CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

In January 1995, the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC) published the 2020 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). This was followed three years later with the 1998 Update. Both documents were prepared in compliance with CFR 450.332, which also is the basis for this document, the 2001 Update, to fulfill triennial review and update requirements. The 2001 Update will be the last update of the LRTP. During 2001, the SMTC will begin a three-year process to completely revise the LRTP, with a 20-year forecast period, for publication in 2004.

The 2001 Update has been prepared on the basis of an evaluation of the LRTP and the 1998 Update, as well as changes of a significant nature that have occurred affecting the two documents. The approach used in preparing the 2001 Update is that the document should not be viewed as a stand-alone document but instead should be used in conjunction with the LRTP published in 1995, and the 1998 Update. In general, sections of the LRTP that are not substantially affected by changing circumstances are not included in this document. The 1998 Update was used as reference information in preparing this document but is entirely replaced by the 2001 Update. Four examples of differences between the 1998 Update and the 2001 Update documents are:

1) The completion of several planning projects from the annual SMTC Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and substantial progress on other projects;
2) Inclusion of more recent demographic data resulting from Census 2000;
3) Changes made in the Federal Highway Administration planning factors to be considered in conducting UPWP planning projects and in the SMTC Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for selecting implementation projects; and
4) Progress achieved in the Action Plans identified in the LRTP, included in Chapter 2.

2020 Long-Range Transportation Plan

During the last decade, several changes in federal legislation have had a substantial impact on how Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), such as the SMTC, conduct transportation planning. These include the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, the Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) of 1998. Collectively, this legislation addresses such major urban transportation planning concerns as environmental quality (especially air quality), access to transportation (especially for those with mobility difficulties), alternative transportation modes (especially bicycle and pedestrian), the transportation – land use linkage (especially the impact of land development on the transportation system), highway traffic congestion and maintenance of the existing transportation infrastructure. The legislation directs the planning focus of agencies such as the SMTC to these new areas of concern, now that the interstate highway system has been completed.
The LRTP presents a vision of the transportation system and the projects that will bring that vision to reality over time. Central to that vision is the protection of the value of investments already made in developing the transportation system while providing resources to pursue innovative solutions to mobility constraints and enhancing travel choices available. Also central to the LRTP is the need to adjust the land development patterns and transportation system investments to conform with Onondaga County’s 2010 Development Guide.

Public Involvement

Engaging the public early and often in the planning process is critical to the success of any transportation plan or program, and it is required by numerous state and federal laws. Such legislation underscores the need for public involvement, calling on MPOs such as the SMTC to provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, private providers of transportation and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on transportation plans and programs.

The SMTC recognizes that the active involvement of the entire community, in addition to the SMTC Policy, Planning and Study Advisory Committee (SAC) members, is paramount to good transportation planning. Public comments are valued because they can shape the direction of a particular transportation study or planning activity, and may help to identify new transportation projects that are important to citizens of the area.

Since the 1998 Update, the SMTC has taken several steps to strengthen the public involvement process. In addition to public meetings, the SMTC also recruits the necessary technical personnel and community representatives to serve on a project-specific SAC. Such a committee is created for most of the SMTC planning activities to assist in managing projects, as well as provide needed input and direction. A staff Communications Specialist works with the technical staff to expand opportunities for public input on each of the projects conducted under the annual UPWP. For many of the SMTC activities, a project-specific Public Involvement Plan (PIP) sets the framework for the public involvement opportunities that will be available throughout the course of the project. The PIP also pinpoints when in the project the public involvement meetings will be held that allow for the exchange of information and input. These meetings are in addition to the project SAC meetings, which are of a more technical nature and held on a more frequent basis. Public input opportunities are also provided during meetings of the SMTC Planning and Policy Committees.

Other methods the SMTC uses to inform and invite the public to participate include the use of press releases to announce various meetings, project updates, and available reports; the production of its quarterly newsletter, DIRECTIONS; the creation and ongoing development of the SMTC web site; distribution of various project-specific fact sheets and flyers; and the use of public comment cards and questionnaires. In addition, the SMTC invites the public to “get involved in the
Insofar as the preparation of the 2001 Update is concerned, the public involvement process includes announcing opportunities for review and comment on draft documents in the news media as well as utilizing the public forums of the SMTC Planning and Policy Committees. Since a major rewrite of the entire LRTP is not being undertaken at this time, the SMTC determined that no special committee structure was needed beyond the already extensive formal SMTC committee structure.

**SMTC Study Area**

As the MPO designated by the Governor of the State of New York, the SMTC was created in 1966 to carry out the continuous, comprehensive and cooperative transportation planning process for the Syracuse Metropolitan Area, which includes all of Onondaga County and a small part of Oswego County. The SMTC area is centered in the City of Syracuse, the transportation hub and economic center for Central New York (see Map 1-1).
SMTC Planning and Programming Process

The process contains the three major elements, of which the LRTP is one element, as illustrated in Figure 1-1. In addition to maintaining a LRTP (a 25-year vision of future transportation projects and improvements), the SMTC, through its UPWP, conducts a number of specific transportation planning activities, some of which include: traffic corridor studies; transportation data collection; accident surveillance; congestion management; and multi-modal transportation planning (including bicycle and pedestrian planning). The SMTC is also responsible for the maintenance of the area’s TIP, a five-year program that funds capital projects related to transit, local roadways and interstates, bicycle and pedestrian amenities, and more. It is important to note, however, that the SMTC is not an agency that can implement particular transportation improvements, but serves as a collaborative forum where transportation issues are studied, and recommendations made.

The LRTP represents the starting point in which the transportation goals and objectives for the future are set forth in a document adopted by the SMTC Policy Committee. Each year, the Policy Committee adopts the UPWP, which incorporates all the transportation planning and directly supporting comprehensive planning activities for the coming year. The activities are generally major transportation studies that identify short and long-range needs and reflect the efforts to be undertaken that will lead toward the attainment of the LRTP goals and objectives over a number of years. Finally, the SMTC adopts each year the annual TIP, which is the financial program for making investments to strengthen the transportation system.

Figure 1-1:
The Transportation Planning and Programming Process
The chart in Figure 1-2 shows the percentage of TIP projects by project type.

**Figure 1-2**

1999-2004 TIP Projects (by project type)

- Bridge - 55%
- Capacity/Mobility/Pavement - 24%
- Safety - 9%
- Transit - 10%
- Bike/Pedestrian - 2%

The SMTC is composed of officials representing local, state and federal governments or agencies having interest or responsibility in comprehensive transportation planning. To facilitate and encourage maximum interaction among these groups and the local community, the SMTC has adopted a committee structure that consists of a Policy, Planning and Executive Committee. Served by the SMTC Central staff, these committees serve as the hierarchy to the transportation planning activities of the SMTC.

**TEA-21’s Seven Planning Factors**

The TEA-21 presents the seven priorities established by the Federal Highway Administration that must be considered as part of the national transportation planning process for every UPWP transportation planning project and TIP line item. The seven planning priorities in TEA-21 represent a consolidation of the 16 planning factors that had been required under the earlier federal legislation (which had previously been 15 requirements). The seven TEA-21 planning factor requirements are as follows:
1) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity and efficiency.
2) Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3) Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.
4) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation and improve quality of life.
5) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
6) Promote efficient system management and operation.
7) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

**Organization of the 2001 Update**

In order to orient the reader, the information in the chapters that follow is presented in nearly the same order as the 1998 Update, as reflected in the Table of Contents to this document. One addition is a new Chapter 2, providing a brief discussion of the current status of the goals, objectives and action plans that were set forth in the LRTP.