address if a target is proving to be challenging to attain.

Targets have been established for Safety, Congestion, Transit asset condition, and Pavement/Bridge condition. For a number of the performance measures, GBNRTC as well as peer MPOs across New York State have partnered with NYSDOT to support statewide targets. For targets relating to transit system performance, GBNRTC collaborates with the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA), the region's public transit operator.

In keeping with the Performance-Based Planning approach, GBNRTC regularly monitors the region's performance as well as progress towards its targets. Performance measures that GBNRTC is paying particular attention to at the time of writing are road fatalities (which regionwide are slightly above the NYS average), age of transit assets (certain types of transit vehicles and facilities), transit system safety, and transit (Metro) staff training activities. GBNRTC currently outperforms both the NYS average and the NYS targets for all of the standard road congestion and road/bridge condition performance measures. Many of this MTP's planned investments address the Buffalo Niagara region's performance measure targets (see Chapter 5 for the itemized listing of planned investments).

GBNRTC reports annually on its Performance-Based Planning activities in a System Performance Report. The 2023 edition is presented as Appendix J of this MTP, and future editions will be published at www.gbnrtc.org.