



CHAPTER 1: PROCESS, CONTEXT, ISSUES, AND KEY MESSAGES



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Introduction

The Mesa County region is a vibrant, bustling region situated on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains in far west Colorado along the Utah state line. It is the fourth largest and eleventh most populous of Colorado’s 64 counties. The region has a rich history, strong community character, major tourist attractions, significant environmental awareness, and a balanced economic base. It serves as a regional economic and

services center for the surrounding rural counties. As a result, the area has seen steady population and employment expansion for several decades and should continue this trend in the years to come.

To accommodate this future growth in an environmentally and economically sustainable fashion, transportation services and infrastructure are planned and coordinated through the regional transportation planning process carried out by the Grand Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (GVMPO) led by the Grand Valley Regional Transportation Committee (GVRTC) and supported by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Regional Transportation Plan Steering Committee. This document is a product of that planning process.

This **2035 Regional Transportation Plan for the Communities and Rural Areas of Mesa County** (RTP) is the long-range transportation plan for the Mesa County region and, although it covers the entire county, it is not a Mesa County process or document. The 2035 RTP is a regional plan for and by all of the communities and rural areas of Mesa County and is a product of the MPO. Its development is guided largely by the federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) legislation.

Among many other items, two of SAFETEA-LU’s most important requirements are that the long-range transportation plan be financially-constrained to available resources and that it be developed through a rigorous public process. After all, as presented in Chapter 4, *Financial Analysis and Funding Resources*, almost all of the funding for the region’s transportation system and services comes from the residents, businesses, developers, and visitors of the region.

Why do we need a plan?

For several obvious and some not-so-evident reasons, the Mesa County region needs a long-range transportation plan. As congestion increases on area roads due to growth, tourism, development, energy extraction, and more travel through the region, it is clear that the current roadway system will not be sufficient to accommodate future needs.

In addition, citizens of the region remain interested in alternative mode options, consistent with federal legislation and other efforts promoting their use.

Also, federal funds make up a significant portion of the region’s transportation dollars, but they come with strings. The federal government requires a long-range transportation plan for urbanized regions such as Mesa County to ensure proper expenditure of revenues and consideration of the community’s needs and desires.

Beyond any of these reasons, a long-range transportation plan just plain makes good sense. Good planning involves citizens, increases efficiency and effectiveness of the investment, and promotes transportation services and infrastructure that are consistent with the community’s desires. The planning process enhances the community’s character and quality of life by considering the interaction between land use and transportation and their cumulative effect on the built and natural environments.

The 2035 RTP identifies future transportation investments for all surface transportation modes. Although the region's mobility continues to be dominated by the automobile, other modes such as public transit, pedestrian, and bicycle transportation and have been and continue to be important means of travel. Aviation travel, railroads, trucks, and freight movement are also included in the planning process, but to a lesser extent.



As such, the 2035 RTP identifies specific services and projects for each mode of travel that will be necessary to meet the transportation needs of the region through 2035. Financial resources available to implement the 2035 RTP have also been estimated. Similar to virtually every community across the nation, anticipated revenues are not sufficient to fund all of the transportation needs. Therefore, projects have been prioritized and selected for implementation by 2035 so that the RTP represents a financially-constrained implementation plan as required by law. As allowed by law, the Plan also contains an analysis of potential funding options that may increase revenues for transportation as well as a list of illustrative projects and services that might be funded with additional revenues.

In this chapter, a discussion of the transportation planning process used to develop the 2035 RTP is presented along with specific requirements of the SAFETEA-LU legislation. Transportation goals and objectives are identified from the planning and public involvement efforts and a list of Key Messages was established as a product of the public input process. Evaluation criteria used to analyze and prioritize projects were developed based on the Key Messages.

The remainder of this **2035 Regional Transportation Plan for the Communities and Rural Areas of Mesa County** is arranged as follows:

- Chapter 2, *Community Involvement*, presents the efforts to involve the residents of the region in the three phases of the development of the 2035 RTP and the messages received through the various public input venues and media.
- In Chapter 3, *Growth in the Region*, the 2035 household and employment growth projections for the region are presented. Growth fuels the need for extension and improvement of the transportation system and mobility services.
- Chapter 4, *Financial Analysis and Funding Resources*, summarizes the costs of future transportation needs, how projects and programs are funded with available resources, and some funding options that could be considered at the local level to increase funding for transportation.
- In Chapter 5, the 2035 Regional *Non-Motorized Plan* is presented along with the alternatives evaluation process.
- Chapter 6 contains the 2035 Regional *Transit Plan*. Vision and Baseline transit scenarios and alternatives are identified as well as the process for developing the plan.
- Chapter 7 presents the 2035 *Roadway Plan* for the region along with the Vision and Baseline roadway scenarios, alternatives that were studied, evaluation criteria used to prioritize and select projects.

- The Multi-Modal Corridor Concepts are presented in Chapter 8. This includes all existing and future roadway, transit, and non-motorized improvements and corridor vision plans where they exist for more than 30 distinct corridors.
- Chapter 9, *Intermodal Transportation*, presents information about other transportation modes, including aviation, rail, freight/trucks, and intelligent transportation systems.
- Chapter 10, *Impacts of the Plan*, summarizes environmental justice, environmental impacts and mitigation, sustainable and livable communities, and other related issues.

Frequently Asked Questions About the Plan

Why Do We Need A Plan?

This process coordinates the regional transportation needs of the communities and rural areas of Mesa County. The Plan helps the region maintain its status as a Regional Service Center and primary economic engine for Mesa County and the Western Slope.

Who Prepared The Plan? Who Approves It?

Mesa County's Regional Transportation Planning Office (RTPO) coordinated the development of the Plan for the communities of Mesa County: including the communities of Grand Junction, Fruita, Collbran, De Beque, Palisade, Clifton, Gateway, Loma, Mack, Mesa, Whitewater, and of course Mesa County. The RTPO has been designated by the federal government as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) responsible for carrying out the long range transportation planning process. The RTP is approved by the Grand Valley Regional Transportation Committee (GVRTC), the policy body of the MPO.

What Area Does The Plan Cover?

The Plan covers all of Mesa County. More specifically, the Plan addresses transportation needs throughout Mesa County and to, from, and within the communities and rural areas of the county.

What Is The Timeframe Of The Plan?

The Plan specifies the transportation system and services in the region for the year 2035. However, the priorities established in the Plan will affect transportation and funding decisions right away. The federal requirement is that the Plan must be based on a point in time at least 20 years from when it is adopted, so 2035 was a logical time frame. Also, 2035 is consistent with the State's planning cycle.

What is the Metropolitan Planning Organization?

Metropolitan planning organizations carry out the regional transportation planning process in communities across the country. They are required under federal law for urbanized areas with more than 50,000 in population in order for those areas to receive federal transportation dollars.

The Grand Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (GVMPO) serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Mesa County region. Although transportation planning had been conducted for several decades previous, the Metropolitan Planning Organization was not designated as such until 1981. The Regional Transportation Planning Office (RTPO) of Mesa County provides staff support for the Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The 2035 RTP was developed through the planning process conducted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization. In addition to the long-range transportation plan, the Metropolitan Planning Organization is responsible for producing the region's transportation improvement program and annual work program.

Who pays for the Plan and the transportation system? Why should people care?

You do, that's why! The transportation system and services are funded through a combination of gasoline taxes, vehicle registration fees, some retail sales tax, and impact fees.

In other words, almost all of the funds used for transportation in the region can be traced back to the pockets of the residents, businesses, developers, and visitors of the region.

What travel modes are addressed in the Plan?

The 2035 Regional Transportation Plan brings together transportation, land use, and community issues in one process. The Plan identifies the future transportation needs of the region, what the region can afford, and how transportation projects will be prioritized for implementation.

The Plan directs transportation tax dollars into multi-modal (e.g., bike, pedestrian, transit, and roadway) transportation projects in the Mesa County region through an integrated transportation planning process.

The Plan examines not only transportation needs and solutions but also related issues such as land use, environmental, air quality, energy, intermodal, quality of life, funding, and other issues.



Planning Process and Context

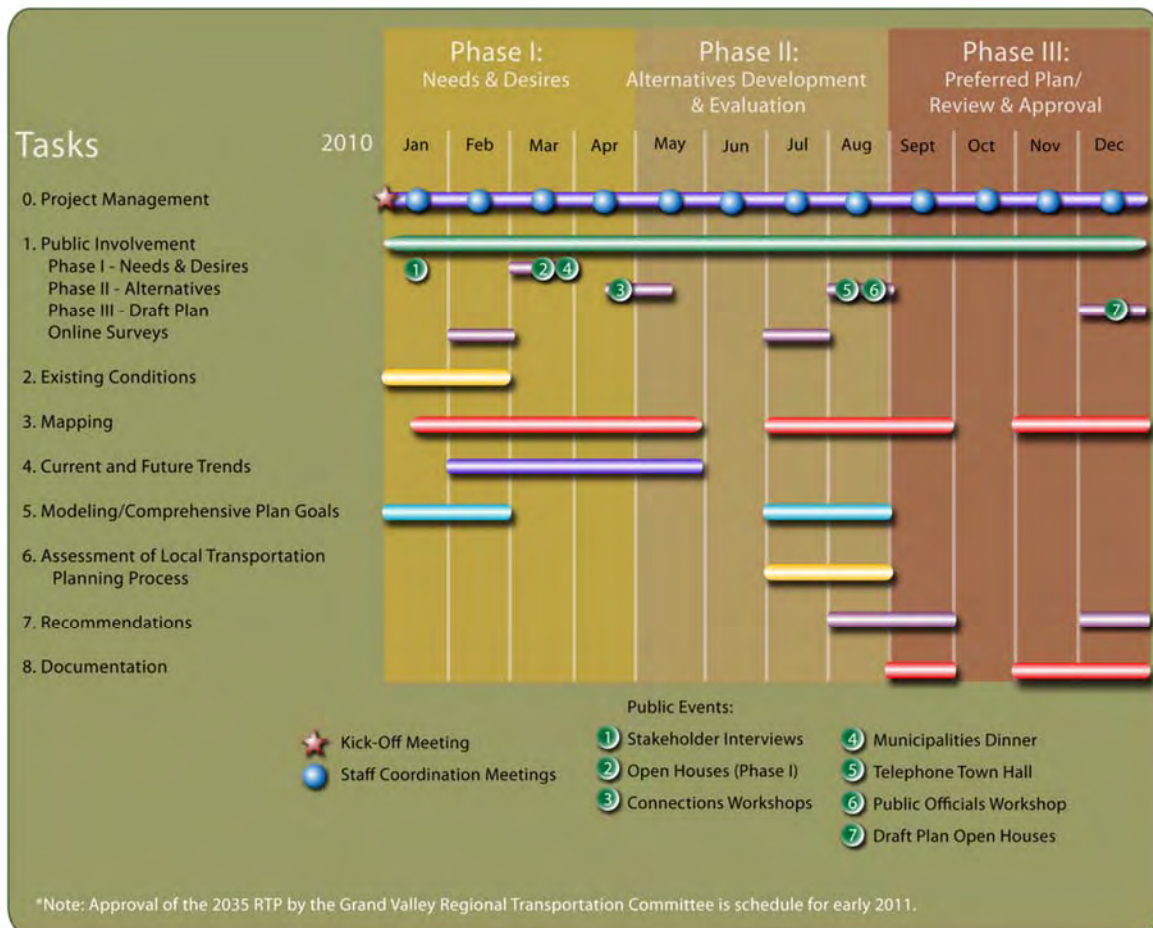
Plan Development and Approval Process

The 2035 RTP was developed through an open and collaborative planning process, complying with applicable government legislation and regulations. The Metropolitan Planning Organization’s approved Public Participation Plan provided the direction through which local public outreach and involvement occurred.

The 2035 RTP was developed through the oversight of the Metropolitan Planning Organization transportation planning committee structure, consisting of the GVRTC, TAC, and a RTP Steering Committee. The TAC and GVRTC committees review and adopt all Metropolitan Planning Organization products and plans. The RTP Steering Committee was formed specifically for the development of the Plan. The Steering Committee was made up of staff representatives from each jurisdiction in the region and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). In addition, CDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) review and comment on the RTP.

The development of the plan was conducted based on the schedule and process shown in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1: Schedule and Process for Developing the Regional Transportation Plan



Planning Area

Metropolitan Planning Organizations are required to develop long range transportation plans for the urban area and unincorporated areas under their jurisdiction which are expected to become urbanized during the 20–25 year planning period. In the Mesa County region, this includes the entirety of Mesa County to make for the 3,309 square mile Planning Area shown in Figure 1-2.

The 2035 Regional Transportation Plan charts future transportation improvements in the region, which includes the communities of Clifton, Collbran, De Beque, Fruita, Gateway, Glade Park, Grand Junction, Loma, Mesa, Mack, Palisade, Whitewater, and the rest of Mesa County.

Figure 1-2: Planning Area



Related Plans and Studies

The 2035 RTP is the current transportation plan for the Mesa County region. Like many planning documents, it incorporates and builds upon the concepts and recommendations from previous efforts, including the *2035 Regional Transportation Plan for Grand Junction and Mesa County* (January 2008).

Other land use and transportation plans conducted by the local jurisdictions, Metropolitan Planning Organization, CDOT, and other agencies contribute to the body of knowledge that supports the development of the 2035 RTP. Plans and studies related to the development and implementation of the *Plan* include the following:

Comprehensive Plans

- City of Fruita Community Plan (2008)
- City of Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan (2010)
- Town of Palisade Comprehensive Plan (2007)
- Mesa County Rural Master Plan
- Loma Community Plan
- Gateway Community Plan
- Mesa / Powderhorn Plan



Modal Plans and Corridor Studies

- I-70B Corridor Optimization Study (2004)
- U.S. 50 Access Control Plan - Final Report (2008)
- U.S. 6 Access Control Plan - Final Report (2008)
- City of Fruita Greenway Business Park Plan (2001)
- North Avenue West Corridor Plan (2010)
- 24 Road Corridor Subarea Plan and Corridor Design Standards
- Redlands Area Transportation Plan
- 2035 Transit & Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan (2010)
- Clifton Pedestrian Circulation Study
- Grand Valley Transit Onboard Survey (2010)

These plans are available from the Grand Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Many are located on the MPO's website.

Plan Elements: What is required in the Transportation Plan?

Several laws, regulations, statutes, codes and other documents at the local, state, and federal levels affect the development of the 2035 RTP by specifying requirements to be considered in the planning process or to be contained in the Plan. These include the SAFETEA-LU, which was signed into law in August 2005 and was recently extended through at least March 2011. This federal legislation generally follows the same framework established by Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act in 1991 and Transportation Efficiency Act-21 in 1998.

In addition to SAFETEA-LU, there are metropolitan planning regulations, management and monitoring system regulations, Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and others that affect the development of the 2035 RTP.

Of these, SAFETEA-LU provides the primary authoritative direction on the development of the 2035 RTP. Among the many environmental, funding, infrastructure, modal, safety, and other transportation-related provisions of the legislation, SAFETEA-LU continues the priorities of multi-modalism and intermodalism, intergovernmental and public/private partnerships, and system development and management that originated in previous legislation.

Some of the more significant planning elements are summarized below.

SAFETEA-LU Planning Factors

The eight SAFETEA-LU Planning Factors that must be addressed in the transportation plan include the following:

1. Support the **ECONOMIC VITALITY** of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
2. Increase the **SAFETY** of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the **SECURITY** of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
4. Increase the **ACCESSIBILITY** and **MOBILITY** of people and for freight.
5. 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.
6. Enhance the **INTEGRATION** and **CONNECTIVITY** of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
7. Promote efficient **SYSTEM MANAGEMENT** and operation.
8. Emphasize the **PRESERVATION** of the existing transportation system.



Sustainability

Sustainability is generally defined as actions that meet current needs in an efficient and financially viable manner without compromising the ability to meet those needs in the future. In the context of transportation, **sustainability** can be defined based on four areas of function and responsibility:

- Mobility and accessibility,
- Environmental stewardship,
- Social equity / quality of life, and
- Economic robustness.

Transportation improvements have historically been made to promote personal and freight **mobility**, access to work and other activities, and safety. In this manner, transportation is a major motivator of **economic development**.

In the past, many transportation improvements have also had requisite improvements in **air quality**, although some highway expansion projects could be thought of as counter to environmental objectives in the long term. Challenges remain and new challenges such as **global energy prices** and concerns with **greenhouse gas emissions** will likely need to be addressed to a greater degree in the future.

Social equity and quality of life can be enhanced by the transportation system through **access to jobs** and other activities via different travel modes. Bicycle and pedestrian projects can improve quality of life by provide **healthy recreational opportunities**. However, some transportation projects in the past have served to break up communities and others have morphed into congested corridors with poor access control where mobility, access, and safety are compromised.

Challenges remain, but it appears likely that **sustainability** will grow in importance as it is further integrated into the transportation planning process.

Livability

Livability is difficult to define because it means different things to different people. A home can be **livable**, as can a street, neighborhood, community, or region of the country. But what does it mean for transportation to be livable?

In terms of long range planning, transportation affects the livability of our **neighborhoods and communities** in both positive and negative ways. For example, six-lane arterial streets are difficult to cross for pedestrians, so their application should be **context-sensitive**. Areas of recreation such as parks and open space could be enhanced with a network of trails and sidewalks. Transportation is a key factor in **safe routes to schools**. These examples and many more demonstrate the potential impact of transportation on our surroundings.

In 2009, the DOT, HUD, and EPA Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities established six **livability principles**:

- Provide more transportation choices
- Promote equitable, affordable housing
- Enhance economic competitiveness
- Support existing communities
- Coordinate policies and leverage investment
- Value communities and neighborhoods

Environmental justice has long been a part of the transportation planning process which requires agencies to identify and address **disproportionately high and adverse impacts** on minority and low-income populations. Livability focuses on the potential positive impacts of the transportation system and not just the adverse impacts. In this manner, livability initiatives will advance the objectives that make our neighborhoods and communities **better places**.

Safety and Security

Safety can be defined as the condition of being protected against the consequences of failure, damage, error, or accidents. This can take the form of being protected from something that causes health or economical loss. It can include protection of people or of possessions.

Security is closely related to **safety** but also includes consideration of people who are trying to cause harm, such as terrorists and muggers.

Safety and **security** involve all aspects of the transportation system. Transportation infrastructure such as roads, trails/paths, transit centers, and bus stops are designed with the highest degree of safety reasonably available, but each of these can be conduits for people intending harm regardless of their design.

From a transportation standpoint, security includes **incident detection, avoidance, and response**. Passenger and cargo screening at airports and monitoring of transportation access to dams, nuclear facilities, and other potential terrorist targets are good examples of security counter-measures. Unfortunately, local transportation systems must also be considerate of security issues in this day and age. Transportation and other activity centers as well as bridges could be considered potential targets and should be designed and operated with this in mind.

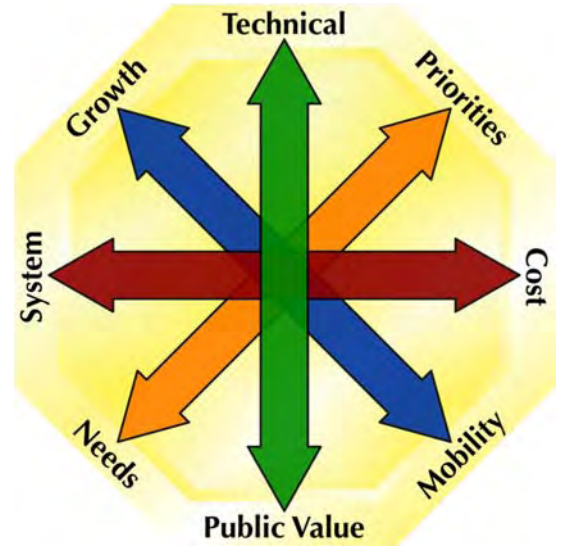
Inevitably, however, most transportation security issues in the Mesa County region are likely to be related to **personal safety**, so persons using the system should be aware of their surroundings and take responsibility for their personal safety while also being cognizant of potential security threats to infrastructure.

Project Listings

SAFETEA-LU identifies several categories of projects that are to be included for implementation over the life of a transportation plan. They are:

- Adopted congestion management strategies;
- Bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
- Transportation enhancement activities;
- Strategies for managing the transportation system; and
- Capital investments and other measures to preserve the existing transportation system.

A description of all proposed improvements in sufficient detail to develop cost estimates should accompany the project listings.



Financial Plan

SAFETEA-LU specifies that available revenues for implementation of transportation improvements over the life of the Plan must be developed through a cooperative effort between the Metropolitan Planning Organization, State, and transit operators. The cost estimates for the projects, strategies, and other transportation improvements contained in the 2035 RTP must be constrained to the forecasts of available revenues.

When this requirement was enacted several years ago, many communities around the country readily embraced the financial constraint philosophy. In this manner, transportation plans transformed from a wish list of projects that could not be implemented to meaningful plans with specific, identifiable transportation improvements.

Forecast Period

At a minimum, a transportation plan must be comprised of a 20-year planning horizon and be updated every five years. After its approval, the Metropolitan Planning Organization is allowed to make substantial changes to the *Plan* during the five-year window, but the 20-year forecast period must be maintained. Therefore, the 2035 RTP incorporates an approximately 25-year planning horizon in order to retain the ability to modify the *Plan* as necessary.

Public Involvement Process

Public involvement is a high priority in the transportation planning process and in the development of the 2035 RTP. The Metropolitan Planning Organization's Public Participation Plan reflects the region's approach to public involvement. It outlines a process that provides complete information, timely public notice, and full public access.

The poster features several call-to-action boxes:

- What's the timeframe?** The Plan will be completed by December 2010.
- Why do we need this?** This process will coordinate the regional transportation needs of the communities and rural areas of Mesa County.
- How can I voice my opinion?** Check out our website: www.2035RTP.com you can leave a comment, ask a question, and take the Connecting-Our-Communities Transportation Survey.
- How can I get more information?** Save the Dates! Connecting Our Communities Open House: Monday, March 22nd 4 - 7 PM, Fossil Town Hall, 127 E. Aspen St.; Tuesday, March 23rd 4 - 7 PM, Mesa County Courthouse Annex, 147 Grand Ave. in Grand Junction; Wednesday, March 24th 4 - 7 PM, Pullaule Out, 1220 W. 8th St.
- How can I make a difference?** Start by completing the Priorities Postcard. Visit the website to request one.
- What modes of travel will the Plan address?** Auto/highway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian are the primary modes emphasized in the Plan.
- Para obtener información en español, visite el sitio de Web:** www.2035RTP.com/Espanol o llame al 970-434-9886

 The poster also includes the website www.2035RTP.com and logos for MESA COUNTY and Grand Junction.

Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice provisions require agencies to take steps to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations through the development and implementation of the 2035 RTP. These requirements are addressed in Chapter 10, *Impacts of the Plan*.



Transportation Goals and Strategies

The Mesa County region has an established set of Transportation Goals and Strategies that were developed through previous iterations of the Regional Transportation Plan. During the development of the 2035 RTP, these goals and strategies were built upon through an extensive public involvement process and a list of Key Messages was prepared as discussed in Chapter 2. For easy reference, both the Transportation Goals and Strategies and the Key Messages are repeated here verbatim. The modal Evaluation Criteria emanated from the Key Messages so that the transportation planning process reflected community values while meeting the requirements of SAFETEA-LU federal legislation.

Goals

- Enhance Mobility
- Promote Economic Vitality
- Increase Safety
- Provide Transportation System Enhancements

Strategies

- Implement transportation plans that have recently been adopted (e.g. Clifton Transportation Study [2003], Grand Valley Circulation Plan [2005], the Clifton Pedestrian Study [2006], SH-340 Corridor Study and Access Control Plan [2004], and the SH-340 Feasibility Study [2006]).
- Implement the Multi-modal Study (1993) recommendations by requiring pedestrian-bicycle improvements in new developments and capital improvement projects as well as other transportation projects in accordance with Urban Trails Master Plan as amended over time.
- Incorporate bus stops at appropriate locations in new developments.
- Encourage in-fill development and discourage sprawl growth patterns.
- Adopt economic development policies which recruit diverse industry and support local businesses.
- Require new development to contribute its fair share to transportation system improvements and enhancements.
- Link transportation and land use planning and implementation.



- Provide the transportation system needed for business and industry expansion.
- Finance future transportation improvements through the continued sales tax dedication to capital improvements and roads and other transportation improvements.
- Land use proposals should be reviewed in conjunction with the County-wide transportation plan and require adequate right-of-way for multi-modal transportation.
- Continue to require improvement to roads by developers, and others who create the need for additional transportation improvements.
- Construct an additional 1-2 overpasses of the Colorado River and railroad tracks.
- Support, refine and expand the public transit system to meet public demand and expectations.
- Encourage open cooperation between the various aspects of transportation.
- Build easily used connections between all modes of transportation.



Private Sector Initiatives

- Provide convenient services throughout the valley, especially near work places.
- Encourage incentives for car pooling and mass transit usage (e.g., travel demand management).
- Redevelop low-functioning areas of the City/County (e.g. south downtown; south side of Patterson, east of Mall).
- Continue the Riverfront Park and trail development by expanding the Riverfront trails system from the east to west end of the valley.
- Provide employer incentives for carpooling, bike riding, public transit, and public transit and park and ride use.
- Encourage private enterprise to develop in harmony and in accordance with the overall comprehensive plan.
- Expand the Riverfront trails system from the east to west end of the valley.



Key Messages

The following key messages were developed based on the entire body of evidence from the public outreach efforts in Phase I and from the planning factors from SAFETEA-LU. The Key Messages are important because they establish the direction for the work effort to develop the **2035 Regional Transportation Plan**. For example, the evaluation criteria used to measure and compare the benefits of alternative transportation solutions is based on the Key Messages.

- **Maximize Efficiency:** The transportation system should perform very well in terms of **mobility and accessibility** while also minimizing the use of resources such as time and money. Transportation investments should balance overall effectiveness with costs: in other words, the improvements with the best cost/benefit ratios should be pursued.
- **Maintenance and Safety of the Existing System:** The existing roadway system is the highest transportation priority and should be maintained as a significant investment in the **economic viability and quality of life** of County residents. Maintenance improvements inherently provide safety benefits, another high priority of County residents.
- **Environment:** While the environment is important, the Regional Transportation Plan should strike a balance between roadway needs, costs, and **impacts on the built and natural environments**. The Plan should reflect that many transportation improvements have a positive impact on some environmental factors such as air and water quality.
- **Economic Vitality:** The transportation system should be planned, maintained, and constructed in a manner that **supports access to jobs for workers**; access to shopping and services; and the safe and efficient movements of goods to, from, and within the region. It should support retail, medical, education, technology, oil/gas extraction, recreation, and other important economic sectors.
- **Funding:** Transportation revenues are shrinking in relation to needs. Roadway maintenance typically consumes a major portion of our transportation funds and needs to be further increased to keep up. **New growth should pay for itself** and not be funded through taxes. Additional local funding options should be considered.
- **Gas Prices and Energy Costs:** Fuel **costs are expected to increase** in the future and will have a significant effect on land use, transportation, quality of life, and other factors.
- **Community Character:** The Regional Transportation Plan should maintain the character of the existing communities and rural areas by enhancing walk, bike, and horse modes and applying **context sensitive solutions** for roadway capacity. New developments should accommodate bicycle, walking, and transit needs as appropriate. The Plan should support the land use plans and special features of the local comprehensive plans.



- **Modal Balance:** In order to provide choice and transportation mobility for youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, and others, future investments in the transportation system should **accommodate alternative modes** although the automobile and streets/highways will continue to be the primary mode of transportation for the foreseeable future.
- **Regional Connections:** People throughout the region will need to be connected to the urban areas and recreational opportunities. The rural communities are growing quickly and **will face unique transportation problems**, such as a rural road transportation system with maintenance and improvement needs that strain the local community's ability to fund them. Connections between communities will benefit from multi-modal investments that provide more opportunities for bicycle and transit use and increase the roadway safety and capacity as necessary.
- **Travel Time Efficiency and New Road Construction:** Congestion in the County is acceptable at this time, but will get worse especially with growth and vehicle miles of **travel outpacing roadway construction**. Travel time is important, but should be balanced with other considerations such as maintenance and safety.
- **Aging of the Population:** People in the Mesa County region are growing older, with the **fastest growing segment over age 65**. This will increase the number of people with special transportation needs.
- **Downtown Areas:** The downtown areas of local communities **are important activity centers** that should receive investment to maintain a strong and vibrant core. Walkability, parking, housing, and bicycle and transit accessibility issues should be considered.



Evaluation Criteria

The Plan’s goals and key messages tend to be somewhat lofty and open to interpretation. However, these important statements along with SAFETEA-LU’s eight planning factors establish the direction of the Plan’s development. As such, they must be considered in the Plan’s development and included in the analysis to the extent possible. One of the most basic ways to do this is to develop evaluation criteria that effectively implement the policy statements. Table 1-1 shows the relationships between the evaluation criteria, planning factors, and Key Messages. Chapters 5 to 7 contain additional information on the definition and application of the non-motorized, transit, and roadway criteria, respectively.

Table 1-1: Evaluation Criteria

		Roadway				Transit				Bicycle / Pedestrian				
		Efficiency	Effectiveness	Cost Effectiveness	Air Quality / Emissions	Mobility / Congestion Relief	System Quality	Environment	Local Commitment / Connectivity	Potential Use	Safety	System Quality	Environment	Local Commitment / Local Plan Consistency
SAFETEA-LU Planning Factors														
1	Support the ECONOMIC VITALITY of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.	☒	☒	☒		☒	☒		☒	☒		☒		☒
2	Increase the SAFETY of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.						☒		☒		☒	☒		☒
3	Increase the SECURITY of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.						☒		☒		☒	☒		☒
4	Increase the ACCESSIBILITY and MOBILITY of people and for freight.	☒	☒	☒			☒		☒			☒		☒
5	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.	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒		☒	☒	☒
6	Enhance the INTEGRATION and CONNECTIVITY of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.	☒	☒	☒		☒	☒		☒	☒		☒		☒
7	Promote efficient SYSTEM MANAGEMENT and operation.	☒	☒	☒			☒		☒			☒		☒

		Roadway				Transit				Bicycle / Pedestrian				
		Efficiency	Effectiveness	Cost Effectiveness	Air Quality / Emissions	Mobility / Congestion Relief	System Quality	Environment	Local Commitment / Connectivity	Potential Use	Safety	System Quality	Environment	Local Commitment / Local Plan Consistency
8	Emphasize the PRESERVATION of the existing transportation system.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Key Messages														
1	Maximize Efficiency: The transportation system should perform very well in terms of mobility and accessibility while also minimizing the use of resources such as time and money. Transportation investments should balance overall effectiveness with costs: in other words, the improvements with the best cost/benefit ratios should be pursued.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2	Maintenance and Safety of the Existing System: The existing roadway system is the highest transportation priority and should be maintained as a significant investment in the economic viability and quality of life of County residents. Maintenance improvements inherently provide safety benefits, another high priority of County residents.						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3	Environment: While the environment is important, the Regional Transportation Plan should strike a balance between roadway needs, costs, and impacts on the built and natural environments. The Plan should reflect that many transportation improvements have a positive impact on some environmental factors such as air and water quality.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4	Economic Vitality: The transportation system should be planned, maintained, and constructed in a manner that supports access to jobs for workers; access to shopping and services; and the safe and efficient movements of goods to, from, and within the region. It should support retail, medical, education, technology, oil/gas extraction, recreation, and other important economic sectors.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**CHAPTER 1:
PROCESS, CONTEXT, ISSUES, AND KEY MESSAGES**

		Roadway				Transit				Bicycle / Pedestrian				
		Efficiency	Effectiveness	Cost Effectiveness	Air Quality / Emissions	Mobility / Congestion Relief	System Quality	Environment	Local Commitment / Connectivity	Potential Use	Safety	System Quality	Environment	Local Commitment / Local Plan Consistency
5	Funding: Transportation revenues are shrinking in relation to needs. Roadway maintenance typically consumes a major portion of our transportation funds and needs to be further increased to keep up. New growth should pay for itself and not be funded through taxes. Additional local funding options should be considered.			☒										
6	Gas Prices and Energy Costs: Fuel costs are expected to increase in the future and will have a significant effect on land use, transportation, quality of life, and other factors.	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒		☒		☒			☒	
7	Community Character: The Regional Transportation Plan should maintain the character of the existing communities and rural areas by enhancing walk, bike, and horse modes and applying context sensitive solutions for roadway capacity. New developments should accommodate bicycle, walking, and transit needs as appropriate. The Plan should support the land use plans and special features of the local comprehensive plans.	☒				☒	☒		☒	☒		☒		☒
8	Modal Balance: In order to provide choice and transportation mobility for youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, and others, future investments in the transportation system should accommodate alternative modes although the automobile and streets/highways will continue to be the primary mode of transportation for the foreseeable future.					☒				☒				
9	Regional Connections: People throughout the region will need to be connected to the urban areas and recreational opportunities. The rural communities are growing quickly and will face unique transportation problems, such as a rural road transportation system with maintenance and improvement needs that strain the local community's ability to fund them. Connections between communities	☒	☒	☒		☒				☒				

		Roadway				Transit				Bicycle / Pedestrian				
		Efficiency	Effectiveness	Cost Effectiveness	Air Quality / Emissions	Mobility / Congestion Relief	System Quality	Environment	Local Commitment / Connectivity	Potential Use	Safety	System Quality	Environment	Local Commitment / Local Plan Consistency
	will benefit from multi-modal investments that provide more opportunities for bicycle and transit use and increase the roadway safety and capacity as necessary.													
10	Travel Time Efficiency and New Road Construction: Congestion in the County is acceptable at this time, but will get worse especially with growth and vehicle miles of travel outpacing roadway construction. Travel time is important, but should be balanced with other considerations such as maintenance and safety.					☒				☒				
11	Aging of the Population: People in the Mesa County region are growing older, with the fastest growing segment over age 65. This will increase the number of people with special transportation needs.					☒	☒			☒	☒			
12	Downtown Areas: The downtown areas of local communities are important activity centers that should receive investment to maintain a strong and vibrant core. Walkability, parking, housing, and bicycle and transit accessibility issues should be considered.	☒												

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