

5-COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY



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Preliminary DRAFT Recommendations

Themes

The 5-County Regional Transportation Study has included extensive public involvement and stakeholder meetings as well as analysis of transportation data and trends. From this input and analysis, five primary themes emerged and have been used to guide the study recommendations.

1. Create a multi-modal transportation system that provides choice and supports the economic vitality of the region.
2. Focus on moving people and freight rather than on moving vehicles.
3. Invest in a transportation system that promotes the region's long-range vision and community goals and objectives.
4. Seek to maximize the vitality of social, economic and environmental systems when making transportation investments.
5. Maintain and invest in the existing transportation system.

Vision

The following vision statement, describes the desires for the 5-County transportation system.

“The five-county transportation system should

- *Be a seamless system allowing the user the choice to utilize multiple modes of transportation in a single trip.*
- *Efficiently move people and goods.*
- *Support a strong regional economy.*
- *Be safe and reliable.*
- *Be financially efficient and affordable for agencies and users.*
- *Enhance the environment.*
- *Improve public health.*
- *Enable all people access to good jobs, education and training, needed services, and recreational and community attractions.*
- *Allow every citizen to participate fully in society whether or not they own a car and regardless of age, ability, ethnicity, or income.*
- *Enhance the quality, livability and character of communities and support revitalization without displacement.*

Desired Outcomes

The following statements describe the desired outcomes of the vision in more detail.

Choice: Invest in a multi-modal transportation system that maintains our existing primarily roadway system but also allows individuals the choice of using other modes of transportation such as sharing a ride, using public transportation, bicycling, or walking. Support the independence of persons with disabilities through transportation investments.

Mobility: Move people and goods in an efficient manner where they want to go, when they want to go. Focus on minimizing person delay across modes rather than focusing exclusively on minimizing vehicle delay.

Safety: Reduce accident rates, crash rates, severity of crashes (fatalities, serious injury accidents), and reduce conflict points. Improve the perception of safety and user-confidence.

Efficient Use of Resources: Evaluate the affordability of transportation investments by considering the initial investment to plan, design and construct; the life-cycle costs to maintain and operate; and the economic benefits to the community. Enhance and maintain the existing transportation system.

Environment: Rather than mitigate the impacts upon the environment, transportation system investments should seek to enhance air and water quality, reduce climate impacts and the region's carbon footprint, and protect high priority natural resources.

Public Health: Reduce the impacts to public health by improving traffic safety, improving air quality, promoting physical activity and fitness, increasing community cohesion, improving access to medical services and increasing transportation affordability.

Regional Prosperity: Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers as well as expanded business access to markets. Provide access to system, facilities and modes. Support sustainable economic development through transportation investments.

Social Equity: Consider the investment benefits and impacts on all population groups within communities. Strengthen civil rights through transportation investments. Create jobs through transportation investments. Minimize personal transportation expenses in ways that support wealth creation. Look for opportunities to employ economically disadvantaged persons in the development of the transportation system.

Livability: Integrate transportation system with the community desires. Balance mobility goals with livability of the community including social equity.

Strategies & Recommendations

The following recommended strategies if implemented should result in the desired outcomes and transportation vision described. These recommendations were developed through an extensive public participation process. They are primarily the product of the four working groups and the Stakeholder Advisory Panel. The strategy recommendations are listed below. Each key strategy has a series of recommendations listed below them that describe the action steps needed to implement the strategy.

The key strategies are:

1. Investment -- Make sustainable transportation investments.
2. Planning -- Link transportation, land use, and environmental planning through a more collaborative and integrated planning process and approach.
3. Innovation -- Think beyond traditional concepts when addressing transportation issues. Anticipate future needs, trends and technologies. Employ innovation and technologies to meet these needs.
4. Multi-Modal -- Increase investment in a multimodal transportation system that connects people and communities and provides for the efficient movement of goods in the 5-County region.

Investment Strategy: Make sustainable transportation investments.

The term “cost-benefit” could mean different things to different people. It is recommended that costs and benefits be identified considering environmental, social, and economic costs, i.e. triple bottom line. The triple bottom line approach is considered a sustainable approach to decision-making. Making sustainable investments means to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The 5 County Region is urban, suburban and rural which may require a better understanding and consideration of a wider range of factors than those applied statewide and a multi-dimensional strategy. Now more than ever, long-term stewardship of resources should be the focus.

Planning Strategy: Link Transportation, Land Use, and Environmental planning through a more collaborative and integrated planning process and approach.

The transportation system can help shape our community as well as service it. One of the major themes is to invest in a transportation system that supports the region’s long-range vision, and community goals and objectives. Often, the land use and transportation planning processes are not well coordinated or integrated. This is because local planning/community development agencies are primarily responsible for land use planning and local public works agencies and KDOT are responsible for planning, building, operating, and maintaining the transportation system. Transportation and land use coordination is particularly important with locating major developments that generate high amounts of traffic. A second planning strategy involves how environmental factors are considered in transportation project development. Typically, environmental considerations for transportation projects are identified late in the planning process and focus on mitigating harm rather than enhancing the

environment, public health, and social equity. The following recommendations will better link land use, environmental and transportation planning:

Innovation Strategy: Think beyond traditional concepts when addressing transportation issues. Anticipate future needs, trends, and technologies. Employ innovation and technologies to meet these future needs.

One theme identified through the planning process was that the transportation system should focus on moving people and freight rather than on moving vehicles. The approach of adding capacity to reduce congestion is expensive and often supports a cycle of additional traffic growth followed by further capacity increases. Other more innovative and perhaps cost-effective options are recommended for consideration during project scoping.

Multimodal Strategy: Invest in a multimodal transportation system that connects people and communities in the 5-County Study area.

The demand and desire to invest in more of a multi-modal transportation system was identified as a need during this study. There were many reasons given including: with the higher fuel prices experienced during the summer of 2008, many people looked for options to travel in personal automobiles; some segments of the region's population are transit-dependent and need a more robust transit system; transit and bicycle use are more environmentally friendly; and, part of livability is affordability – transportation costs are reduced with non-automobile mode options.

When gas prices went up, many people changed their travel habits by combining trips, car-pooling and using public transportation. When prices went back down, many continued with these practices. Some feel gas prices will go up again and that there is great uncertainty about the future of fossil fuels and energy in the United States. One of the major themes is to create a multi-modal transportation system that provides choice, freedom and supports the economic vitality of the region.