

1. Introduction

Federal law requires urban areas to follow a comprehensive, continuous, and cooperative planning process. Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG), a regional planning agency, represents the 28 local governments in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties.

Designated as the Lead Planning Agency for the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), WPCOG has the primary responsibility for preparation of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), and is the primary local recipient of transportation planning funds received from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the US Department of Transportation (US DOT).

Along with the NCDOT and the US DOT, these 28 local governments participate in a continuing transportation planning process for the Greater Hickory MPO. Locally based transportation planning gives communities the opportunity to make transportation investment decisions that enhance economic and community development goals.

Planning efforts reach out to each of the four counties in order to connect the entire region in developing a multi-modal transportation system that facilitates the safe, efficient movement of people and goods. The MPO has a unique partnership to coordinate all phases of transportation planning for the four-county region.

Every five years, the region must update its long-range plan to prioritize transportation projects. Fiscally constrained, the plan must balance identified needs with projected transportation revenues. The 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) updates the prior 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan for the Greater Hickory Area.

Plan emphasis is on transportation facilities, programs, and services that will serve the urban area's future travel needs. New emphasis has been given to performance metrics and targets to help prioritize projects addressing system deficiencies, improving operations, and/or enhancing quality of life.