

8. FUTURE WORK PLAN

The Cache MPO Long Range Transportation Plan is intended to provide not only a prioritization of transportation projects for the region over the next 30 years, but also to present a summary of activities that the MPO will be pursuing in interim years. This chapter covers the topical areas that the MPO has responsibility for, and the discussions here offer a guide to specific steps that the MPO should consider in developing and maintaining work programs in each area.

A. Summary of other MPO Activities

In an informal telephone survey of eight similarly-sized MPOs throughout primarily the Intermountain West, several topics were explored with MPO staff in order to determine the extent to which smaller MPOs deal with specific work activities. Results of this survey are summarized here and survey respondents are shown in Table 8-1.

Table 8-1: MPO Survey

MPO	Urbanized Area	2000 Population
Casper Area Transportation Planning Process	Casper, Wyoming	57,589
Cheyenne MPO	Cheyenne, Wyoming	68,117
Eau Claire Chippewa Falls Area MPO	Eau Claire, Wisconsin	91,647
Mesa County Regional Transportation Planning Office	Grand Junction, Colorado	92,419
Bonneville MPO	Idaho Falls, Idaho	67,032
Rogue Valley MPO	Medford, Oregon	128,797
Missoula Office of Planning & Grants	Missoula, Montana	69,502
Bannock Planning Organization	Pocatello, Idaho	62,514

i. Total MPO Staff

Staff size ranged from 1.75 persons to six. Many MPO staff are housed within transportation planning departments of other agencies or share administrative, technical, and professional services with county, city, and even state and other regional offices. Some offices have had to recently reduce staff numbers as other MPOs within the state were designated following the 2000 Census but with no increase in funding for all MPOs in the state.

ii. Travel Model

Of the MPOs surveyed, most used travel demand models that were maintained and operated by the state Department of Transportation, with the MPO often providing air quality and socioeconomic data to the state for updates. Of those that provide their own modeling services, they generally use consultant services for major updates.

Model software is typically TransCAD, with one MPO changing from MINUTP to TransCAD during their next model update. Other software mentioned included QRSII and EMME2, a statewide model used in Oregon that includes a land use component. While generally both daily and peak hour volumes are available, most MPOs utilize daily volumes to a greater extent than peak hour. There seemed to be concern over the accuracy of peak hour data due to both the data being “borrowed” from another city and the error in one-hour reporting, especially for future years.

Only one MPO used the travel demand model for any bus ridership or mode split information. A testament to the smaller urban areas served by these MPOs, most areas do not have fixed route

	transit systems and rely on paratransit and demand response systems for service to elderly, disabled, and transportation impaired patrons.
<i>iii. Air Quality</i>	Of the MPOs surveyed, most had no air quality issues within their region, again attributable to the relatively small size of those areas surveyed. Of those that did experience air quality issues, carbon monoxide and PM10 were the most common pollutants of concern. These MPOs tended to be very involved in the air quality process with their state regulating agencies and in State Implementation Plan development.
<i>iv. Most Recent LRP or Update</i>	Of the eight MPOs that were contacted, six are in the process of updating or anticipate beginning an update process in the next six months. Several MPOs indicated that they have a regular three or six year process for updates. Specifically, LRPs are often updated as the result of new data following the decennial census.
<i>v. Freight Planning</i>	Freight has typically not been a great concern in LRP processes for these MPOs. Freight is addressed to varying degrees in the plan documents with some agencies not addressing freight at all and another that has established a process to examine freight issues through an advisory committee and is now beginning to explore freight policy decisions. The majority, however, have not done any significant freight planning.
<i>vi. Bicycle Planning</i>	Bicycle planning is a process that most all MPOs participate in, but vary somewhat in whether or not they are the lead agency in preparing bicycle plans (as opposed to cities or counties that develop plans) and to what degree the plans are included in the LRP document, either wholly or by reference. MPOs that are involved in bicycle planning indicate the importance of the process from a regional perspective.
<i>vii. Public Meetings</i>	Not surprisingly, most of the MPOs surveyed found the public involvement aspect of the LRP development process less than successful. Due to its long-term nature and the fact that the LRP is a planning document and typically doesn't show specific future road alignments, it is difficult to generate public interest in what can be rather abstract projects. However, there was some consensus among MPOs that the more specific the project or topic, the more likely they were to get better attendance at public meetings.
<i>viii. Planning Emphasis Areas</i>	The MPOs surveyed identified several areas of planning emphasis in which they try to provide organizational or leadership roles. Several areas are trying to be more active participants in land use planning, but usually their influence is minimal and land use changes are more persuasive in nature than obligatory. Other activities identified include serving as a GIS clearinghouse, pedestrian and bicycle trails planning, and tracking building permits.
<i>ix. TDM Strategies & Performance-based Budgeting</i>	Few MPOs have any kind of performance-based budgeting process or require specific transportation demand management strategies. While some MPOs have considered implementing such a process, ultimately their board of directors have concluded that they would rather make funding decisions based on congestion and safety data and "start with a clean slate." Again, the Rogue Valley MPO was the exception among those surveyed in that Oregon's Transportation Planning Rule requires transportation projects to meet vehicle miles traveled reduction targets.

x. Streamlined or Small Projects List

No MPO uses any type of streamlined or small projects list for projects that are smaller in scope or budget. Reasons for not utilizing such a process include that those types of projects do not best utilize federal funds, the area tends to have mostly large projects in excess of \$1 million, those projects go through city or county processes, they are interested in federal money for small projects because of the requirements, and there are several other funding sources for those projects.

xi. Reinforce Regional Nature of MPO

When asked in what ways their MPO tries to reinforce the regional nature of the organization, a range of responses was given. Several MPOs cited maintaining GIS libraries as well as providing mapping services to regional entities. Similarly, many mentioned that they provide some kind of assistance to local governments in the form of development and traffic impact analysis review. Transportation planning information such as traffic counts, maintenance of the travel demand model and updating socioeconomic data are important aspects of MPO activities, as are advisory services to land use planning and Community Development Block Grant funding distribution.

The key conclusion to be drawn from this informal survey is the importance of process more so than product. Establishing a process by which an MPO will address issues such as air quality, freight planning, and trails planning is as important, if not more, than the products delivered. Over time, these processes become institutionalized and expected, offering member entities a thoughtful and prescribed approach to addressing regional transportation issues.

B. Planning Products

The remainder of this section is a discussion of specific activities on which Cache MPO should focus its future work in addition to a schedule for those activities. Work is divided into planning products such as socioeconomic projections and data collection.

i. Demographic Projections

In order to more efficiently proceed through the Long Range Plan update process, Cache MPO will regularly examine socioeconomic data including population, households, and employment in the Cache region. Annual evaluations of existing socioeconomic conditions and projections will make the LRP process update more straightforward in that travel demand model information will be more accurate and readily available for use.

Included in these regular assessments of the region's socioeconomic information will be recent trends in housing and employment growth, broad economic development initiatives of area entities, and data projection work done by the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. In addition, updated census information should be incorporated into existing and future conditions analysis when available.

ii. Financial Projections

Cache MPO staff will meet with UDOT Region 1 officials to discuss transportation funding priorities, assumptions, and funding source projections so that project list priorities can be revised as necessary. In addition, local funding assumptions should be periodically examined as well as operations and maintenance costs so that LRP update funding assumptions are consistent with project lists and projected available funds.

iii. Long/Short Range Transit Plan

The Logan and Cache Valley Transit Districts will work with Cache MPO staff and officials in updating their long and short range transit plans. These transit plans are important components in the region's long range plan for transportation, and continuous coordination with the transit districts is important to the work of the MPO.

*iv. Trail/
Bicycle Plan*

An updated trails plan, including both bicycle and pedestrian facilities, has not been adopted by the Cache MPO at this time. The Cache MPO will update the trails plan and incorporate the goals and objectives of the LRP within it. In adopting an inclusive bicycle and pedestrian trails plan, the Cache MPO will consider an 'Ultimate Trails Plan' that is consistent with the Ultimate Functional Classification map for roads and highways. This would define the vision for bicycle and pedestrian trails planning in the Cache Valley and offer a build-out plan on which nearer-term trails plans could be based. The importance of this trails plan lies in the consistency of plans between cities and at municipal borders more so than specific trail plans within each city.

*v. Freight
Plan*

The Cache MPO recognizes the importance of the freight moving industry to the economic sustainability of Cache Valley. It is vitally important that the existing Union Pacific "Cache Valley Branch" railroad line be preserved. Although lightly used at present, this route links Hyrum, Logan, Smithfield, and Richmond, Utah, in addition to Preston, Idaho, with UP's Ogden to Pocatello mainline at Cache Junction. Having rail service in place allows the Cache Valley to attract businesses that require direct access to railroad freight service, which is far more economical and energy efficient than trucks for many commodities. In pursuit of this, several steps are detailed for future work related to freight planning. First, the Cache MPO and local governments should continue to work closely with the Cache Valley Initiative group to ensure that freight issues are properly identified and addressed at all levels of local and regional planning. It is imperative that the freight industry, including trucking, rail, aviation, and warehousing have a clear voice in the planning process and that local government planners and leaders have a clear understanding of freight service and issues as they impact Cache Valley.

Second, there is a need for more comprehensive data on freight movement in the Cache Valley, just as there is a similar lack of accurate data on freight traffic in Utah and across the West. The Cache MPO should work closely with UDOT and other regional agencies in a cooperative effort to identify what data is needed and then in collecting such data over the next two years. Trucking and warehousing companies, as well as large shippers should also be involved in this effort.

The shift in truck traffic to local roads in order to avoid congestion is creating new problems by introducing large trucks onto roads that are not designed for such traffic. To better understand these challenges, the following is a list of freight movement issues and suggested improvements in the Cache Valley provided by the local trucking industry:

- Passing lanes of adequate length on S.R. 30 over Collinston Divide west of Logan.
- Inadequate left turn lanes and signals on Main Street in Logan particularly at 200 North.
- Signals needed on U.S. 89/91 at 6th West and 10th West in Logan for truck access.
- Traffic on 10th West in Logan impacting access to local businesses and industries.
- Truck traffic is increasing on S.R. 217 between 10th West in North Logan and Amalga.
- Deteriorated pavement problems on Nibley Road from U.S.89/91 east to 1200 West.
- 6th West and 10th West have become unofficial truck bypasses around Logan's Main St.

vi. LRP Update

The Cache MPO will update their existing Long Range Plan every five years and will incorporate the information gathered under the 'Data Collection' program in each updated document. The project list will be re-examined based on new data, including updated travel demand model information, funding projections, socioeconomic data, and the region's goals and objectives.

*vii. Corridor
Vision Plans*

Following the adoption of this Long Range Plan, the Cache MPO board will undertake a process by which they will develop Corridor Vision Plans for the major transportation corridors in the

Cache region. These Corridor Vision Plans will consider such things as existing and future functional classification, road width, surrounding land uses, primary purpose of the corridor, access management principles such as signal and access spacing, provision of alternative mode such as transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities, and overall purpose, function, and character of the corridor. These Corridor Vision Plans should be reexamined periodically as the region grows and changes.

**viii. Annual
Open House**

As is discussed in Chapter 7, the Cache MPO will be consistent and comprehensive in its approach to public involvement, both with respect to its Long Range Plan update process as well as other projects and initiatives. First, the CMPO will host an annual Transportation Open House or Transportation Fair which will highlight current projects in the region. City participation will be strongly encouraged as local government involvement is a key element of the success of these events. Invitations to the event will be methodical and all-encompassing. In addition, the MPO will hold informational meetings for specific projects if the timing of such does not coincide with the annual open house. The scope of these project-specific events can be more limited in terms of advertising, but should still be broad enough to consider any individuals or groups impacted by the project.

**xi. Performance
Measures**

The CMPO Long Range Transportation Plan represents a substantial public investment with a significant impact on the quality of life of citizens in Cache Valley. The ability to evaluate the success of the planned investment and make mid-course adjustments in future plan updates is paramount to the success of the plan. Given the projected 40 percent increase in population in the MPO area over the life of the plan, it is clear that the ability to maintain a quality transportation system in Cache Valley must depend on wise transportation investments coupled with a balance approach to transportation modes and various “smart growth” planning principles. This plan identifies several key performance measures which must be tracked on an ongoing basis by the MPO for them to remain meaningful. Specific data related to performance measures are listed under “data collection.”

**C. Data
Collection**

**i. Annual
Report Card**

The intent of this tracking is to provide for an on-going “report card” of the success of the plan and an accountability to the planning stakeholders and the general public. Several performance measures will be tracked with every decennial Census (in the absence of significant changes to the Census structure) and include the reliance of various modes of transportation to work. This decennial data should be tracked on an annual or biennial basis with a small sample workplace survey. The CMPO should strive to gradually reduce the percentage of commuters driving in single occupant automobiles and track the success of these measures. UDOT and the Utah Governor’s Office of Planning & Budget track vehicle mile growth and population growth, respectively, on an annual basis. The CMPO should strive to reduce the growth rate of vehicle miles traveled to the point where the growth is less than the growth in population. Finally, the Texas Transportation Institute tracks a national “Congestion Index” represented by the comparison of average travel time during congestion to average travel times in the absence of congestion. A similar congestion index should be developed in the CMPO based on a defined set of roads and travel runs, such as the average of travel times over five peak and five off-peak “floating car” speed runs over the length of SR-91 (Main Street) in the Urban Area.

Performance measures identified in this plan represent a narrow review of available data and targeted development of easily obtainable measures which can be tracked by the CMPO staff.

The value of performance measures is in the development of long term tracking and not one time analysis. A more detailed discussion of the base measures used in this Plan is found in the Needs Assessment Chapter. The CMPO will continue to track these measures and couple the annual Open House with the availability of a “report card” to display the progress of the plan.

**ii. Project
Accountability
Report**

On an annual basis, Cache MPO is required to provide FHWA a Project Accountability Report that describes TIP (specifically federally funded) projects that were completed during the previous year. This requirement can become more than a computer print-out and will include before and after pictures, comments from affected individuals, before and after speed and capacity studies, and an assessment of the improvements offered to transit and pedestrians. What is presently a bland and internal federal requirement will be a meaningful assessment which will only add a fraction of a percent to each project cost. The CMPO will make these reports a requirement of project sponsors and use them as displays at annual open houses.

iii. Traffic Counts

Cache MPO will coordinate with city staffs to implement an annual traffic count program on major transportation corridors in the region. These traffic counts are intended to supplement the average daily traffic (ADT) volumes provided by the Utah Department of Transportation in their annual publication, *Traffic on Utah Highways*. Traffic information will be collected for both daily traffic volumes as well as peak hour volumes. This data will be used in order to calibrate the region’s travel demand model and in corridor planning processes throughout the area. The CMPO will work with UDOT to establish protocols for count duration, seasonal adjustments, and related data integrity requirements.

**iv. Speed Data
Collection**

Cache MPO staff will establish a program through which travel time will be collected and recorded in alternate years. Travel time runs on alternate years shall be in addition to travel time runs for the annual travel time index, and will be used primarily to build a speed data base. Specific routes and times will be established so that conditions are held constant to the extent available. This activity will give the MPO valuable information related to speed and congestion conditions on key routes through the valley.

**v. Peak
Period Model**

The existing regional travel demand model gives results in daily traffic volumes and speed information from the model is not as accurate as it would be with peak period model results. As air quality becomes a bigger issue in Cache Valley, speed data will be important information in development of air quality plans. A peak period model should be developed so that speed data can be collected. Speed data collection identified in the previous activity would be used to calibrate speed information for a peak period model.

**vi. HPMS
Expansion**

Highway Performance Model System is a traffic count collection system whereby UDOT officials supply traffic volume information to FHWA. Cache MPO officials will work with UDOT to determine the locations where additional traffic volume information should be collected as well as the appropriate level of accuracy for each functional class type.

Activities outlined in this chapter form the basis of future work for the Cache MPO. While specific timeframes are not necessarily associated with each element of the future work plan, care should be given in determining the most efficient and effective schedules. Table 8-2 below offers a summary of the various data elements and planning processes and products outlined in this plan.

Table 8-2: Planning Products and Data Collection Program

Products	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Demographic Projections	X			X			X	
Financial Projections	X	X				X		
Long / Short Range Transit Plan			X					X
Trail/ Bicycle Plan			X					
Freight Plan					X			
LRP Update	X					X		
Corridor Vision Plans		X						
Annual Open House		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Data								
Annual Report Card		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Project Accountability Report		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Traffic Counts		X		X		X		X
Speed Data Collection		X	X		X		X	
Peak Period Model					X			
HPMS Expansion		X						

D. Other Activities

i. Air Quality

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) of 1990 strengthened the relationship between transportation planning and air quality. Specifically, regionally significant transportation projects in air quality non-attainment (and maintenance) areas must be derived from a Regional Transportation Plan which “conforms” to the State Implementation Plan for air quality. In the State of Utah, portions of the WFRC and the Mountainland AOG are non-attainment areas and each of these MPOs dedicates approximately one full-time staff person towards addressing the transportation planning issues associated with air quality conformity. Although no portion of the CMPO is a federally-designated air quality non-attainment area, planning activities and staffing should anticipate this designation in the near future.

In 1997, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established National Ambient Air Quality Standards for an evaluation of fine particulates called PM2.5 (particulate matter of 2.5 micrometers and smaller), although the actual implementation of the standard and associated monitoring was delayed due to court battles. The standard, which has been upheld by the courts, requires a three year average of PM2.5 24-hour monitoring levels. Although the Cache Valley exceeded the PM2.5 health levels in several 24-hour periods during a severe inversion in the winter of 2003-2004, it is unclear whether portions of Cache County will be designated a non-attainment area until the third year of monitor data is collected this coming winter. Regardless of whether Cache Valley can remain below the National Ambient Air Quality Standard, the MPO should begin a proactive campaign to understand and mitigate the impacts of transportation on PM2.5 and other air quality problems.

As evidenced in this brief description, air quality issues are both complex and rapidly evolving. The science of PM2.5 (particles of approximately 1/30th the diameter of a human hair) and the specific causes of the problem in Cache County are still poorly understood. Staff at the Cache

MPO should begin working with the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Air Quality (DAQ) to determine the types of data needed to evaluate this issue. Since air quality conformity involves the comparison of future transportation emissions against maximum allowable levels, the ability of the travel model to simulate base year data will be important. While it is too early to anticipate the level of modeling required until data collection programs are established, the CMPO should anticipate improvements to travel speed modeling since the present model has been calibrated only towards traffic volumes. Because conformity requirements are not “triggered” until the area exceeds the national standards, the CMPO should be supportive of near-term mitigation measures identified by the Utah DAQ to avoid the classification of a non-attainment area. However, once classified, the CMPO should re-direct its focus towards understanding and implementing the types of longer-term controls that will assist in conformity issues that are often a trade-off against more immediate “quick fixes” that are proposed by DAQ.

ii. Meeting Administration

It is important for the Cache MPO to meet regularly, provide agendas in advance, and distribute meeting minutes after meetings have occurred. This is true for both Cache MPO board meetings and technical advisory committees. Maintaining written record of meeting discussions and votes is important in providing an accurate depiction of board and committee activities. As mentioned, the process of meeting and discussing key regional issues is as important as the products produced, so a written record of the process is paramount to the success of the CMPO to affect regional improvements.

iii. ITS Operations Deployment

The Cache MPO, UDOT, and FHWA have initiated the process of implementing Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) for the Cache Valley area. ITS refers to a system of transportation-related technologies that provide up-to-the-minute information about current network conditions. ITS allows for more efficient operation of transportation infrastructure as well as better management and improvement in service from government and private transportation providers.

Key components of an ITS system include traffic signal control, freeway management, transit management, incident management, and emergency response, among others. According to the U.S. DOT, the benefits of ITS systems that have been demonstrated in other areas include travel time improvements ranging from eight to 25 percent, reduced crashes by 24 to 50 percent on freeways while handling eight to 22 percent more traffic at speeds 13 to 48 percent faster than pre-existing congested conditions, and reduced delay associated with congestion caused by incidents by 10 to 45 percent.

iv. Safety

FHWA officials have suggested that safety needs to be a priority in the planning process to the same extent that capacity improvements are prioritized. The Mountainland Association of Governments was offered as a good example of a thorough discussion of safety in their current LRP including school zones and high accident rate zones. Each project identified in MAG’s Long Range Plan must include a safety discussion/analysis in order to be included on the region’s project list.

The Cache MPO will undertake a prioritization process by which the various elements of safety will be ranked and weighted. Also included in this process will be the identification and quantification of specific reduction goals. The outcome of this process will be used in evaluating each transportation project with respect to increasing safety or reducing accidents.