CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE *CONNECTIONS 2040* MTP

The *Connections 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan* (MTP) is the region's long-range transportation plan. The MTP identifies transportation challenges that the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA) will face over the next 20 years and presents strategies for addressing them.

As our region grows it is crucial to analyze both the location and density of growth and the types of transportation options available to people to reach certain destinations. Our ability to access employment centers, local services and entertainment, and recreational activities all impact the quality of our lives. Having opportunities to walk or ride a bike safely or get to our jobs if we don't have access to a vehicle, are important factors to consider for everybody. When residential or commercial growth develops in a fragmented way, or the streets are not well-connected, congestion can worsen, and safety concerns become more amplified.

Integrating our land use and transportation decisions in a way that creates complete street networks, and therefore redundancy in an emergency situation such as a vehicular crash or roadway flooding, is beneficial for both overall safety and smooth traffic flow, as well as more direct facilities for people biking and walking. When there are limited choices of different housing types, and when residential land uses are separated from other land uses, people end up having to travel long distances to their jobs, for socializing, or to obtain services. These long trips on a limited number of wide thoroughfares can encourage high speeds on major roadways and increase congestion.

Figure 1-1: Aerial View of the AMPA

The Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MRMPO) considers all these issues and helps the region make better land use and transportation decisions for the future based upon the areas that will see the most severe congestion or existing data that point to the most unsafe intersections. Long-range multimodal transportation systems and proposed transportation investments are evaluated within the 20-year planning horizon and within fiscal constraints (federal regulations that require the plan be fiscally responsible). Recognizing that transportation issues and opportunities are highly inter-related with other regional aspects, this plan examines land use, economic development, environmental resiliency, public health, and environmental justice as well.

> **The purpose of the *Connections 2040 MTP* is to provide a framework for establishing equitable regional priorities in cooperation with member agencies, and to invest in multi-modal transportation infrastructure and programs that optimize mobility, enhance economic linkages, improve environmental resiliency, and support active transportation.**

Why Connections 2040?

The *Connections 2040 MTP* is an update to the Futures 2040 MTP and both share a core concept: that transportation and land use decisions are integrally linked. The previous 2040 MTP was named "Futures" due to its emphasis on scenario planning, which brought together regional stakeholders with the goal of improving transportation conditions through envisioning different land use and transportation scenarios. Participants identified major regional challenges and potential solutions that relate to where and how we grow and how we get around. For example, a challenge was river crossing congestion and a potential solution was increasing job opportunities west of the Rio Grande. With the assistance of MRMPO's analytical tools, stakeholders were able to compare the performance of different scenarios and come to consensus around a shared direction for future growth that focuses growth in key centers, supports premium regional transit, and balances jobs and housing on both sides of the river, among other objectives. The result was the Target Scenario, which was approved by MRMPO's governing body, the Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB), as an aspirational scenario.

The *Connections 2040 MTP* honors the regional commitment towards the Target Scenario and continues to refine this vision. It also improves one of its guiding principles, prioritizing existing infrastructure, through a new emphasis on transportation system management and operations. This MTP is named "Connections" because it emphasizes identifying gaps, or problem areas, in our existing multimodal networks and because it identifies an assortment of pathways to address these gaps. By focusing on filling in the gaps in existing multimodal networks, such as extending a bike lane, or making a high crash intersection safer, we can make the most efficient use of limited infrastructure funds. Through making important connections we effectively reduce the costs of congestion and improve traveler experiences and safety, thus enhancing how we live and travel, oftentimes at a much lower price tag than constructing entirely new transportation facilities.

1.1 The Role of MRMPO

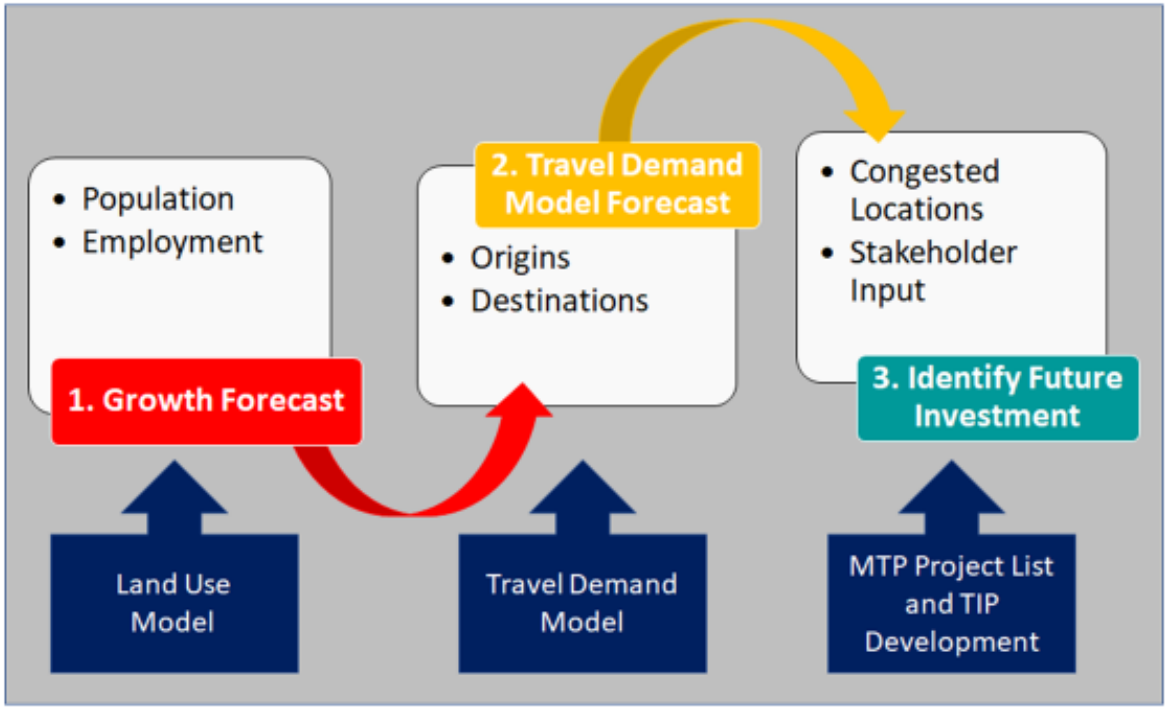
The *Connections 2040 MTP* is a product of the Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, or MRMPO, a regional government planning agency responsible for the long-range transportation planning and programming of near-term federal transportation dollars in the AMPA. MRMPO is housed within the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) and works closely with local governments, member agencies, and the public. The MRMPO is governed by the Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB), a board of elected officials appointed by local jurisdictions and member agencies. The board is supported by numerous technical and advisory committees comprised of a variety of planners, engineers, geographers, demographers, and other technical professionals. MRMPO is not an implementation agency, meaning it does not build or maintain infrastructure projects. Rather, **the role of MRMPO is to facilitate regional discussion, identify long-term regional transportation needs, and develop strategies for addressing those needs.** MRMPO staff members have collaboratively developed this Metropolitan Transportation Plan, guided by the following mission statement:

> *Through a commitment to robust and quality data, the MPO will ensure an objective and balanced analytical approach that emphasizes multi-modal considerations and unique geographic characteristics, in order to support well-informed regional decision-making and public discourse.*

a. Long-Term Planning Horizon

MTPs must have a planning horizon of at least 20 years and must be updated every four or five years.[1] The MTP is a living document that is intended to be continually revisited as urban areas grow and change, funding situations evolve, new data and analytical methods become available, and different transportation needs and priorities are identified. *Connections 2040* is an update to the previous MTP, the Futures 2040 MTP. Both plans have the same horizon year of 2040, but the *Connections 2040* plan has a new base year of 2016. *Connections 2040* builds off the previous plan but with updated data, analysis, research, and public and stakeholder inputs.

Figure 1-2: Illustration of the Transportation Planning Process



b. MTP Planning Area or the AMPA

The Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA) is geographically situated in central New Mexico. The AMPA encompasses the central Rio Grande valley and a rich diversity of natural and human-made landscapes and cultural treasures. It includes all of Valencia County, Bernalillo County, and the most developed part of southern Sandoval County. Approximately one-sixth of the land within the AMPA is protected open space including city or county open spaces, state parks, and lands owned and managed by federal agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Forest Service. The Rio Grande runs through the middle of the region and supports the Bosque ecosystem, irrigates farmland, and carries water for household consumption. The AMPA also includes all, or portions of, several tribal reservations and land grants. Within the AMPA's 3,095 square miles there are 11 incorporated communities, seven Pueblos, and the To'hajiilee chapter of the Navajo Nation.

[1] MPOs without air quality maintenance violations can update their plans every five years. MRMPO's plan must now be updated every five years because it is currently in carbon monoxide (CO) attainment status.

Map 1-1: Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA) Boundaries

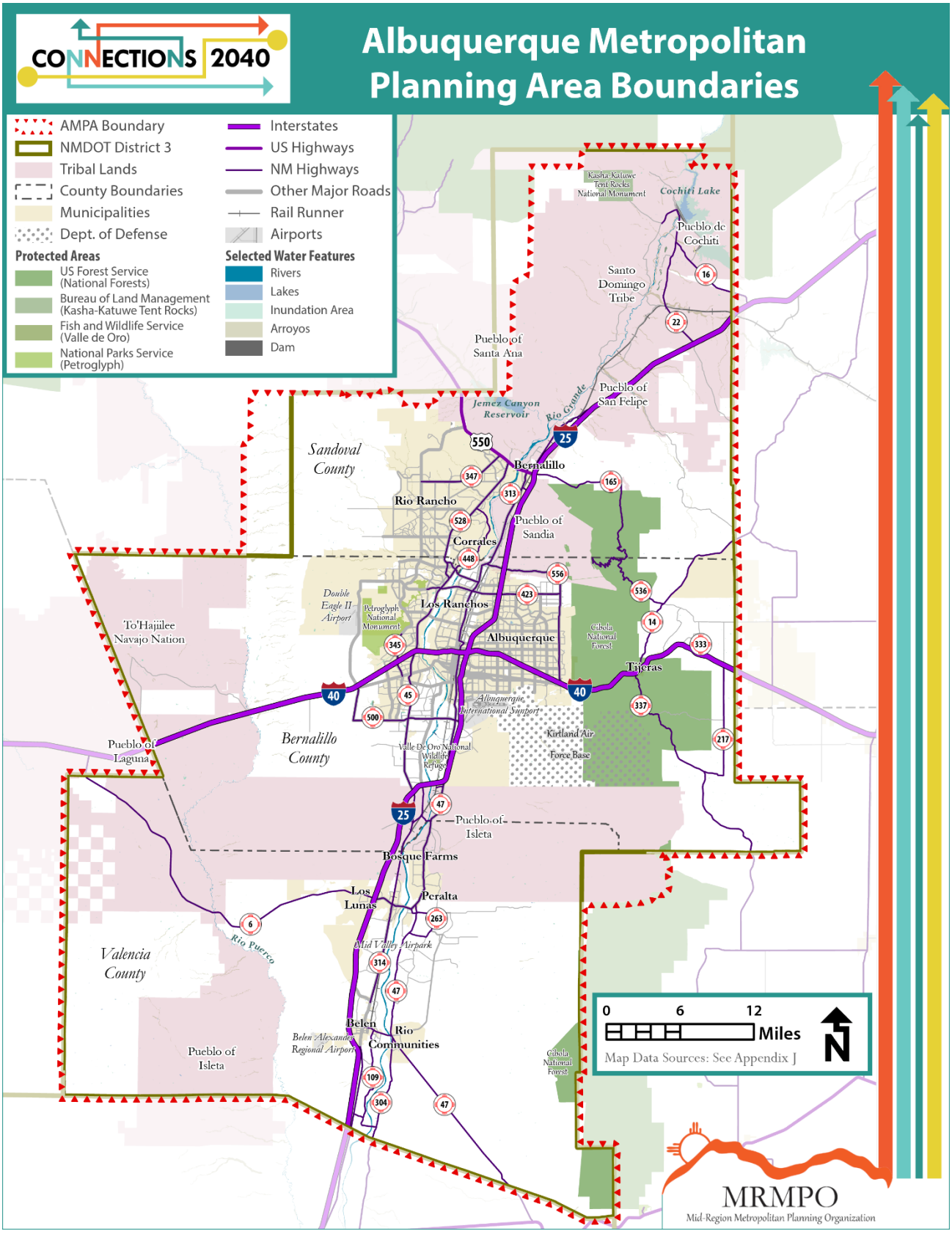


Table 1-1: List of Members, Advisory Agencies, and Stakeholders

Jurisdictions and Agencies with Transportation Rights-of-Way
Bernalillo County
City of Albuquerque (includes ABQ RIDE)
City of Belen
City of Rio Rancho
City of Rio Communities
Navajo Nation – To'Hajiilee
New Mexico Department of Transportation
Pueblo de Cochiti
Pueblo of Isleta
Pueblo of Laguna
Pueblo of San Felipe
Pueblo of Sandia
Pueblo of Santa Ana
Pueblo of Santo Domingo
Rio Metro Regional Transit District
Sandoval County
Town of Bernalillo
Village of Bosque Farms
Town of Edgewood
Town of Peralta
Village of Corrales
Village of Los Lunas
Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque
Village of Tijeras
Valencia County

Agencies with Little or No Transportation Rights-of-Way
Albuquerque Public Schools
Belen Consolidated Schools
Bernalillo Public Schools
Los Lunas Public Schools
Rio Rancho Public Schools
Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo & Flood Control Authority
East Sandoval County Arroyo & Flood Control Authority
Southern Sandoval County Arroyo & Flood Control Authority
Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District
Other Stakeholders/Advisory Agencies
City of Albuquerque Aviation
Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board
Federal Highway Administration
Federal Transit Administration
Kirtland Air Force Base
NM State Transportation Commission
US Bureau of Indian Affairs
US Forest Service
US Fish and Wildlife Service
US National Park Service
US Bureau of Land Management
Various Economic Development Agencies

1.2 MTP Goals

There are four overarching goals that guide *Connections 2040*. The goals of the MTP are: Optimized Mobility, Economic Linkages, Active Transportation, and Environmental Resiliency. These four goals establish a direction and general priorities for the MTP and provide a framework to help assess the transportation system's performance in the region.

What is Different in this MTP

The MTP goals are evolving in notable ways. Optimized Mobility focuses on the overall management of our roadways, including the introduction of more advanced technologies, such as smart signals and vehicle to vehicle communication. In addition, a greater emphasis is placed on prioritizing cost effective maintenance and operations to preserve existing infrastructure.

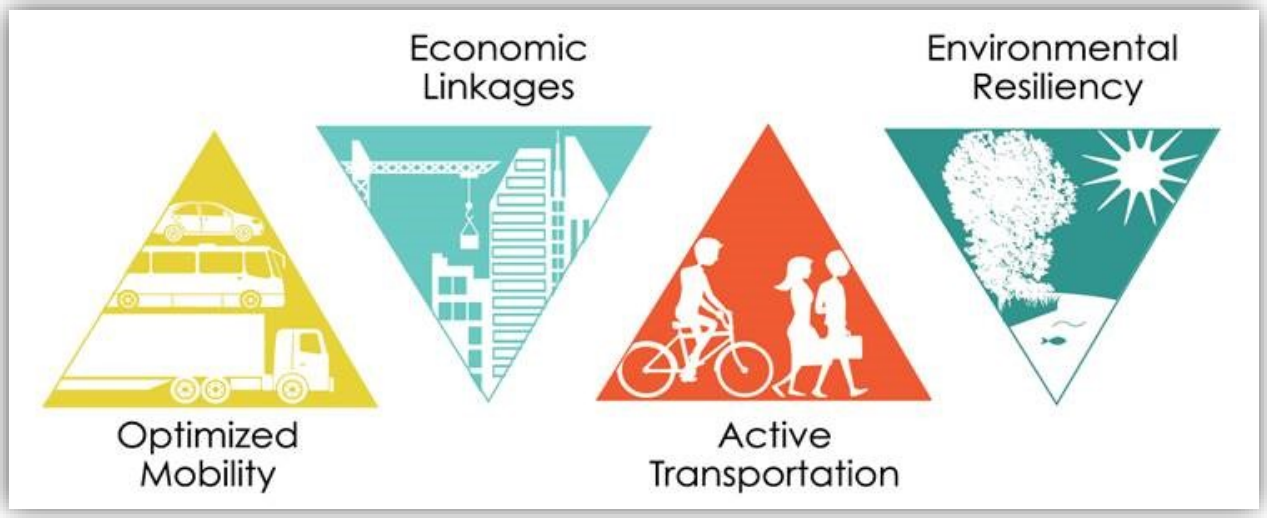
The Active Transportation goal is enhanced in response to a disproportionately high rate of pedestrian fatalities in our region and helps target funding towards the most unsafe locations for all modes of travel as well as toward the critical role of transportation investments in activity centers for people biking and walking. For this MTP, Active Transportation focuses on non-motorized modes of travel such as walking and biking and includes other types of new ways to travel in the region like using bike share or scooters.

Economic Linkages is expanded in this update to explore the economic impacts of place-making and capture a better sense of fiscal implications of expanded growth**,** such as roadways and transit, as well as costs of public services like schools or fire stations**.**

Finally, Environmental Resiliency continues to recognize the impact of climate change and the urban heat island effect as well as the transportation sector's impacts on air quality. The chapter discusses the benefits of low impact development and tree coverage. This chapter also expands on emergency evacuation and critical transportation infrastructure.

> ***Connections 2040* identifies pathways to achieve these goals and discusses these in Chapter 9, Plan Implementation. Pathways are defined as strategies or action items for achieving the goals.**

Figure 1-3: Connections 2040 Goals



1.3 Federal Requirements for the MTP

All urbanized areas in the United States with a population of more than 50,000 must have a designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) to facilitate the federally required multimodal transportation planning process. The AMPA includes two urbanized areas as defined by US Census Bureau: the Albuquerque Urbanized Area and the Los Lunas Urbanized Area as well as the Santo Domingo Urban Cluster. The following map shows these boundaries. The transportation plan, or MTP, is at the center of this process and uses long-term growth projections and anticipated travel patterns to consider long-term regional needs. **Development of the MTP is a comprehensive and cooperative planning process that involves iterative feedback from member agencies within the metropolitan area and includes all modes of transportation.** The plan must be fiscally constrained, meaning all projects proposed for inclusion in the MTP must have an identified funding source.

a. Fiscally Constrained Project Listings in the MTP and TIP

In coordination with the state department of transportation, all MPOs must develop an MTP and a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is the short-range implementing mechanism for the MTP that allows for transportation projects to be funded and eventually built. Simply put, the TIP lists regionally significant transportation projects that will receive federal funding over a six-year timeframe and is updated every two years. **The MTP provides the framework for proper consideration of whether projects meet regional transportation needs and are effective investments for the AMPA.** For a project to be in the TIP, it must first be included in the MTP. Indeed, the two go hand in hand: if you had an MTP without a TIP, projects would never get off the ground. On the other hand, if you had a TIP without an MTP, projects would be built in an ad hoc manner and may not necessarily support the goals of the region. The MTP and TIP must be consistent with the latest federal transportation law, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, signed into law by President Obama in 2015. Administrative regulations for the FAST Act are found in Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 450.

a. FAST Act and State Requirements and Goals

Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations includes planning factors that must be considered as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process (23 CFR 450.306(b)), as well as specific elements that must be included in a metropolitan transportation plan (23 CFR 450.324).

MRMPO's planning process is consistent with the planning process requirements and *Connections 2040* includes all federally required elements for transportation plans. The detailed planning factors and plan requirements that must be addressed in a long-range transportation plan are included in the Appendix. In addition, the FAST Act includes seven national goals that MPOs must measure progress toward as part of their planning programs and transportation decisions (23 USC 150(b)).

Figure 1-4: FAST Act Performance Goals

Map 1-2: AMPA Urbanized Areas as defined by the US Census Bureau

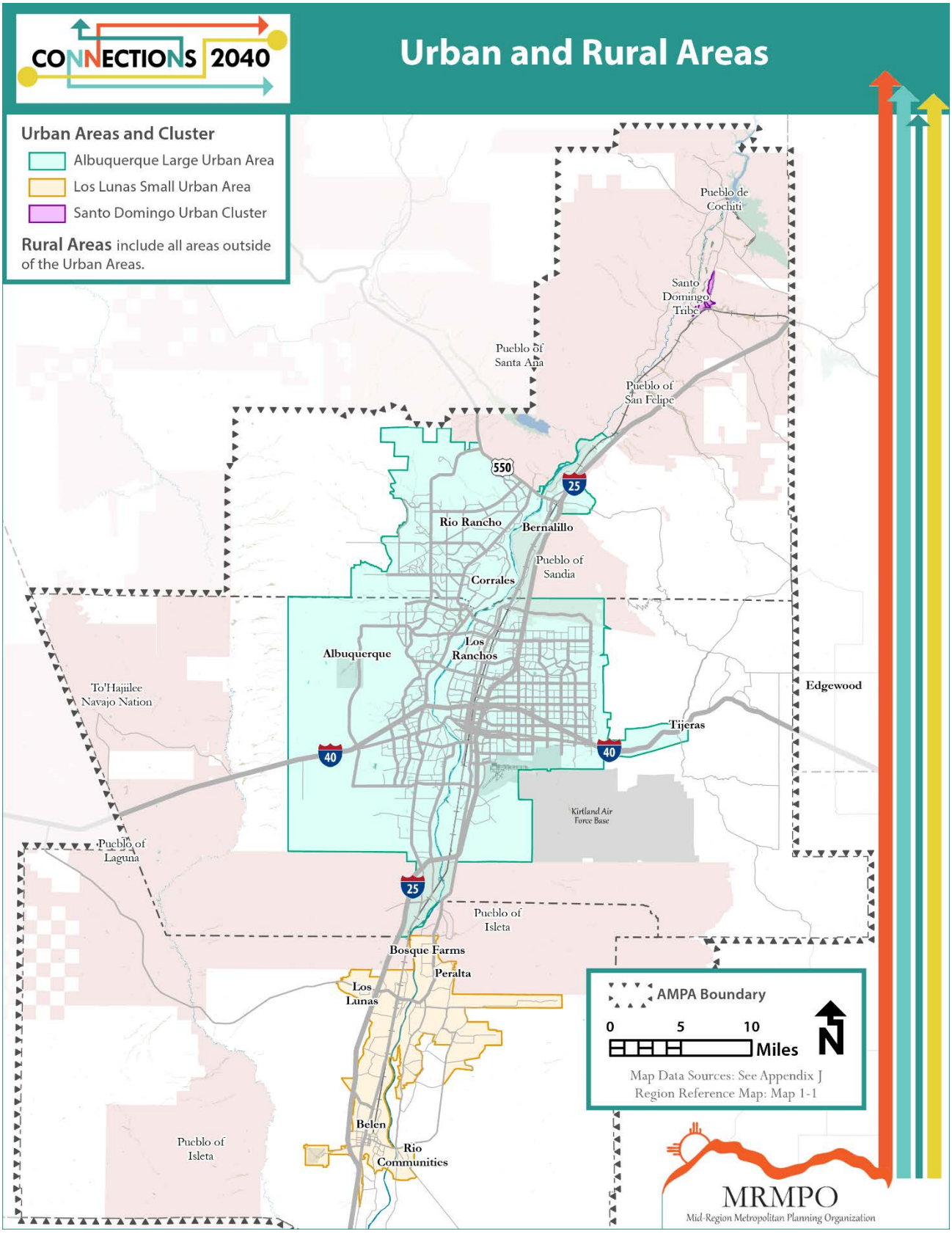


Table 1-2: Connection between FAST Act Goal Areas and MTP Goals

FAST Act National Goals	*2040 MTP* Goal(s)
Safety: To achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.	Active Transportation, Optimized Mobility
Infrastructure Condition: To maintain the highway infrastructure asset system in a state of good repair.	Optimized Mobility
Congestion Reduction: To achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the National Highway System.	Optimized Mobility, Economic Linkages
System Reliability: To improve the efficiency of the surface transportation system.	Optimized Mobility, Active Transportation, Economic Linkages
Freight Movement and Economic Vitality: To improve the national freight network, strengthen the ability of rural communities to access national and international trade markets, and support regional economic development.	Economic Linkages, Optimized Mobility
Environmental Sustainability: To enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.	Environmental Resiliency
Reduced Project Delivery Delays: To reduce project costs, promote jobs and the economy, and expedite the movement of people and goods by accelerating project completion through eliminating delays in the project development and delivery process, including reducing regulatory burdens and improving agencies' work practices.	Economic Linkages, Project Prioritization Process*

**The Project Prioritization Process is described in Chapter 9.*

Air Quality

MRMPO must make a conformity determination on its MTP in accordance with the Clean Air Act and EPA conformity regulations. Currently, the region is in conformity with federal air quality regulations, however there are potential future concerns around ozone levels, and whether the region will meet these standards which are expected to be determined one to two years after the adoption of this plan. The Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration must also make a conformity determination. Finally, the MTP must conform to the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board transportation conformity regulations (New Mexico Administrative Code [NMAC] Title 20, Chapter 11, Part 3).

Title VI and Environmental Justice

The planning and public input processes conducted by MRMPO are required by federal law to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Environmental Justice Orders. Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin and specifies that recipients of federal funds must certify nondiscrimination. Environmental Justice requirements direct every federal agency to make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing all effects of programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. Evaluation of environmental justice as it applies to the regional transportation system is addressed in Chapter 9, Plan Implementation.

ITS Regional Architecture

For any project that includes ITS elements such as communications, traffic and operational management, or travel messaging associated with informing traveler about congestion, incidents, detours, or weather conditions that affect travel decisions, MRMPO must ensure that projects comply with the Regional ITS Architecture. This requirement, referred to in 23 CFR as Rule 940, is in place so that all of these communications and data collection systems are integrated in a planned and coordinated manner that guarantees the delivery of these critical transportation information services.

Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan

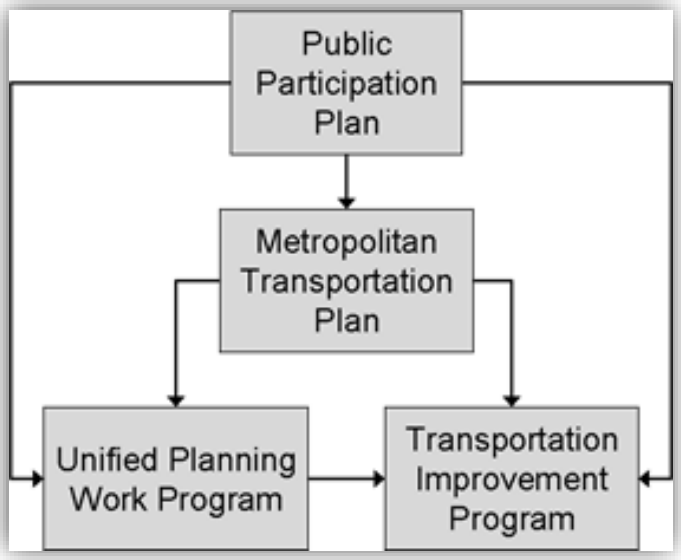
Federal transportation law requires New Mexico's Department of Transportation (NMDOT), MPOs, and regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) to coordinate their long-range plan development processes. Coordination means that plans produced by those organizations must be mutually consistent with respect to demographic assumptions, travel demand forecasts, and revenue forecasts. To help ensure this consistency NMDOT, MPOs, and the RTPOs update their plans on roughly the same timetable and participate in exchanges of data, information, and ideas at critical stages. The previous MTP, the *Futures 2040 MTP,* was developed concurrently with the update to the statewide long-range transportation plan, the *New Mexico 2040 Plan*, and *Connections 2040* is consistent with current statewide planning.

Figure 1-5: New Mexico 2040 Plan

b. MRMPO Core Documents

Certain core documents are required by federal transportation regulations. MPOs must create a *Public Participation Plan* that defines the process for providing citizens and all interested parties reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process including developoment of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Once the MTP has been adopted, a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) outlines transportation planning activities that will be conducted by the MPO. The MTP then guides the TIP process, where project selections must be consistent with the goals of the MTP.

Figure 1-6: MRMPO Core Documents



MRMPO has also developed a *Project Prioritization Process (PPP)* document that essentially translates the MTP goals into both qualitative and quantitative ways to more objectively evaluate TIP projects and ensure that projects that are programmed to receive federal funds andmeet the goals of the MTP.

1.4 MRMPO Structure

The Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization or MRMPO is the designated MPO for the Albuquerque urbanized area and the Los Lunas urbanized area in central New Mexico. MRMPO has an established policy board, the Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB), and technical committees that work alongside the organization on the region's continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative planning process. MPO staff are committed to creating an effective regional forum for transportation planning decisions.

a. MRMPO Committees

Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB)

The MTB sets regional transportation policy for the AMPA and is comprised of elected officials from the jurisdictions within the AMPA. These jurisdictions are often referred to as member agencies of the MPO. Reporting to the MTB is the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC), which includes staff-level representatives from each of the local member agencies and other planning partners, such as the New Mexico Department of Transportation and Albuquerque Public Schools.

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)

The TCC provides technical advice to the MTB and reviews items that are scheduled to come before the MTB. Both the MTB and TCC meetings are open to the public and all of their meetings allot time for public input. Reporting to the TCC are several specialized committees. An organization chart showing this board and committee hierarchy is shown. Descriptions of the committees reporting to the TCC follow.

Land Use and Transportation Integration Committee (LUTI)

To promote a more robust planning process in a growing area and support the better integration of land use and transportation planning in the region, LUTI was formed in 2012. Committee members include transportation and land use planners, transit professionals, and transportation engineers from local jurisdictions, including Rio Rancho, Albuquerque, Los Lunas, Belen, Valencia County, Bernalillo County, the Town of Bernalillo, the New Mexico Department of Transportation, Rio Metro, and ABQ Ride. This group meets regularly and has become the steering committee for integrating scenario planning into the MTP.

Active Transportation Committee (AT)

The Active Transportation Committee (AT) provides a forum for discussing primarily walking and biking in the larger scope of the region's community health and safety. This committee also addresses mobility, access to transit, recreation, and other services. The committee reviews MPO products and projects including, but not limited to; safety planning and analysis, the Long Range Bicycle System (LRBS), the MTP, PPP, TIP, bike share, transit, complete streets, and more. This committee is comprised of staff from local agencies and local stakeholders, public health professionals, and active transportation advocates.

Intelligent Transportation Systems Subcommittee (ITS)

The Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Subcommittee is responsible for the promotion and coordination of ITS applications and services within the AMPA. Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Subcommittee meetings are inter-agency meetings between federal, state, and local stakeholders. The Subcommittee coordinates ITS stakeholder activity and ensures the ITS data is up to date and conforms to the ITS Architecture (regional guidance document) for the region.

Congestion Management Process Committee (CMP)

The Congestion Management Process (CMP) is a federally mandated process that helps planners identify congested travel corridors and recommends strategies to increase transportation efficiency and improve transportation options for the traveling public. The CMP Committee is comprised of technical staff from member

agencies who meet monthly to discuss congestion management, transit, safety, and the Project Prioritization Process (PPP) that guides the TIP projects selection process.

Roadway Access Committee (RAC)

The RAC hears requests to modify roadway access conditions of current and future Limited Access Roadways in the AMPA and the roadway access policy. The Committee is comprised of traffic engineers representing the NMDOT, City of Albuquerque, City of Rio Rancho, Bernalillo and Valencia Counties and staff traffic engineers from any other MPO member agency wishing to participate. This Committee meets on an as-needed basis.

Transportation Program Task Group (TPTG)

The TPTG is a working group that provides advice to the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) regarding the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the long-range system maps for the urban area. The TPTG uses a set of evaluation criteria to develop the draft TIP prior to its release for public review and comment. TPTG membership is drawn from technical staff from the various local agencies and the New Mexico Department of Transportation.

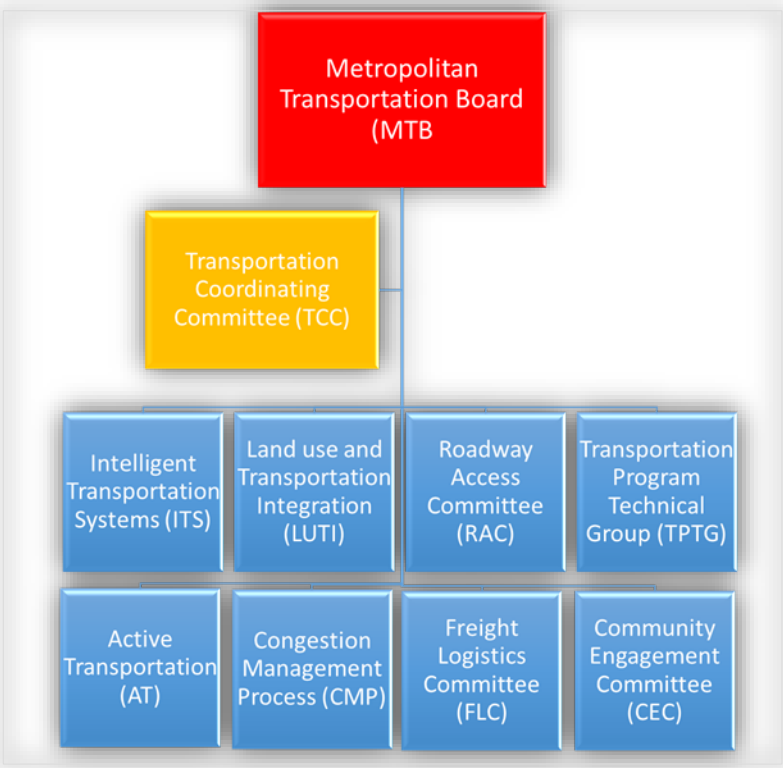
Freight Logistics Committee (FLC)

This committee serves as the regional forum for intermodal movement of goods into, out of, and within the MRCOG region. Members of the committee include staff members and representatives in the region involved in economic development and transportation planning as well as representatives from private associations involved in freight movement.

Community Engagement Committee (CEC)

The Community Engagement Committee is a committee comprised of local professionals and advocates who outreach with the public. The Committee provides feedback and helps assess MRMPO's public outreach methods.

Figure 1-7: MRMPO Committees and Structure



b. MRMPO Technical Assistance and Reports

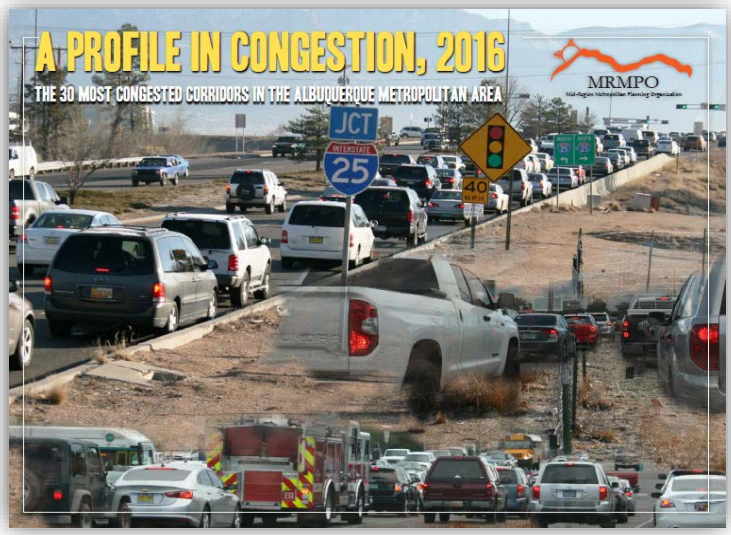
In addition to the policy board and committees that support the work of the transportation planning process, MRMPO has a variety of technical tools and services that support the function of the MPO in the following areas:

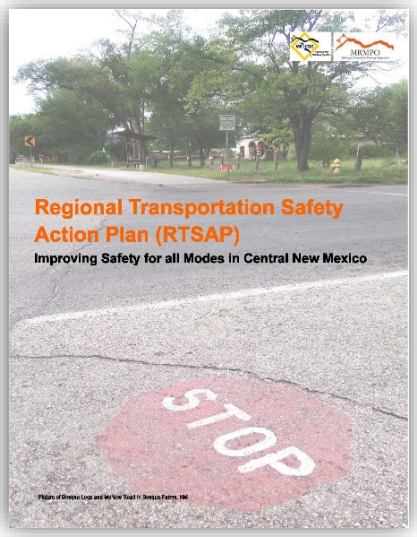
- Socioeconomic and land use modeling and analyses
- Regional safety and crash analyses
- Traffic Counts data collection (motorized and non-motorized)
- Travel demand modeling and analyses
- Transportation accessibility modeling and analyses
- Regional economic modeling and analyses
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping and spatial analyses

MPO-developed documents, maps and data sets are often produced and maintained as a result of these services, including the following examples:

- *The Regional Transportation Safety Action Plan* (RTSAP)
- *The AMPA ITS Regional Architecture*
- *Taking the Wheel – Getting ABQ from Here to There*
- *A Profile in Congestion*

Figure 1-8: A Profile in Congestion, 2016 and the RTSAP, 2018





1.5 MTP Public Engagement

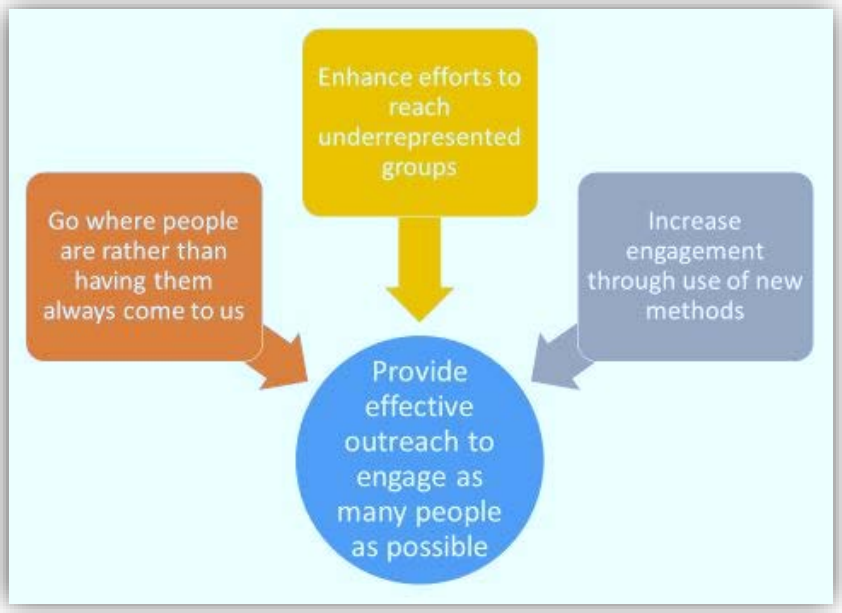
Public engagement efforts and activities for *Connections 2040* were undertaken in accordance with MRMPO's *Public Participation Procedures* adopted by the Metropolitan Transportation Board in 2018 and were guided by MRMPO's *Connections 2040 Public Participation Plan*. MRMPO's overarching goal for public participation is to provide effective outreach to engage as many members of the public and stakeholders as possible, with particular focus on reaching out to populations underrepresented in the planning process such as low-income, minority populations, and young adults.

a. Public Engagement Goals and Objectives

The objectives of MRMPO's public participation goals are to increase engagement through new methods, to increase efforts to reach underrepresented groups, and to put more effort on going to *where people are* as opposed to having them come to where we are. A list of public presentations given and forums where public input was gathered, as well as MTP materials provided, is available in the Appendix F. In its outreach efforts, **MRMPO's focus shifted from *presenting* information to *gathering* information and ideas** from the public, agency members, and stakeholders through a variety of methods. As this information is gathered, staff integrates feedback into the applicable plans where possible. Outreach strategies used for the *Connections 2040 MTP* include the following:

- Paper and online questionnaires (available in English and Spanish)
- Public meetings and open houses, including new methods and techniques used at meetings to better engage participants
- Attending community events and meetings to hand out information and gather feedback in geographically varied locations
- Social media, electronic newsletters, and email blasts
- Interactive maps to gather public feedback
- Presentations to existing advocacy groups and non-profit organizations
- Use of videos that explain the MTP planning process and products

Figure 1-9: Public Engagement Goals



b. Methods for Collecting Public Input and Feedback

To collect public input and feedback for the *Connections 2040 MTP*, staff used a variety of methods including: an online MTP questionnaire; a voting poll on transportation spending; an online interactive map; and documenting comments and questions from meetings and community events. In all, MRMPO recorded over 167 individual comments, 630 respondents to the online questionnaire (with 695 write-in responses), 140 participants in the online gaps map tool, and 368 participants in a "bean jar" voting activity that assessed how people would like to see their transportation funds spent. In addition, MRMPO attended or hosted over 30 community events and meetings where participants had the opportunity to provide feedback. Official public meetings were held for this MTP, and MRMPO made a concerted effort to supplement these meetings with other opportunities for the public to weigh in on the Plan.

Figure 1-10: Mind the Gap Postcard

MTP Questionnaire

The *Connections 2040 MTP* questionnaire was made available online and also in hard copy format in both English and Spanish. The survey was open from August 2018 until December 2018. There were 23 questions that were designed to gauge respondents' satisfaction with the transportation system and their opinions about different transportation modes. About 630 people participated and filled out the questionnaire[2]. Key takeaways from the questionnaire included: the vehicle network is the only network most respondents felt is 'very complete' at 64 percent compared to, for instance, only three and two percent of respondents agreeing that the train and bus networks are very complete, respectively. Also, the top barriers reported for each mode were revealing:

- Vehicle – no significant barriers
- Train – lack of good routes
- Bus – lack of good routes
- Walking – distance is too great
- Bicycle – safety

People's views varied in interesting ways depending on what they reported as their primary mode of transportation. For example, the overall pool of respondents viewed bus travel as not very conducive to getting where you want, but people who reported taking the bus as their primary mode of transportation reported higher satisfaction with that mode. This indicated that perhaps efforts and campaigns that encourage people to try other modes (such as bike to work day events and Safe Routes to School programs), may be an effective means to achieving greater satisfaction for active modes of transportation.

[2] A summary of the questionnaire results is found on MRCOG's website at this location: https://www.mrcog-nm.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3951/Connections-2040-Questionnaire-Report-PDF

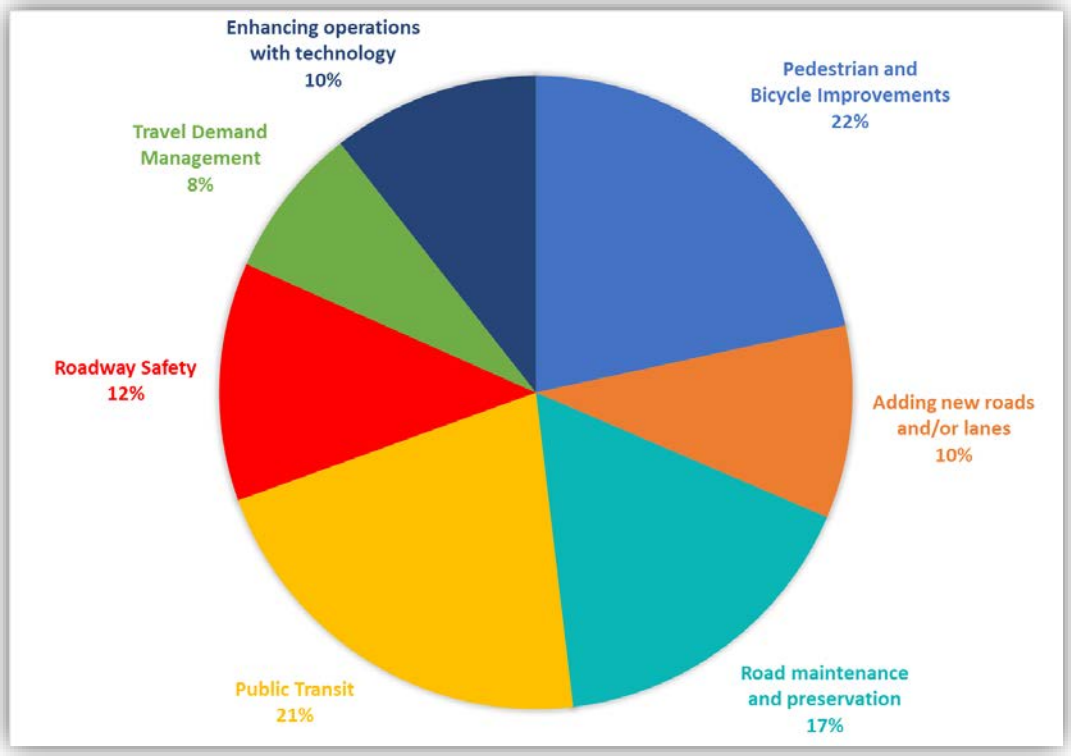
Bean Jar Voting

The *Connections 2040 MTP* represents a more concerted effort to provide interactive opportunities for involving the public. Bean jar voting—where the public was given the opportunity to tell us how they would like to see transportation funds spent—was one such interactive opportunity. Seven project categories used in the Transportation Improvement Program were used for this voting exercise that spanned approximately 15 months.

Figure 1-11: Bean Jar Voting

Results for each voting event were tallied and shared with participants to let them know how their group voted and how their "spending" compared to the entire universe of participants. This exercise proved to be an approachable, intuitive, hands-on way to get feedback about a very important responsibility of MRMPO's—programming federal funds for transportation projects. The results of the public's voting are shown below.

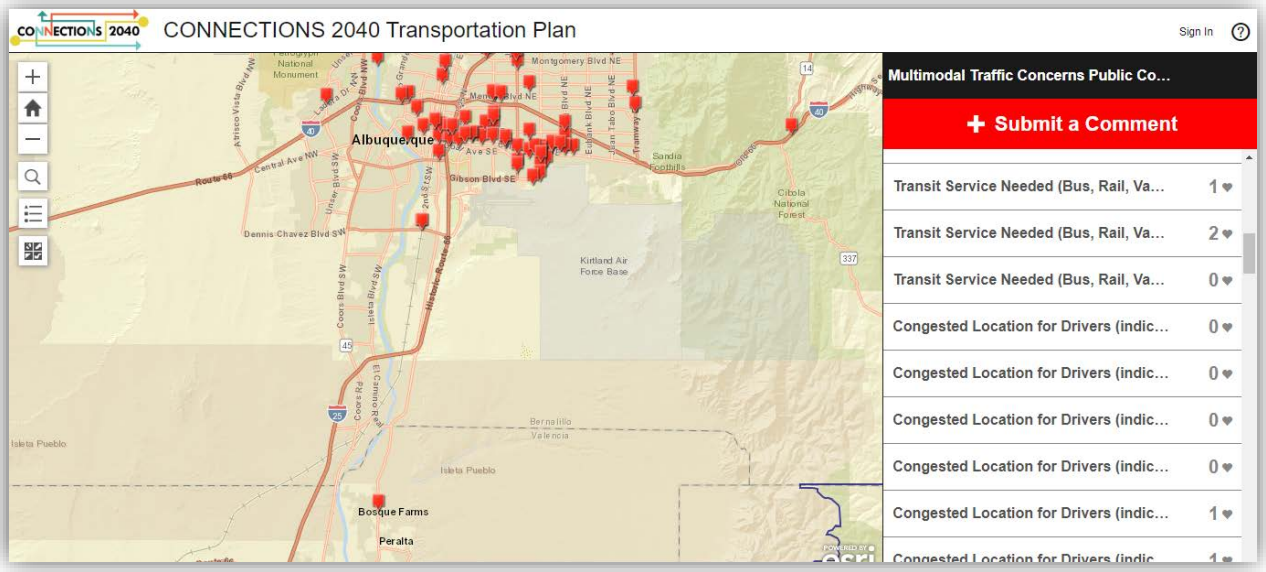
Figure 1-12: Bean Votes for Transportation Spending



Online Interactive Map

Another new tool used to gather public feedback was the development of an online interactive map that allowed people to record problem areas, or gaps, from traveling around the region by vehicle, bus, train, walking, or biking. The intent of the tool was to give MRMPO a sense of where the public identifies problem areas or gaps are around the region in order to inform transportation priorities. Aproximately 140 comments were received. Results were shared online and are included in Chapter 9.

Figure 1-13: Online Interactive Map for Public Comments



c. Public Engagement Groups

Public Outreach Group

An informal Public Outreach Group was created by staff from local governments and civic agencies to discuss best practices and lessons learned regarding public outreach practices. This group began meeing in March 2018 and continues to meet once a month. The intent of the group is to improve the effectiveness of public outreach in the region. Staff from the MRMPO regularly attend these meetings and any government agency staff person working on public outreach in the region is welcome.

Community Engagement Committee (CEC)

A formal Community Engagement Committee (CEC) was formed with a charter adopted by the MTB in 2019. The Committee will meet once or twice per year to provide feedback to MRMPO on its public outreach activities and methods starting in 2020.

1.6 Contents of the MTP

a. Improved Outlook for the Region

Besides the fact that an MTP is federally required, it is a wise investment in time and energy to produce a long-range transportation plan for the region. By working toward the goals of optimized mobility, active transportation, environmental resiliency, and economic linkages and implementing the pathways described in Appendix G, the region's future outlook improves. This is true not only in terms of transportation conditions, but also livability, traveling safety, regional competitiveness, and sense of place, to name a few.

The *Connections 2040 MTP* represents a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process to identify existing conditions, anticipate future needs, and prioritize projects that support the goals and pathways of the plan.

> **The MTP development process not only results in a long-range multimodal transportation plan, but also provides the opportunity to reconsider how the region is growing and how those growth patterns affect the way people live and travel throughout the region.**

As a result, the *Connections 2040 MTP* is not just a product and a means of disseminating information, but it is also *a process* that brings together regional stakeholders to develop a vision for the future and continually work toward achieving that vision.

b. Document Organization and Chapter Summaries

The *Connections 2040 MTP* document highlights the state of our existing transportation system and how we expect conditions to change in the future before delving into more focused chapters that include content grouped around the four goals of the MTP and the financial aspects of the plan, and then finishes with a look at plan implementation.

Table 1-3: Document Organization and Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1: Introduction to the long-range transportation plan and the role of the MRMPO.	**Chapter 6:** Overview of how transportation investments ripple throughout the economy including infrastructure spending, issues of affordability, and fiscal impacts to municipalities.
Chapter 2: Socioeconomic and transportation trends and the rate of growth expected in our region over the next 20 years, including key opportunities and challenges in the region.	**Chapter 7:** Brings together environmental resiliency concerns including climate change and air quality concerns, and protecting natural landscapes.
Chapter 3: Target Scenario explanation and its integration into the long-range process, including the scenario's guiding principles and benefits.	**Chapter 8:** Describes financial aspects of the plan including federal funding, fiscal constraint, revenue projections, and maintenance and operations costs.
Chapter 4: Focuses on optimized mobility including how the roadway and transit systems are performing, congestion management and maintenance of our transportation infrastructure.	**Chapter 9:** Explores the multiple avenues for plan implementation including a toolbox of strategies for achieving the MTP goals.
Chapter 5: Highlights active transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle conditions, roadway safety, access to transit, and public health concerns.	Supplemental materials are in the **Appendices**, including a list projects proposed by member agencies for implementation by the year 2040.