

## **Chapter 13: Planning Factors**

### **Introduction**

The Metropolitan Planning Rule for the Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act (ISTEA) listed 16 factors that must be considered as part of the planning process for all metropolitan areas. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century amended Section 134 (f) and consolidated those 16 factors to seven broader areas listed as the Scope of the Planning Process.

**The MPO staff and the Technical Advisory Committee consider the seven planning factors in the transportation planning process before making recommendations to the Policy Committee.**

The MPO staff and the Technical Advisory Committee consider the seven planning factors explicitly in the transportation planning process before making recommendations to the Policy Committee. The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) are the principal products of the planning process. The MPO considered these factors in the development of LRTP as listed below.

### **Compliance Process**

**(1) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.**

Manufacturing, food processing, agriculture, education, and health care are the economic basis for the metropolitan area. An improved intermodal transportation system would best support the economic development of the area.

The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) is working on the development of US 63 to the interstate highway standard for conversion of US 63 to I 555. This will help bring more trade to the metropolitan area.

The MPO is working closely with the Jonesboro Greater Chamber of Commerce and other local governments in their effort to improve SH 226 (proposed I-730) to a freeway standard for a better connection to Little Rock through a connection with US 67 (proposed I-30) which is being developed to the interstate highway standard.

AHTD is widening and improving AR 18 (Highland Drive) for a better access to industrial areas in Jonesboro and provide improved regional connection to towns and cities in the north east part of the state.

AHTD is performing a feasibility study for the construction of a rail spur and team track transloading facility on AR 1 approximately six miles south of Jonesboro. This facility will create an opportunity for low cost rail transportation from this area and boost the economy of the MPO area.

In addition to those regional interests, the MPO and AHTD are working to improve transportation in the Jonesboro area. An interchange at US 63 connecting Matthews Avenue is under construction. The West Campus Overpass is being designed to provide two grade separations with the Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroads. This project will begin at Matthews Street and extend to Aggie Street on new

location. These constructions would assure proper transportation links to the university and other parts of the city.

**(2) Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non motorized users.**

Most streets in the metropolitan area do not have walkways. There are also no designated bikeways in the area. To improve the safety for non-motorized users, all new road construction by AHTD will have the outer lane to be fourteen feet wide to accommodate bikes. The LRTP has adopted goals, objectives, and policies to develop pedestrian walkways and bikeways. The MPO, with assistance from local interest groups, would prepare a walkway and bikeway plan for the entire MPO area.

The City of Jonesboro is planning to operate the transit system. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds will be used to equip buses with a two-way radio system. Garages and parking facilities will be equipped with electronic security devices. Bus terminal and transfer stations will have public phones and will be properly lighted at night.

**(3) Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and freight.**

The mainstay of transportation in the metropolitan area is the private automobile. Car pooling, van pooling, ride sharing, and biking have not been highly promoted in the area. The MPO will make efforts to educate the citizens on the benefits of pooling and ride sharing. To increase the accessibility and mobility, the MPO will focus on the optimal use of streets and highways.

The City of Jonesboro will be synchronizing signals at several intersections for the free flow of traffic. The City also plans to improve several intersections by adding left- or right-turn lanes or by providing ramps for accessibility for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance.

The transit service will be doing its share to increase the accessibility and mobility of the citizens of Jonesboro. The transit will provide fixed-route service and demand response service within the city.

Freight mobility is also important for the MPO area. Railroad overpasses are being constructed or planned for busy intersections. The AHTD is performing a planning study to connect US 49 to US 63 on the eastern side of the City of Jonesboro. The AHTD also studied the feasibility of a north bypass to improve the traffic flow. With these improvements in place, regional traffic would bypass the city reducing congestion on urban streets.

The metropolitan area is served well by Burlington Northern Santa Fe and the Union Pacific Railroads. The railroads connect all major industries. To coordinate and integrate freight movement in the overall transportation planning, the MPO will carry out a study to develop a plan for efficient movement of freight including hazardous material movement in the MPO area.

**(4) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.**

The Jonesboro Metropolitan Area is an attainment area according to the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) of 1990. Effort would be made to retain the attainment status by encouraging alternate mode of transportation, reducing the number of trips, car pooling, van pooling, using alternative fuel buses, and the use of intelligent transportation system.

**(5) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.**

The MPO, AHTD and participating agencies are committed to sound planning and development to ensure that all roads are properly interconnected and lane-reduction is done with proper lane markings and signs. The airport has a good road connection. The Greyhound Bus terminal on Industrial Drive is well connected to other portions of the city.

**(6) Promote efficient system management and operation.**

The MPO plans to perform an access management study for the Caraway Corridor. The study would propose the Transportation System Management (TSM) options to improve safety and traffic flow on Caraway Road and other connecting roads.

The City of Jonesboro is performing a traffic study for the south side of the city. This study may propose TSM strategies for better flow of traffic in the city.

The MPO also plans to perform speed and delay studies on selected streets in the study area. The study will be repeated every second year to built database for efficient management of streets. This proposed study will indicate probable problem areas where congestion may occur. Remedial actions would be taken to avert the problem.

**(7) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.**

The preservation and efficient use of the existing transportation system are the prime goals of the MPO. All the projects listed in the Long Range Transportation Plan are improvements to the existing transportation system, except the construction of US 226 on a new location.