

CHAPTER 1

About this Plan Update

A Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is a region's primary tool for laying out significant, long term improvements in their transportation system. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) like the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) are required to develop MTPs to allocate federal, state and local dollars to transportation projects across the region.

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What is a Metropolitan Transportation Plan?



One Region Forward, a federally-recognized Regional Plan for Sustainable Development, created a new story for our region's future rooted in shared community values. In the process of engaging more than 700 organizations and thousands of citizens through One Region Forward, we learned what we as a region want for our transportation system in broad terms.

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the GBNRTC is responsible for developing a metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) for our region that reflects both regional needs and local concerns.

The MTP serves a number of purposes. It provides a vision of the region's future growth and development, identifies regional transportation needs for future transportation improvements and services, and provides guidance and direction for infrastructure investments in the region. The plan sets the foundation and priorities for the distribution of federal transportation funds and serves as the framework for the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the capital program of all federally funded transportation projects in the region.

Federal regulations require that the GBNRTC update the region's metropolitan transportation plan every five years to determine its consistency with current trends and conditions and to maintain at least a 20 year planning horizon.

This document serves as an update to Moving Forward 2050, the metropolitan transportation plan for Erie and Niagara Counties adopted by the GBNRTC in May 2018. It keeps our region in compliance with federal legislation and eligible for federal transportation dollars. Like its predecessor, the Moving Forward 2050 update aims to use transportation investments to strengthen communities and focus growth where we already have infrastructure, create economic development, and support workforce access. The Plan also looks at ways to improve mobility using technology, and to protect our natural environment by using sustainable materials and innovative design features.

The original Moving Forward 2050 built upon One Region Forward, identifying specific transportation policies, strategies, and investments that will help us achieve the region's goals. This Plan update continues to be the foundation that will guide how we implement the future we want to see.



Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) update MTP plans every five years.



MTPs allocate how regional transportation projects are funded through federal, state and local dollars.



The planning process brings together people from different backgrounds and areas of expertise to share ideas.

Since adoption of the 2018 Plan, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law was passed and is the largest long-term investment in our infrastructure and economy in our Nation's history. It provides \$550 billion nationally over fiscal years 2022 through 2026 in new Federal investment in infrastructure, including in roads, bridges, and mass transit, water infrastructure, resilience, and broadband. This means more funding to the region for both system preservation and system enhancements of our transportation network.

A full-page photograph of a cyclist riding a road bike around the Peace Circle in Washington, DC. The cyclist is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, black shorts, and a yellow helmet. In the background, the large, white, domed U.S. Capitol building is visible, partially obscured by green trees. A large, ornate stone monument stands in the middle ground. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.

*A cyclist riding around Peace Circle in Washington, DC.
Photo by Sandy Torchon
(www.pexels.com).*

Metropolitan Transportation Plan - Transportation Improvement Program Linkage

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a priority listing of all federally funded transportation projects programmed for implementation during a five-year period and is consistent with the goals and objectives defined in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

The GBNRTC TIP, updated every three years, reflect those projects of highest priority based on need, local desires, long-range plan conformity and funding availability. The current TIP covers the period from November 1, 2023 through September 30, 2027 and includes highway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and demand management and air quality projects, as well as transportation studies and programs within the Buffalo Niagara Region.

Under federal regulations, the TIP must reflect the investment priorities established in the current Metropolitan Transportation Plan. To learn about ways to better align the goals and objectives of the MTP and TIP projects, GBNRTC member representatives and staff participated in a FHWA sponsored virtual workshop series in June 2021. The workshops focused on how to develop competitive transportation projects for the TIP that align with the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

The GBNRTC TIP project submission process was updated and a new project submission form and scoring system were developed that required project sponsors to consider how each project submission related to the following criteria:

- MTP goals
- System performance
- Transit accessibility
- Bicycle/pedestrian accommodations
- GBNRTC's regional bicycle plan
- Business attraction and retention
- Social equity including Areas of Persistent Poverty (>20%) and regionally defined Communities of Concern

The more points that a project scored, the better the MTP-TIP linkage was determined to be. From the initial screening of candidate projects, the following types of projects typically received a "High" MTP Alignment ranking:

- Transit projects
- Projects located on main streets or thoroughfares
- Projects that included elements to increase multi-modal options
- Projects in Communities of Concern and Areas of Persistent Poverty

GBNRTC will continue to evaluate and revise the process as part of future MTP and TIP development cycles.

Key Elements of this Plan Update



**Federal Planning
Emphasis Areas**

Chapter 1



**Updates to demographic, land use and
transportation conditions to reflect
the most current data available.**

Chapter 3



**Reaffirms the vision and goals, which guide
the development and implementation of
the metropolitan transportation plan.**

Chapter 4



**Includes a System Performance Report
to provide key system information to determine
the progress towards achieving goals and objectives.**

Chapter 4



**Updates to the financial plan based on anticipated
funding available to the region to implement
the metropolitan transportation plan projects.**

Chapter 5



**An inclusive participation process to ensure
transparency and provide opportunities for
engagement in the planning process.**

Appendix D



**Federal planning requirements as specified
in the latest federal transportation legislation,
the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and how
the Plan meets those requirements.**

Appendix F



**Air Quality Conformity
documentation.**

Appendix E

Federal Planning Factors

According to regulations, “the degree of consideration and analysis of the factors should be based on the scale and complexity of many issues, including transportation system development, land use, employment, economic development, human and natural environment, and housing and community development.

Per federal regulations, the federal planning factors are:

As the MPO, the GBNRTC, carries out a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process that addresses ten federal planning factors.

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight.
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasize preservation of the existing transportation system.
- Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and
- Enhance travel and tourism.

Planning Emphasis Areas



With continued focus on transportation planning the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Offices of Planning jointly issued the 2021 Planning Emphasis Areas (PEAs). These 8 PEAs provide a framework for the GBNRTC planning processes including the development of the 2050 MTP update.

Tackling the Climate Crisis: Transition to a Clean Energy, Resilient Future

Identifying the barriers to and opportunities for deployment of fueling and charging infrastructure, evaluating opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing single-occupancy vehicle trips and increasing access to public transportation, shift to lower emission modes of transportation, and identifying transportation system vulnerabilities to climate change impacts and evaluating potential solutions.

Equity and Justice40 in Transportation Planning

Executive Order (EO) 14008, “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad” was signed creating a government-wide “Justice40 Initiative” that aims to deliver 40 percent of the overall benefits of relevant federal investments to disadvantaged communities. Through the implementation of this Administration priority, the Department will develop a method to identify disadvantaged communities and benefits for Justice40-covered programs, consistent with guidance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and relevant statutory authorities.

The Justice40 Initiative is also aligned with the goals of EO 13985, “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government,” and will be implemented as part of the Department’s broader equity agenda.

Until such time when further guidance is provided, agencies should consider using, as appropriate, the following indicators of disadvantaged communities to implement the goals of the Justice40 Initiative utilizing existing data sources and indices that are currently used by programs serving low income, vulnerable, and underserved communities:

Community:

Agencies should define community as “either a group of individuals living in geographic proximity to one another, or a geographically dispersed set of individuals (such as migrant workers or Native Americans), where either type of group experiences common conditions.”

Disadvantaged:

Agencies should consider appropriate data, indices, and screening tools to determine whether a specific community is disadvantaged based on a combination of variables that may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Low income, high and/or persistent poverty.
- High unemployment and underemployment.
- Racial and ethnic residential segregation, particularly where the segregation stems from discrimination by government entities.
- Linguistic isolation.
- High housing cost burden and substandard housing.
- Distressed neighborhoods.
- High transportation cost burden and/or low transportation access.
- Disproportionate environmental stressor burden and high cumulative impacts.
- Limited water and sanitation access and affordability.
- Disproportionate impacts from climate change.
- High energy cost burden and low energy access.
- Jobs lost through the energy transition.
- Access to healthcare.

Complete Streets

A complete street is safe, and feels safe, for everyone using the street. The goal is to provide an equitable and safe transportation network for travelers of all ages and abilities, including those from marginalized communities facing historic disinvestment. Complete Streets approaches vary based on community context. They may address a wide range of elements, such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, bus lanes, public transportation stops, crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, modified vehicle travel lanes, streetscape, and landscape treatments. A safe and complete network for bicycles can also be achieved through a safe and comfortable bicycle facility located on the roadway, adjacent to the road, or on a nearby parallel corridor. Jurisdictions will be encouraged to prioritize safety improvements and speed management on arterials that are essential to creating complete travel networks for those without access to single-occupancy vehicles.

Public Involvement

Early, effective, and continuous public involvement brings diverse viewpoints into the decision-making process. MPOs are encouraged to increase meaningful public involvement in transportation planning by integrating Virtual Public Involvement (VPI) tools into the overall public involvement approach while ensuring continued public participation by individuals without access to computers and mobile devices. The use of VPI broadens the reach of information to the public and makes participation more convenient and affordable to greater numbers of people. Virtual tools provide increased transparency and access to transportation planning activities and decision-making processes. Many virtual tools also provide information in visual and interactive formats that enhance public and stakeholder understanding of proposed plans, programs, and projects. Increasing participation earlier in the process can reduce project delays and lower staff time and costs.

Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET) / U.S. Department of Defense Coordination

Improve coordination with representatives from the Department of Defense (DOD) in the transportation planning and project programming process on infrastructure and connectivity needs for STRAHNET routes and other public roads that connect to DOD facilities. According to the Declaration of Policy in 23 U.S.C. 101(b)(1), it is in the national interest to accelerate construction of the Federal-aid highway system, including the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, because many of the highways (or portions of the highways) are inadequate to meet the needs of national and civil defense. The DOD's facilities include military bases, ports, and depots. The road networks that provide access and connections to these facilities are essential to national security.

Federal Land Management Agency (FLMA) Coordination

MPOs are encouraged to coordinate with FLMA in the transportation planning and project programming process on infrastructure and connectivity needs related to access routes and other public roads and transportation services that connect to Federal lands. Through joint coordination, the State DOTs, MPOs, Tribal Governments, FLMA, and local agencies should focus on integration of their transportation planning activities and develop cross-cutting State and MPO long range transportation plans, programs, and corridor studies, as well as the Office of Federal Lands Highway's developed transportation plans and programs. Agencies should explore opportunities to leverage transportation funding to support access and transportation needs of FLMA before transportation projects are programmed in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL)

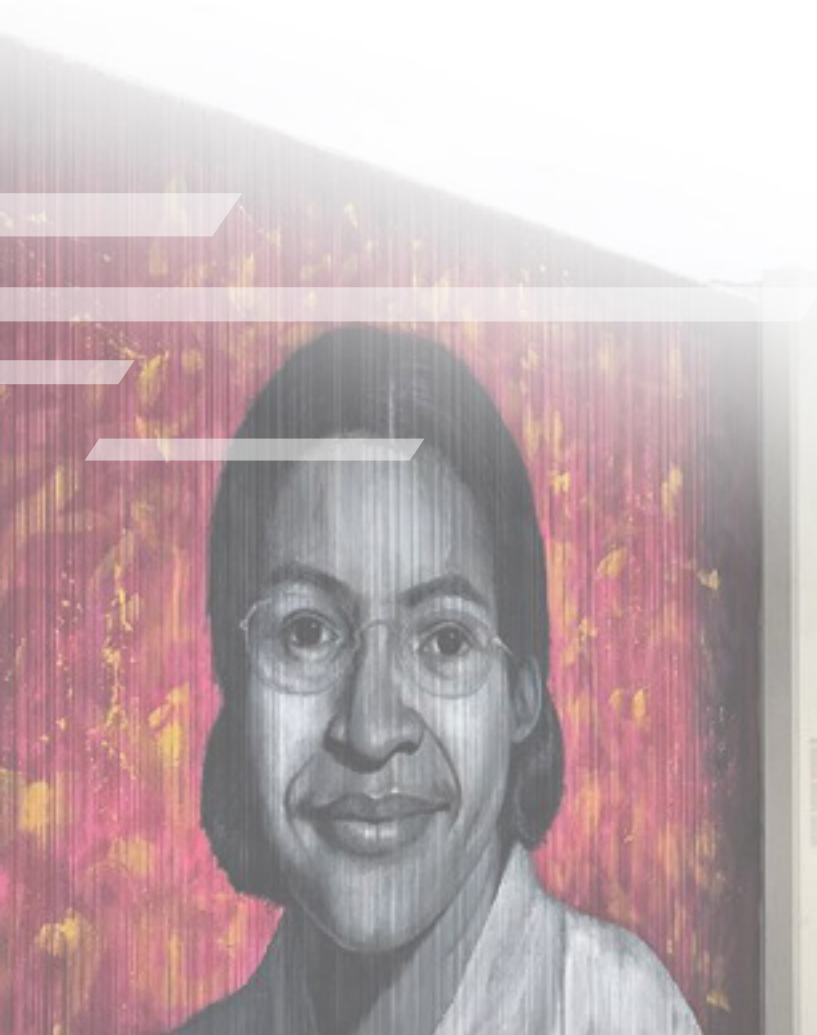
The use of Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) is a collaborative and integrated approach to transportation decision-making that considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the transportation planning process, and uses the information, analysis, and products developed during planning to inform the environmental review process. PEL leads to interagency relationship building among planning, resource, and regulatory agencies in the early stages of planning to inform and improve project delivery timeframes, including minimizing duplication and creating one cohesive flow of information. This results in transportation programs and projects that serve the community's transportation needs more effectively while avoiding and minimizing the impacts on human and natural resources.

Data in Transportation Planning

To address the emerging topic areas of data sharing, needs, and analytics, MPOs are encouraged to incorporate data sharing and consideration into the transportation planning process, because data assets have value across multiple programs. Data sharing principles and data management can be used for a variety of issues, such as freight, bike and pedestrian planning, equity analyses, managing curb space, performance management, travel time reliability, connected and autonomous vehicles, mobility services, and safety. Developing and advancing data sharing principles allows for efficient use of resources and improved policy and decision-making at the State, MPO, regional, and local levels for all parties.

Title VI Statement

GBNRTC is committed to compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, and all related rules and statutes. GBNRTC assures that no person or group(s) of persons shall, on the grounds of race, color, age, disability, national origin, gender, or income status, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any and all programs, services, or activities administered by GBNRTC, whether those programs and activities are federally funded or not. It is also the policy of GBNRTC to ensure that all of its programs, policies, and other activities do not have disproportionate adverse effects on minority and low income populations. Additionally, GBNRTC will provide meaningful access to services for persons with limited English proficiency.



The Freedom Wall, located at the corner of Michigan Avenue and East Ferry Street in the City of Buffalo celebrates our nation's historic and ongoing struggles for political and social equality.



Photo by GBNRTC (2022).