

# INTRODUCTION





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Metropolitan transportation planning is a cooperative, comprehensive, and continuous (“3-C”) process. This process is conducted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), in coordination with Texas and New Mexico Departments of Transportation (DOTs), transit operators, numerous stakeholders from throughout the region, and the public to create a vision for the future of the community.

This 3-C process, which is prescribed by federal regulations, is designed to assist the MPO in prioritizing short- and long-term investments in the regional transportation system over the next 28 years through a proactive public participation process that involves all users of the transportation system.

This document is an update to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) – also known as Regional Mobility Strategy (RMS) 2050 MTP - for the years 2022-2050. The El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization (EPMPO) initiated this update in March 2020 with a presentation to the Transportation Policy Board.

RMS 2050 MTP builds upon local planning documents and performance-based analysis including the Congestion Management Process adopted in November of 2019 and the Regional Mobility Strategy (RMS) developed by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) El Paso District in cooperation with the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization, completed in December 2019.

RMS began in 2018 as an exercise among various stakeholders and partner agencies to help define the future of our region mobility, livability and economic development. RMS 2019 focused on the binational metropolitan area (referred to by some) as the borderplex which includes Ciudad Juarez,

Chihuahua, Mexico; Las Cruces, New Mexico; as well as municipalities inside El Paso County.



The planning area for the RMS 2050 MTP encompasses the entirety of El Paso County, Texas, as well as portions of Doña Ana and Otero Counties in New Mexico. **Figure 1-1** shows the boundary of the MPO study area, as well as the location of population centers, major transportation facilities, and major environmental features within the MPO study area.

## METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

With the passage of the Federal Highway Act of 1962, all major cities within the United States were required to adopt an MTP to guide the long-term development of the transportation system. The Act established specific rules and regulations for carrying out the long-range transportation planning process and required the formation of MPOs for any urbanized area (UZA) with a population greater than 50,000. Under federal regulations, MPOs are responsible for carrying out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C) planning process, in cooperation with the state and local governments, to develop the MTP and determine how best to invest federal transportation funding in the region.



## LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY FOR THE MTP

Following passage of the Federal Highway Act of 1962, Congress has passed a series of surface transportation bills that have continued to require MPOs to develop a metropolitan transportation plan to be eligible for federal funding. The most recent surface transportation legislation was the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), which was passed in 2015. The RMS 2050 MTP was developed in compliance with this legislation.

## EL PASO MPO

The El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization is the organization designated by the Governor of Texas on August 30, 1988 as being responsible, together with the state, for carrying out the provisions of 23 USC §134, 59 USC §5303 (Metropolitan Transportation Planning) and 23 CFR 450.300 et seq. (Metropolitan Transportation

Planning and Programming) and is established pursuant to those same US Codes. The MPO is the forum for cooperative decision making by principal elected officials of general-purpose local governments, in the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA).

## TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD

Elected and appointed officials comprise the Transportation Policy Board (TPB), which is responsible for approving and adopting all the transportation planning activities and programs of the MPO. The TPB was established in 1973 to meet federal requirements. Membership of the TPB is governed by agreement between the affected local governments and the governors of Texas and New Mexico and is reviewed periodically to ensure adequate representation of all parties. Membership consists of 30 voting members, with representatives from the following member agencies as detailed below:





TITLE/REPRESENTATION	CURRENT REPRESENTATION BY
<b>TEXAS</b>	
Town of Anthony - Mayor	Benjamin Romero
City of El Paso - Mayor	Oscar Leeser
City of El Paso - Grant Funded Program Director	Yvette Hernandez
City of El Paso - City Manager	Tommy Gonzalez
City of El Paso - District 3 Representative	Cassandra Hernandez
City of El Paso - District 7 Representative	Henry Rivera
City of El Paso - District 8 Representative	Cissy Lizarraga
City of El Paso - Mass Transit Department Director	Ellen Smyth
Town of Clint - Alderman	Esteban Olivas
El Paso County Commissioner Precinct 3	Iliana Holguin
El Paso County - Public Works Director	Norma Palacios
El Paso County - County Judge	Ricardo Samaniego (V-Chair)
Town of Horizon City - Alderman 1	Walter L. Miller (Chair)
City of San Elizario - Mayor	Antonio Araujo
City of Socorro - District 3 Representative	Rudy Cruz Jr.
Village of Vinton - Mayor	Manuel Leos
Texas State Senator 29th District	César Blanco
Texas State Representative 75th District	Mary E. Gonzalez
Texas State Representative 76th District	Claudia Ordaz-Perez
Texas State Representative 77th District	Lina Ortega
Texas State Representative 78th District	Joe Moody
Texas State Representative 79th District	Art Fierro
El Paso International Airport - Director of Aviation Development	Sam Rodriguez
TxDOT-El Paso District - District Engineer	Tomas Trevino
<b>NEW MEXICO</b>	
City of Anthony - Mayor	Diana M. Trujillo
Doña Ana County - County Commissioner District 5	Manuel Sanchez
City of Sunland Park - Mayor	Javier Perea
New Mexico State Representative 53rd District	Willie Madrid
New Mexico State Senator 31st District	Joseph Cervantes
New Mexico DOT District 1 - District Engineer	Trent Doolittle



## TRANSPORTATION PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Transportation Project Advisory Committee (TPAC) serves in an advisory role to the Transportation Policy Board (TPB) and is responsible for professional and technical review of work programs, policy recommendations, and transportation planning activities. Membership consists of 16 voting members who are local and state technical and professional personnel knowledgeable in the transportation field.

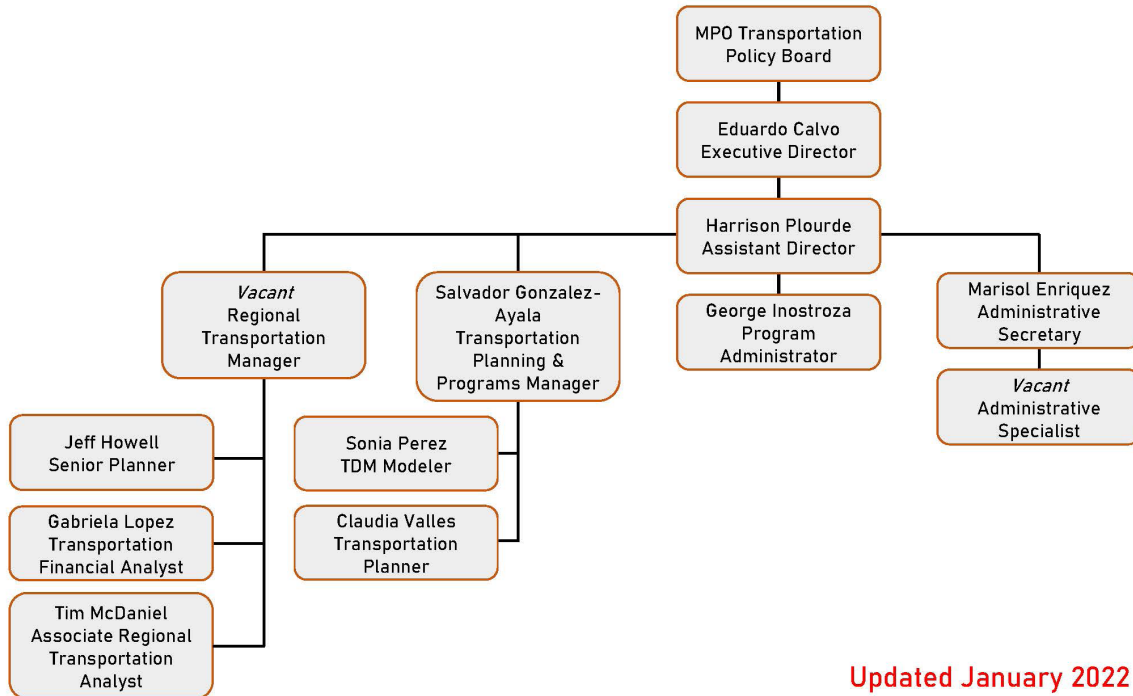


TITLE/REPRESENTATION	CURRENT REPRESENTATION BY
<b>TEXAS</b>	
Town of Anthony	Benjamin Romero
City of El Paso	Yvette Hernandez
Sun Metro	Claudia K. Garcia
Town of Clint	Dino Coronado
Town of Horizon City	Michelle Garcia
City of Socorro	Ivy Avalos
Village of Vinton	Santos Lucero
City of San Elizario	Maya Sanchez (V-Chair)
El Paso County	Jose M. Landeros (Chair)
Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT)	Marty Boyd
Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo	Evaristo Cruz
University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP)	Greg McNicol
<b>NEW MEXICO</b>	
City of Anthony	Gloria K. Ramirez
City of Sunland Park	Hector Rangel
Doña Ana County	Valerie Sherman
New Mexico DOT	Harold Love



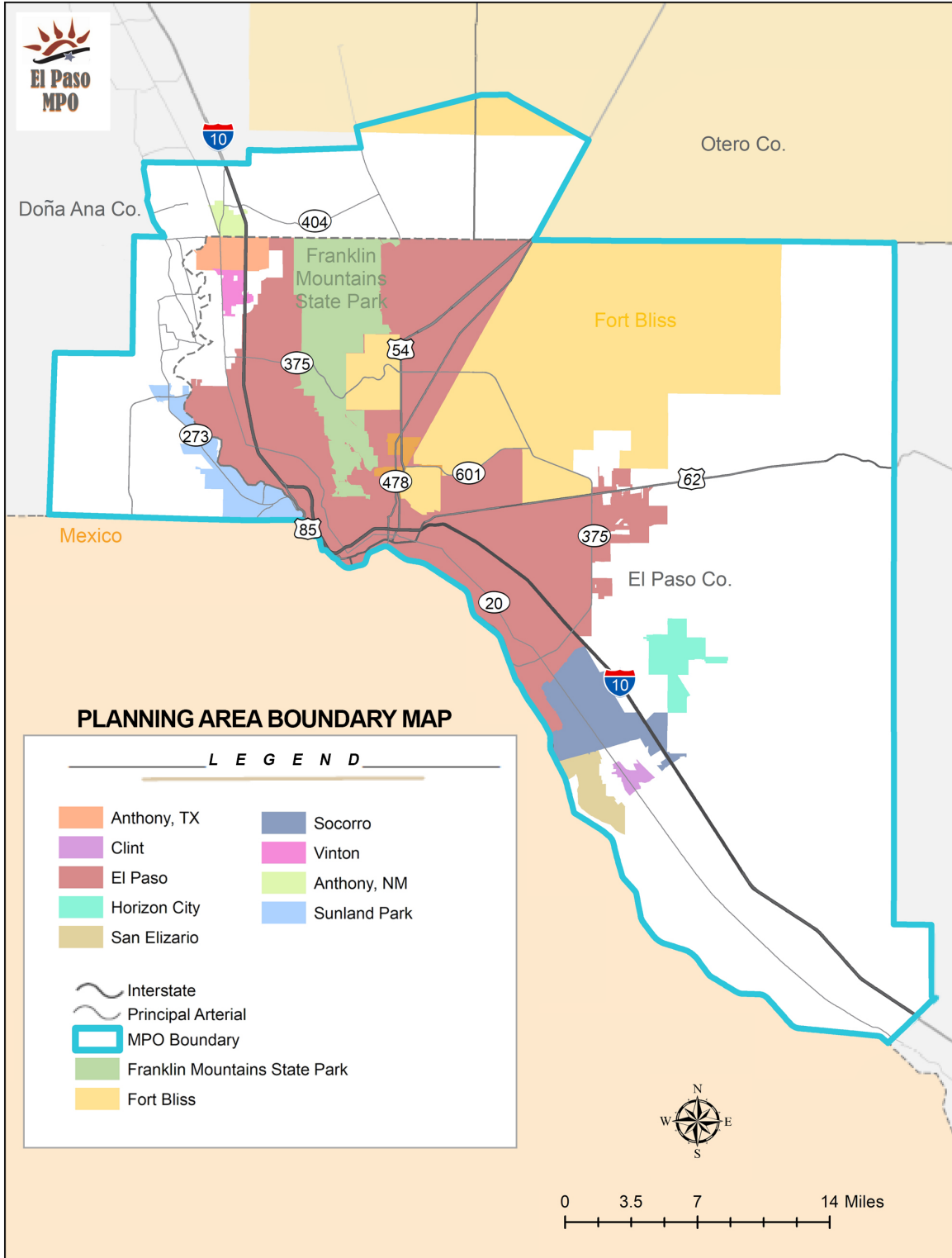
## EPMPO STAFF

TITLE/POSITION	NAME
Executive Director	Eduardo Calvo
Assistant Director	Harrison Plourde
Transportation Planning & Programs Manager	Salvador Gonzalez-Ayala
TDM Modeler	Sonia Perez
Transportation Planner	Claudia Valles
Regional Transportation Manager	<i>Vacant</i>
Transportation Financial Analyst	Gabriela Lopez
Associate Regional Transportation Analyst	Tim McDaniel
Senior Planner	Jeff Howell
Program Administrator	George Inostroza
Administrative Secretary	Marisol Enriquez
Administrative Specialist	<i>Vacant</i>



Updated January 2022

FIGURE 1-1: EPMPO PLANNING AREA





## MTP PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process used for the creation of the RMS 2050 MTP is prescribed by state and federal regulations, but the vision that drives the process is developed locally. This MTP visioning process, therefore, focused on gathering locally generated plans and information, as well as the knowledge and wisdom of the local community, while following the state and federal guidelines that direct the general planning process. The El Paso MPO is responsible for programming regional transportation projects for implementation using federal transportation funding. The MTP provides a framework for analyzing the current and future regional travel demand and creating a blueprint for addressing the future transportation needs within the El Paso Urbanized Area.



## VISIONING PROCESS

The purpose of the MTP is to identify the transportation needs of the community over the next 28 years, establish priorities for funding those improvements, and chart a course for meeting the community's identified transportation needs. Establishing a community vision for the future of the transportation system and related goals to assist in the prioritization of transportation improvements is key to ensuring the plan reflects community values. Input from key stakeholders and members of the public was solicited early and continuously throughout the development of the plan.

The process for updating the EPMPPO Long Range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) was initiated by a public comment period and online workshops. Pursuant to recent actions taken by Texas Governor Greg Abbott that suspended certain open meeting requirements due to COVID-19, two live workshops were conducted online. In addition, an on-demand workshop was accessible at the MPO website as well as an online survey available for download. The public visioning workshop and online activity results are presented in Chapter 2. An overview of the workshop and all the questions may be found in Appendix E.

The purpose of these workshops was to gather data and input on community needs and values in order to establish a framework for MTP development. Using this information, the MPO drafted a recommended vision, set of goals, and a list of evaluation criteria to assist in prioritizing transportation improvements for inclusion in the MTP.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

To develop feasible and beneficial transportation solutions, it is imperative to assess the current state of the transportation system, as well as





community growth trends. For the RMS 2050 MTP, three main assessments were developed to help identify the future regional transportation needs: a) Regional Mobility Strategy –RMS 2019, b) Multimodal Network Evaluation and c) Segment Performance Analysis.

The Regional Mobility Strategy established a transportation vision for the El Paso region. The ultimate objective was to identify individual concepts and ideas that can be translated into formal projects and transition these into the MPO process for future development and implementation.

The Multimodal Network Evaluation identified safety and connectivity gaps that can help guide where capital improvements to the roadway network can have an immediate impact toward improving multimodal travel networks where they are used the most. This evaluation also identified multimodal-supportive projects among those recently proposed by TxDOT, NMDOT and local governments for inclusion in the RMS 2050 MTP. It should be noted that the gaps identified do not represent the only places where the multimodal network should be improved, but instead prioritize where initial investments can be made to address the most immediate needs.

The Segment Performance Analysis was developed as part of the ongoing analysis required to support the Congestion Management Process (CMP). Based on the CMP definition of congestion, the identified congested segments were analyzed utilizing the required performance measures in accordance with the Transportation Performance Management (TPM) guidance. The change in congestion levels and the impact of these on passenger hours of delay and emissions were evaluated and completed or potential projects along the congested segments were identified.

## TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

The next step in the planning process was to identify potential strategies to consider for addressing regional transportation needs.

## CONGESTION MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Building new facilities will not address all identified transportation needs. Not only is building new roadways expensive and funding limited, but some identified needs are best addressed by strategies that reduce demand and improve the operational efficiency of the existing transportation system. Therefore, the MTP planning process included consideration of preservation of the existing system through preventative and rehabilitative maintenance; the inclusion of access management strategies; and the incorporation of Travel Demand Management (TDMg) and Transportation System Management and Operations (TSMO) strategies. From the wide range of available strategies, some examples of the strategies that fit the character of our region are: bicycle connectivity infrastructure improvements, incident management/traffic surveillance and control systems, advanced traveler information systems, public transportation strategies such as Transit Service Enhancements, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Park-and-Ride as well as access management strategies such as conversion of streets from one-way to two-way streets to help increase mobility.

As part of RMS 2050 strategy considerations, two alternative scenarios were analyzed to explore ways to reduce the percent of single occupancy vehicles (SOV) and increase non-SOV usage. These scenarios combine proposed High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes along major roadways and a robust network of interconnected BRT routes. But as important as the infrastructure is, the exercise also included the element of land use densification.

## PROJECT IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Once the congestion mitigation strategies were considered, potential projects to expand or build new facilities were examined. The following were combined to develop a list of candidate projects for further analysis:

- results of technical reviews,
- available planning studies,
- highway and corridor studies,
- consultation with local traffic engineers, planners, and other stakeholders,
- a call for transportation projects,
- the results of the travel demand model\* analysis.

Proposed projects were then coded into the travel demand model and tested to determine what impact they might have on addressing identified congestion and transportation system needs. Non-highway projects were also analyzed to determine what impact they would have on addressing deficiencies, using a combination of existing data, forecasts, and professional judgment.

Traffic volume, volume-to-capacity, and travel delay information provided by the travel demand model were used in conjunction with the weighted qualitative measures developed through the public visioning process to inform TPAC.

*\*A travel demand model is a statistical analysis tool that uses elements such as roadway and transit networks, population, and employment data to calculate the expected demand for transportation facilities.*

The ranked evaluation criteria and community goals developed through the visioning process was presented to the TPAC during their project selection process to ensure that community priorities were included in the final list of recommended projects.





## SYSTEMS-LEVEL ANALYSIS

System level analyses examined how the candidate projects impact community issues that are of system and region-wide concern. This planning approach allowed for prioritization of transportation investments based on broader community issues in accordance with the community's vision.

## AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY ANALYSIS

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, a portion of El Paso County is designated as a National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) non-attainment area for particulate matter (PM-10) and limited maintenance area for Carbon Monoxide (CO), and El Paso County non-attainment for Ozone (O3). This designation requires the MPO to conduct a more thorough air-quality conformity analysis of the proposed projects included in the MTP. This analysis uses outputs from the travel demand model to populate an air quality model that estimates levels of different pollutants at discrete future year benchmarks over the planning horizon of the MTP.

On November 17, 2021, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) completed its review of certain area designations for the 2015 ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) in response to a July 10, 2020, decision by the District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals. EPA completed its response by expanding the initial nonattainment boundaries for the area of Doña Ana County (Sunland Park Area) by expanding the area. The nonattainment area now includes all of El Paso County, Texas and has been renamed El Paso-Las Cruces, Texas-New Mexico area and classified as marginal nonattainment. Therefore, the RMS 2050 MTP is required to maintain compliance with the 2015 Ozone rule.

The MTP is a long-range planning document and is reviewed and updated every four years for areas designated as non-attainment. Each iteration provides a chance to reassess conditions and ensure that the plan remains consistent with the desires and needs of the region as it changes over time.

## COORDINATION WITH LOCAL PLANS AND PROGRAMS

Ensuring that proposed improvements are consistent with local programs, plans, and their goals and objectives, as well as supporting local values and preserving existing community resources is of vital importance to the MTP development. As part of RMS 2050 strategy considerations, two alternative scenarios were analyzed to explore ways to reduce the percent of single occupancy vehicles (SOV) and increase non-SOV usage. These scenarios combine proposed High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes along major roadways and a robust network of interconnected BRT routes. But as important as the infrastructure is, the exercise also included the element of land use densification.



Source: El Paso CVB via [visitelpaso.org](http://visitelpaso.org)

## FINANCIAL ANALYSIS AND CONSTRAINT

Fiscal feasibility is a significant priority in determining the final list of improvements. Not only does federal legislation mandate that the MTP be fiscally constrained and only include projects that can reasonably be expected to have adequate funding, but certain projects also require that area communities contribute local matching funds to receive federal funding. The process for establishing both estimated costs and revenues is critical for the creation of a viable MTP.

## REVENUE PROJECTION

A revenue projection was developed that identified the anticipated revenue stream for local, state and federal funds. This revenue stream was factored to account for inflation at the anticipated year-of receipt.

## PROJECT COSTS

Cost is defined as the total project cost, which includes: planning elements (e.g. environmental studies and functional studies); engineering costs (e.g. preliminary engineering and design); preconstruction activities (e.g. line and grade studies, right-of-way acquisition and corridor preservation); construction activities; and contingencies. Project costs were calculated based on historical expenditures for similar improvements. The resulting cost estimates also included an inflation factor to account for the anticipated year-of-expenditure.

## FISCAL CONSTRAINT ANALYSIS

A fiscal constraint analysis was performed that compared the anticipated year-of-expenditure costs to the anticipated year-of-receipt revenues to determine if sufficient and timely financial resources were likely to exist to fund the proposed program of projects.





## SELECTION OF A PROPOSED PACKAGE OF PROJECTS

Based on the cost and revenue projections, the package of fiscally constrained projects anticipated to best accomplish community-defined goals and objectives was selected by the TPAC and then submitted to the Policy Board for review and approval. The TPB was then able to review these recommendations and make measured and fiscally constrained choices.

## ADOPTION PROCESS

The preliminary program of projects was approved by the Policy Board on September 17, 2021. The preliminary transportation recommendations and associated list of proposed projects resulting from the project selection and fiscal constraint analysis were presented and approved to be used for air quality analysis and public review.

## PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE DRAFT RMS 2050 MTP

On January 24, 2022, the draft plan was presented to the public and their feedback was solicited throughout the 45-day public review period as outlined in the MPO's adopted Public Participation Plan (PPP).

## ADOPTION OF THE FINAL RMS 2050 MTP

The final MTP, which incorporated comments received during the 45-day public comment period, was presented to the Policy Board for adoption on March 25, 2022. The policy board's approval of the MTP kicked off a 90-day conformity review by FHWA that ends on June 23, 2022. The MTP should be approved prior to that date so that we do not enter into a conformity lapse. The approved MTP has an effective date of [Month Date], 2022.

