

INTRODUCTION

Transportation planning is a multi-jurisdictional process that is both regional and local in its nature and necessity. The Cache Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a federally-designated agency charged with preparing a long range plan for transportation for the Cache urbanized area to the year 2030. Under federal code 23CFR Part 450, MPOs are directed to prepare a plan which incorporates public input and addresses the future transportation needs for their region. In fact, in order to be eligible for federal funding for transportation projects, the MPO must have an adopted Long Range Plan which identifies priority transportation projects that are of regional significance.

While this Cache MPO 2030 Long Range Plan Update fulfills requirements identified in federal regulations by addressing regional transportation needs over the next several decades, it also looks at transportation from a more broad-based, comprehensive perspective. It considers not only near-term capacity improvements, but perhaps more importantly, a longer-term “ultimate” vision for the region and a multi-modal transportation network that addresses needs that are far-reaching in scope. This ultimate vision described in this plan is the result of many factors. Goals and objectives were developed by the CMPO and are described in the 2025 Long Range Plan.

They include:

- Enhance mobility within the urbanized area
- Improve safety of the transportation system
- Protect the environment
- Coordinate among the member jurisdictions to provide a regional transportation system.

These goals and objectives become the foundation of the MPO’s work and serve as the basis for future planning work and other projects. Identification of these goals and objectives is important in planning for a high-growth area like the Cache Valley. In addressing the transportation need created by fast-paced growth, it is easy to lose focus on the region’s core priorities, and yet it is even more important in these times of great change that the community’s overall objectives be clear, focused, and attainable.

The Cache Valley is widely known for its quality of life. The strengths of the Cache Valley lie in its difference from other areas of the state; that it has a vibrant and healthy central business district, is a walkable community, and has a transit system that is a viable and well-used alternative to driving. However, these assets and this quality of life are also responsible for much of the population and employment growth in the region. The increasing demand on the transportation system that is created by this growing population forces the region to address both short and long-term transportation issues and solutions.

The solutions to transportation issues in the Cache region are multi-faceted and are a balance of several factors rather than a single-minded approach. While these factors include the more traditional solutions of additional highway capacity and increased highway spending, they also include expanded transit infrastructure and the providing of incentives to use alternative modes of transportation. Inherent in expanding transit infrastructure is looking at land uses that support and augment a transit system by providing appropriate density and/or suitable scale. While

these latter elements are less traditional ways to address transportation issues, they need to be recognized as important elements in the realm of transportation planning.

The chapters in this plan address both technical aspects of the transportation planning process as well as more theoretical discussions of land use and transportation planning concepts. The first several chapters of the document offer a more detailed examination of existing and future conditions in the region as well as a project list that will fulfill identified transportation needs. Initial chapters include a description of the Cache MPO region with respect to socioeconomic information, land use, modes of transportation, and freight and an assessment of future conditions based on projections of socioeconomic information. Project needs are developed based on anticipated future conditions and travel demand modeling results. A funding discussion is presented that begins to summarize future financial opportunities and constraints in paying for regional projects, and the project list is detailed by type, cost, and extent.

The latter part of the document provides a more conceptual discussion of the greater scope of transportation planning, including such elements as land use and alternative mode considerations, the planning factors identified in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), and how this document addresses the key principles and specific direction with respect to public involvement efforts.

Taken together, the individual elements of this planning document offer the Cache MPO a long range transportation plan that not only pragmatically addresses and prioritizes transportation facility needs, but also provides a visionary and conceptual document that begins to explore the ultimate vision of the Cache Valley transportation system and provides a mechanism by which leaders can move the Cache MPO to address, revisit, and update these and other issues in the future.