

Going Forward – The Plan to Maintain & Improve Mobility Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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What is “Going Forward” – The Plan to Maintain & Improve Mobility and why does the region need a Long Range Transportation Plan?

Going Forward – The Plan to Maintain & Improve Mobility (Plan) is the official Long Range Transportation Plan for the South Western Region, covering the 2011 – 2040 timeframe. The Plan is the "blueprint" for transportation in the eight towns of the South Western Region: Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk, Stamford, Stamford, Weston, Westport, and Wilton. It serves as a guide for developing a transportation system that is accessible, safe, and reliable and contributes to a higher quality of life for the region's citizens. The Plan reflects the current state of the region, identifies future transportation needs, and plans responsibly for the entire region. The Plan is also a federal requirement and must be in place before federal transportation dollars can flow to the region. The South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (SWRMPO) is required to review and update the Plan every four years.

What is the South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (SWRMPO) and what is its role in the Plan?

The South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (SWRMPO) is responsible for developing long range regional transportation plans and transportation improvement programs for the eight towns in the South Western Region. The SWRMPO voting membership includes the chief elected official of each of the towns, and representatives from the Norwalk Transit District, the Stamford Transit District and the Westport Transit District. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) is the most recent federal legislation that controls transportation programs and requires metropolitan planning organizations to develop regional transportation plans in cooperation with federal, state, and local agencies.

What is the Transportation Technical Advisory Group (TTAG) and what role does it play in Plan development?

The Transportation Technical Advisory Group (TTAG) is the region’s technical committee and provides support to the SWRMPO. The TTAG participates in studies, and assists in the development of programs and plans that are prepared for the SWRMPO. The TTAG members are technical representatives from the transit districts, municipal planning, public works or transportation departments, South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA), the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT DOT), USDOT Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and USDOT Federal Transit Administration (FTA). SWRPA is the region’s designated transportation planning agency, and serves as staff to the SWRMPO and TTAG.

How is the Plan developed and what does it include?

Development of the Plan is a multi-pronged approach. The SWRMPO and the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA), as the transportation planning agency, work with local elected and technical officials, state and regional transportation agencies and other stakeholders such as the public, special interest groups, business and industry representatives. The SWRMPO and SWRPA staff also participates in local, regional, state and metro-New York transportation studies and committees to ensure that there is up-to-date information and interaction on transportation issues and initiatives of concern to the region. Public input and

involvement is encouraged through public information sessions, study and committee advisory groups, and targeted efforts to engage stakeholders in the development of plans and programs. The technical and quantitative aspects are developed and maintained by SWRPA in cooperation with CT DOT. SWRPA collects and maintains data and conducts analyses and studies that identify needs, and analyze alternatives and impacts of transportation improvements. The end results are policies, initiatives, and projects that represent the long range transportation vision and investments for the region.

How does the Plan relate to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)?

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the five year financial program for implementation of federally-funded projects. The TIP is developed in cooperation with CT DOT, and is another responsibility of the SWRMPO. Projects in the TIP must be included in the long range transportation plan.

Who reviews and approves the Plan after it is approved by the region?

Before the Plan can be implemented and federal transportation funds spent, it is subject to a review and approval at the state and federal levels. After the Plan is endorsed by the SWRMPO, the Plan is submitted to CT DOT, USDOT FHWA and FTA, as well as the CT Department of Environmental Protection, and the US Environmental Protection Agency to review and issue a finding of conformity with federal regulations.

Once the Plan is adopted can it be amended?

To keep the Plan up-to-date and responsive to regional needs it must be flexible. Amendments to the Plan are possible, and the requirements for public involvement, technical and policy endorsements are the same as the usual four year plan update.

What is in the Plan:

What are the Region's key strategies?

The Plan identifies strategies and projects that support the transportation goals and objectives for the region. Strategies are identified for highways/roadways, the rail network, the bus network, human services transportation, waterborne transportation, freight, the bike/pedestrian network, safety, security, and transportation systems management & operations. Additional strategies incorporate recommendations that link land use, economic development and the environment to the Region's transportation network. The strategies focus on attaining and maintaining a state of good repair, new planning and engineering studies that will define future investments, and development of operational programs to increase safety, mobility commuter choice and congestion mitigation.

What are the regional transportation goals and objectives and examples of key strategies that support each goal and objective?

The Plan's goals are to provide safe, efficient, cost effective and balanced transportation systems that promote mobility, access and choice with minimum adverse impacts and optimal investment of available resources in the transportation systems. The objectives, along with an example of a key strategy recommended to address each objective, are:

- I **Economic Competitiveness** – to make timely investments in the transportation system to maintain a healthy regional economy and to promote quality of life.
Key Strategy: Implement strategic improvements to existing infrastructure to increase capacity to the extent required to support anticipated ridership growth on all modes of the highway and transit networks.
- II **Infrastructure** – to maintain in a state of good repair transportation equipment and facilities, including highways, bridges, and transit systems.
Key Strategy: Preserve the transportation network's structural integrity and operational efficiency, and identify and correct safety, capacity and congestion deficiencies within existing financial, environmental and regulatory constraints.
- III **Accessibility and Mobility** – to maintain and increase options for the movement of people and goods.
Key Strategy: Develop a Regional Transit Strategies Plan that includes a vision and implementation plan for transit within the region and addresses external transit connections to New York City and the New York metro area, including interstate passenger rail service, passenger ferry and air.
- IV **Safety** – to promote the safety of all modes of transportation for all users and operators.
Key Strategy: Focus on improving the safety of the traveling public through a program of engineering upgrades and enhanced use of technology.
- V **Security** - to increase security of all modes of transportation for all users and operators.
Key Strategy: Work with DEMHS and Municipalities to develop evacuation plans and to identify resource and infrastructure needs.
- VI **Environmental and Clean Air Responsibility** – to avoid, minimize, or mitigate negative environmental impacts of transportation projects and systems whenever possible.
Key Strategy: Promote clean air initiatives to: encourage smart growth and TOD; use of alternative fuels; expand effective travel demand management programs such as telecommuting, flexible work weeks and various forms of ridesharing; support public transit, rail freight, traffic flow improvements, and incident management programs.
- VII **Land Use and Transportation** – to support strategies that promote transit oriented development, context sensitive design solutions and quality of life in the region.
Key Strategy: Support the goals of the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015, foremost of which is promoting centrality by directing development to those areas with the infrastructure to best accommodate growth, including transit oriented

development.

VIII Intermodal Connectivity – to enhance the integration and connectivity of transportation systems and modes for people and freight.

Key Strategy: Expand intermodal connections at Metro North rail stations, and improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the vicinity of rail stations and bus stops as an alternative to over-subscribed parking lots and to support transit oriented development.

IX Systems Efficiency and Productivity – to optimize current systems and resources through transportation systems management’ and the use of new technology to increase system productivity.

Key Strategy: Work with CT DOT, municipalities, and transit agencies to advance intelligent transportation systems strategies that improve the operations and efficiency of the regional transportation system.

X System Performance – to develop measurement and monitoring tools and strategies to better assess transportation systems performance, and revise programs to improve systems operations and performance.

Key Strategy: Expand the Congestion Mitigation Process into a more comprehensive product that informs project development and selection.

XI Financing – to provide resources to maintain existing transportation systems and services in a state of good repair, and to support improvements and services that meet the needs of system users and operators. The Transportation Plan describes the financial framework for system operation, maintenance and improvement.

Key Strategy: Adequately fund transit services to the extent necessary to maintain and strategically expand existing levels of service to accommodate ridership growth and improve regional connectivity and mobility, and develop innovative financing techniques to be considered for potentially providing additional funding assistance for transportation projects.

What are the region’s key priority projects and programs?

Some notable projects affecting the highway, bus and rail networks in the Region include:

Highway:

- Reconstruction of the Merritt Parkway/Route 7 Interchange
- I-95 Operational Lanes (Exits 8-10 Northbound, Exits 14-15)
- I-95 interchange improvements (various locations)
- I-95 Bridge Rehabilitation (Byram River, Metro North overpass in Stamford)
- I-95 median improvements (Exits 17-19)

- Greenwich weigh station weigh-in-motion
- Various Merritt Parkway safety improvement projects
- I-95 continuous count stations

Rail:

- Rehabilitation of key rail bridges (Walk, Saga, Sound Bach, Tomac, Mianus River)
- Positive train control for the New Haven Line
- Service improvements on the Danbury and New Canaan Branches
- Catenary (Overhead power lines) upgrades
- Replacement of the Stamford Transportation Center parking garage
- Implementation of the Stamford Transportation Center Master Plan
- Enhancements to Glenbrook and Springdale rail stations
- Platform extensions at various stations

Bus:

- Normal replacement of bus fleets
- Installation of ITS infrastructure, including smart card capability and automatic vehicle location
- Route 1 enhanced bus service
- Various service studies, including the Norwalk Transit District fixed route system and 7 link
- Improvements to fuel systems and storage
- Facility upgrades and additional bus storage
- Installation of bus system enhancements, including shelters , bike racks, artwork

Key local projects within each of the Region’s municipalities include:

Darien:

- Intersection improvements at various locations to enhance traffic flow and safety
- Implementation of Route 1 Study recommendations

Greenwich:

- Bridge improvement projects at various locations;
- Streetscape & sidewalk improvements at various locations;
- A town-wide traffic review – priority plan
- Implementation of Greenwich/Stamford Route 1 Study recommendations

New Canaan:

- A rail parking study for New Canaan Station;
- A downtown parking study;

Norwalk:

- Construction of the South Norwalk Intermodal Facility
- Reconstruction of various key roadways (including East Avenue, Scribner Avenue, Washington St.)
- Various bike/pedestrian improvements
- Route 1 signal improvements and roadway enhancements

- A Merritt 7 area transportation study
- Main Avenue corridor connectivity improvements
- Harbor dredging

Stamford:

- Completion of Stamford Urban Transitway Phase 2
- Parking guidance systems
- Replacement of key rail overpasses at various locations
- Atlantic Street widening
- Various roadway reconstruction/improvement, traffic signal projects
- Pedestrian/bicycle trails along the Mill River and near the Harbor
- Streetscape improvements

Weston:

- Various intersection improvements and studies to enhance safety
- School Road sidewalks

Westport:

- Various intersection improvements (along Routes 1, 33, 57, and 136)
- Enhanced bike facilities
- North Avenue Bridge Replacement
- A downtown parking study

Wilton:

- Various intersection improvements
- A tiered parking structure at Wilton Station

How is the Going Forward 2011-2040 Plan different from the South Western Region Long Range Transportation Plan 2007-2035?

The new Plan extends the planning and programming timeframe to 2040. Since reauthorization of a Federal transportation bill to succeed SAFETEA-LU has not been put into law, the plan follows the guidance set forth by SAFETEA-LU, which is the basis for the continuing resolutions that have been approved by Congress. This plan also contains additional emphasis on livability, economic development and climate change.

How much will it cost to maintain and operate the Region's transportation system?

The South Western Region Long Range Transportation Plan 2011-2040 is financially constrained. The Plan assumes that only projects are that are listed in the FFY2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program, the CT DOT 2011 Transportation Master Plan, and the CT DOT Bureau of Public Transportation Capital Plan 2011-2030 are funded. CT DOT estimates that \$2.3 billion will be made available for system preservation and maintenance in the Region, and reserves \$1.5 billion for projects deemed to be of statewide significance. Based on estimates that extend CT DOT's Capital Plan to 2040, it is anticipated that \$1.8 billion will be available for transit capital projects over the life cycle of the Plan. The estimated cost of transit operations allocated to the region is estimated to be about \$3.8 billion, which is supported by approximately \$2.1 billion in farebox revenue and \$1.7 in state and local subsidies.