

Chapter 1: Introduction

The 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is the long-range transportation plan for the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA). The MTP identifies challenges and sets out strategies that will be employed over the next 20 plus years to maintain and improve mobility, quality of life and economic development throughout the region. The plan presents solutions to regional problems and, unlike past MTPs, sets a new emphasis on monitoring the extent to which the region meets the goals and objectives defined in the plan.

Transportation planners, decision makers, and the general public alike realize that the “building our way out of congestion” approach to transportation in the region will no longer suffice, especially when faced with the significant growth projected in the region and the mounting challenges of rising oil prices, increased congestion, climate change and air quality concerns. To keep a population of 1.3 million moving in the region in 2035, new goals and strategies will need to be developed. This plan introduces new goals and commits to strategies for reaching them.

Chapter 1 includes background information on requirements and guidelines for the MTP, the guiding goals of the plan and how the plan was developed.

A. 2035 MTP Goals

The 2035 MTP features three goals meant to provide structure, organization and direction to regional transportation planning efforts. The goals and underlying objectives (see Table 1-1) were approved by the Metropolitan Transportation Board in April 2010 and reflect the common needs of the region from a transportation perspective. The MTP goals help frame both the organization of the plan and consideration of future changes in the region. The goals also guide the principles and objectives for transportation decision-making in the region. In short, the goals concretely identify in an easy-to-understand manner how an improvement or approach fits into and benefits the overall transportation system.

Table 1-1: Goals and Objectives of the 2035 MTP

GOAL	Preserve and improve quality of life
Objective Statement	<i>Enhance the livability, safety, and environmental conditions of the region through proactive, responsible, equitable and sustainable transportation decisions.</i>
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Improve air quality by prioritizing projects that would result in reduced VMT and reduced net emissions 2) Enhance environmental justice communities (areas of high low-income and/or minority population) 3) Encourage safety improvements 4) Preserve and maintain existing infrastructure
GOAL	Mobility of people and goods
Objective Statement	<i>Enable the efficient movement of people and goods within and through the region and provide residents with a range of viable transportation choices.</i>
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Respond to mobility needs (identified geographically) 2) Improve connections to transit 3) Include a pedestrian and/or bicycle component 4) Focus on high traffic flow areas 5) Include strategies that will enhance system performance
GOAL	Support economic activity and growth
Objective Statement	<i>Develop a transportation system that promotes economic activity and vitality in the region, achieved through decisions that provide an affordable, efficient, multi-modal and safe transportation network.</i>
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Serve areas with high population and employment activity ("investment areas") 2) Support private sector enterprise 3) Support local priorities which are demonstrated with local matching funding and project readiness

B. Federal Requirements and Plan Consistency

Federal Requirements

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. This process is carried out in coordination with the statewide transportation planning process. All MPOs must develop an MTP and a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The MTP must be consistent with the latest federal transportation law, which is currently the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act-A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), signed by the President in 2005. In 2007, the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration issued final rulemaking to incorporate SAFETEA-LU into their administrative regulations, which are found in Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 450 (23 CFR Part 450).

In addition to the MTP and TIP, federal transportation regulations also require MPOs to create a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and a Public Participation Plan. The UPWP outlines transportation planning activities that will be conducted by the MPO. All activities must be in compliance with the MTP. The Public Participation Plan defines the process for providing citizens and all interested parties reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning processes including in the development of the MTP and TIP.

Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations includes the planning factors that must be considered as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process (23 CFR Part 450.306) as well as specific elements that must be included in a metropolitan transportation plan (23 CFR Part 450.322). MRMPO's planning process is consistent with the planning process requirements and the 2035 MTP includes all federally required elements for transportation plans.

The planning and public input processes conducted by MRMPO are required to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (U.S.C. 23 §450.334.a.3) and the Environmental Justice Orders, discussed further in Chapter 1.F.

In relation to air quality regulations, MRMPO must make a conformity determination on its MTP in accordance with the Clean Air Act and EPA conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93; more description on air quality regulations and existing conditions is found in Chapters 2.G and 3.B.iii). The Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration must make a conformity determination on the plan as well.

In addition, the MTP must conform to the following:

- the State Implementation Plan (SIP) Revision: Limited Maintenance Plan for Carbon Monoxide (CO) for Albuquerque/Bernalillo County, New Mexico
- the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board Transportation Conformity regulations, New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) Title 20, Chapter 11, Part 3

Plan Consistency

Efforts have been made to make the 2035 MTP consistent with existing local and state planning documents. In particular, NMDOT has a variety of state-wide transportation plans that impact regional plans and vice versa. The state-level document that is equivalent to MRMPO's MTP is NMDOT's Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan. These two documents should be as consistent as possible.

In an effort to increase the coordination of land use and transportation planning, MRMPO also reviews local short and long-range plans. The land use plans similar to the MTP are local comprehensive plans. Many of the area and sector development plans, however, can also have a significant impact on the efficiency of the regional transportation system. The main planning documents that apply to the AMPA include:

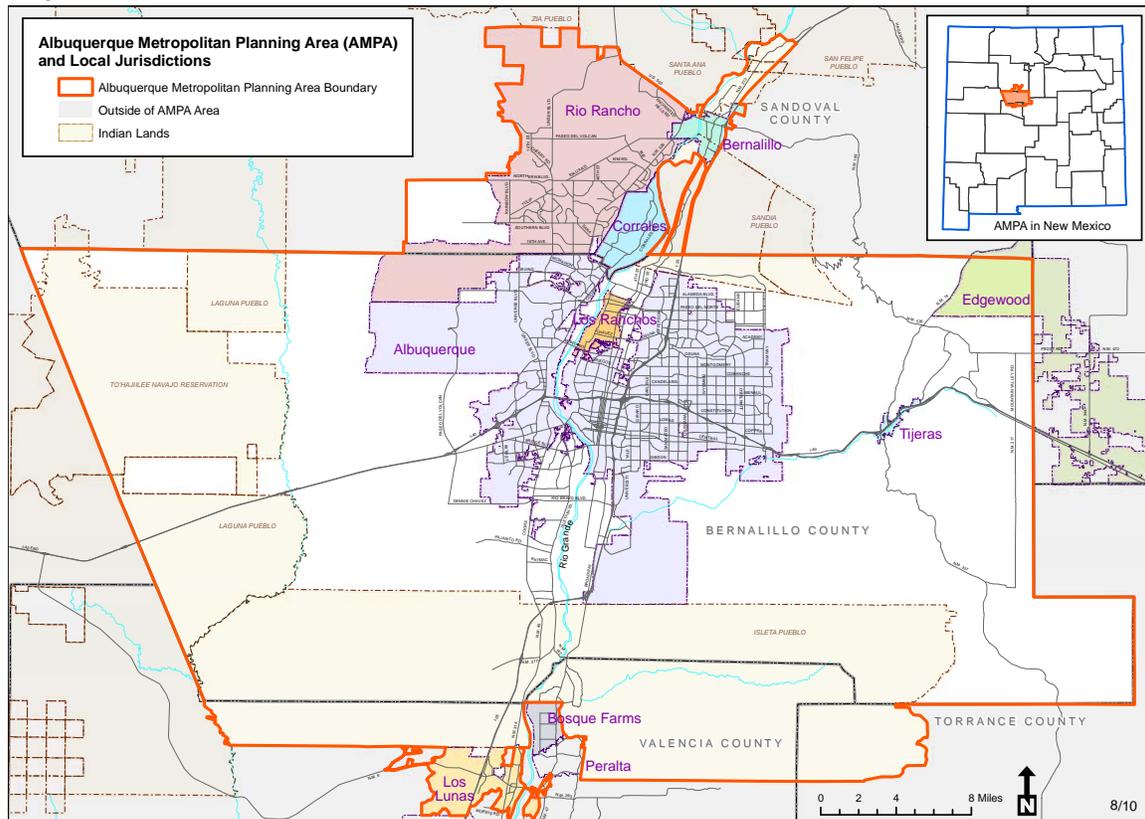
- New Mexico Department of Transportation's *New Mexico 2030 Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan*
- New Mexico Department of Transportation's *DRAFT New Mexico Statewide Public Transportation Plan (2010)*
- New Mexico Department of Transportation's *New Mexico Comprehensive Transportation Safety Plan: 2009 Strategies Update*
- The State Implementation Plan Revision: Limited Maintenance Plan for Carbon Monoxide; Albuquerque/Bernalillo County, New Mexico, Years 2006-2016
- New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC), Title 20, Chapter 11, Part 3 (20.11.3), Transportation Conformity
- *State of New Mexico All-Hazard Emergency Operations Plan (2007)*
- *2005 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for New Mexico State Planning and Development District 3*
- *Middle Rio Grande Regional Water Plan 2000-2050 (2004)*
- New Mexico Department of Game and Fish's *Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (2006)*
- regional growth plans
- county and municipal general comprehensive plans
- area and sector development plans
- capital improvement plans (CIPs)
- major transportation studies
- county and municipal housing plans and goals
- natural resource plans
- bikeways and trails master plans
- safety plans

C. Purpose of the MTP

The 2035 MTP is the long-range transportation plan for the greater Albuquerque area. The plan includes short and long-range strategies and action items for the development of a multimodal transportation system that improves mobility for people and goods throughout the region. The plan is developed by the Albuquerque area's metropolitan planning organization, the Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MRMPO). MRMPO is the transportation arm of the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG).

An MTP is a federally-required document for urban areas with a population of more than 50,000. It is a living document, intended to be updated and continually revisited as urban areas grow and change, funding situations evolve, new analysis methods become available and different transportation needs and priorities are identified. The 2035 MTP has a timeframe of over 20 years and examines the transportation needs for the AMPA, which is shown in Map 1-1.

Map 1-1: AMPA Boundaries¹



More specifically, the MTP is a tool that helps guide the metropolitan area in terms of improving regional mobility and providing a process for the strategic allocation of federal dollars that benefit the region as a whole. The 2035 MTP uses 2008 as the base year for assessing existing conditions and for future year employment and population

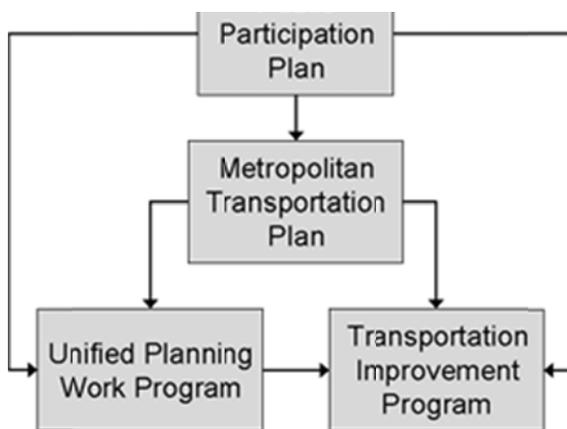
¹ All maps will be available in full-size on MRCOG's website (<http://www.mrcog-nm.gov/>)

projections. The 2035 MTP examines the impact of these projections on the transportation network and offers a set of strategies aimed at achieving the plan's three goals of preserving *quality of life*, improving *mobility* and *supporting economic activity and growth*.

The MTP development provides the opportunity to consider how the region is growing and how those growth patterns affect the way people live and travel throughout the region. As a result, the final 2035 MTP document is not just a product and a means of disseminating information; it also represents a process that brings together regional stakeholders to make recommendations and develop strategies for the transportation system based on the analysis of existing and projected conditions and common goals.

The major challenge the 2035 MTP addresses is how to best plan for the region's transportation needs as a result of projected high rates of population growth. The rate and location of continued growth in the region necessitate an increased focus on easing congestion at river crossings and other key locations, assessing the benefits of higher density land uses along transit corridors, and pursuing the development of new methods to objectively prioritize and select projects for inclusion in the MTP and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

One of the essential components of the MTP is the identification of transportation projects and studies planned for the next 25 years. The MTP must be fiscally constrained, meaning that only those projects for which there is funding (either committed, available or reasonably expected to be available) can be included in the plan. This list of projects in the MTP is important because the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) must be derived from the MTP.



The TIP is the short-range implementing mechanism for the MTP that allows for transportation projects to be funded and eventually built. 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. The MTP provides the framework for proper consideration of whether projects are good investments for the

AMPA and will be effective for maintaining and improving the regional transportation system. Additionally, the MTP sets the course for the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which describes the planning activities to be undertaken by MRMPO on an annual basis. All metropolitan planning organization products—the MTP, the TIP and the UPWP—adhere to the MPO-developed Public Participation Plan (See Figure 1-1).

D. MTP Development and Public Participation

The 2035 MTP was developed over the course of several years and with input and cooperation from many different participants. While the Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB) is the decision-making body that sets transportation policy for the area, the Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MRMPO) is responsible for carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process, including developing and updating the MTP. Under the direction of the MTB, MRMPO staff is responsible for the day to day work and activities required for bringing the plan together, including data collection and analysis, leading public participation efforts and technical committee work and prioritizing projects.

The MTB, which is comprised of elected officials from each of the organization's member agencies, is advised by several technical committees including the Transportation Planning Technical Group (TPTG), Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC), MTP Steering Committee, Congestion Management Process (CMP) Committee, Pedestrian-Bicycle Transportation Advisory Group (PB-TAG), Public Involvement Committee (PIC), and the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Committee.

Technical committees are comprised of staff from member agencies and provide key contributions in developing the MTP through the analysis of transportation issues and the development of strategies and action items for the region. Public and stakeholder input were also instrumental to the plan development and were integrated into the plan throughout the process in three phases (see the following section on Public Participation).

For the final phase, a draft MTP was made available for public review and comment in January 2011. The final draft MTP was made available for public review and comment in March 2011. Finally, the MTP was adopted by the MTB in April 2011. Copies of the adopted 2035 MTP are provided to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Agency by June 2011 for a conformity determination. Once the plan's conformity is determined, MRMPO staff will begin to implement the 2035 MTP.



Public Participation

Public participation for the 2035 MTP was conducted in accordance with MRMPO's Public Participation Procedures² adopted by the Metropolitan Transportation Board in January 2010. The Procedures highlight several strategies intended to generate meaningful input for the MTP. The strategies used included surveys, public meetings at forums such as neighborhood associations, open houses held at various locations and requests for comments sent via the MTP website and through postage-paid comment forms. Public events were publicized in local broadcast and print media, postcards were mailed to the over 800 individuals and organizations on the MRMPO mailing list and notices were provided to all members of MRMPO's boards and committees.

The goal of the Public Participation Plan is to provide the public and concerned stakeholders meaningful access to the planning process at each stage of its development. The first stage of development was assessing current conditions



and deficiencies in the transportation system. For this stage, the 2010 Transportation Survey was the primary means of gathering public input. The survey was made available online and respondents provided open-ended comments at the conclusion of the survey. The survey was also sent to MRMPO's email distribution list, University of New Mexico (UNM) and Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) students and staff, Rail Runner commuters, and large employers in the area. In addition, local media publicized the survey. Over 3,600 responses were received, representing a broad cross-section of the public³.

The top three planning priorities among survey takers were to:

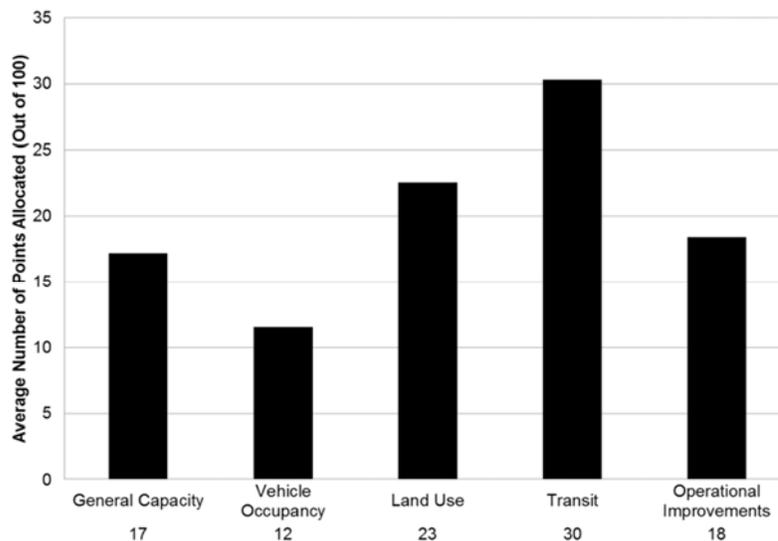
- develop the system so that people can travel to centers of employment, education and commerce easily by public transit, bicycle and walking (30 percent of survey takers rated this as their first priority)
- expand and enhance public transit (14 percent of survey takers rated this as their first priority)
- reduce traffic congestion (11 percent of survey takers rated this as their first priority)

² The Public Participation Procedures are available on MRCOG's website at www.mrcog-nm.gov.

³ The full 2035 MTP survey report is available on MRCOG's website at www.mrcog-nm.gov/more-news-showallnews-210/399-results-of-transportation-study.

These top three priorities became key themes for the 2035 MTP. These results also closely tracked verbal comments received during public meetings. The survey generated 300 pages of open-ended comments. Wherever possible, priorities distilled from comments were integrated into the 2035 MTP.⁴

Building on the success of this preliminary survey, MRMPO staff revised its public presentations in order to solicit measurable input on transportation issues at its 2035 MTP public meetings (a list of public meetings where the 2035 MTP was presented is shown in Table 1-2). Early presentations thoroughly described the planning process, forecast data, and various planning factors but yielded little response from audience members about their reactions or thoughts about transportation in the region. In response to this, the revised presentation included a discussion of strategies to address one regionally-significant and perennially contentious issue: river crossings in the AMPA. Five strategies to address this problem were presented, and the audience was directed



to allocate resources between them (see Figure 1-3 for the results). These strategies included expanding bridge capacity, introducing HOT/HOV lanes, increasing transit, land use changes and operational improvements. Once results from the survey were tabulated they were compared to prior presentations. A web version was also

prepared to allow any interested person the opportunity to comment on the river crossing strategies. Results of the survey were then presented to the Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB). While the river crossing survey was limited to one particular issue, it did allow the public to express their support (or lack thereof) for different approaches to solving an important regional issue.

The final round of public participation gathered input from the public about the set of action items and projects proposed for inclusion in the MTP. Action items for implementing the MTP (see Chapter 5) were introduced to the public, categorized by the goals they are intended to address. Participants were able to express support for up to three action items for each goal. The top three responses for each goal are listed below.

⁴ All comments received have been posted on MRCOG's website.

- **Quality of Life:** Adopt complete streets policies; develop livable / sustainable communities; promote non-motorized modes of travel.
- **Mobility of People and Goods:** Implement Bus Rapid Transit System; identify specific locations for dedicated transit facilities, right-of-way acquisition and signal improvements; close gaps in the regional bicycle network.
- **Economic Activity and Growth:** Assess economic impacts of various land use scenarios; incorporate transit-oriented development principles into local development plans and policies; coordinate regional growth strategies with the transportation network.

The survey given at the these meetings will be available online, and its results will continue to be monitored by MPO staff.

Comments received from the all three phases of public participation helped guide the 2035 MTP toward a greater emphasis on sustainable growth. For example, the urban form which most people preferred was one that provided several transportation options. During the second phase of public involvement, the strongest support was given to increasing transit options and developing land use strategies that would promote transit use and non-motorized forms of transportation. These results were largely mirrored by the support given to transit-oriented and complete streets development in the final round of public participation.

Table 1-2: Public Meetings Held for the 2035 MTP

Date	Audience	Location
September 17, 2009	Public Meeting	Albuquerque
February 3, 2010	Westside Coalition	Albuquerque
February 22, 2010	West Central Business Development	Albuquerque
February 25, 2010	High Resort Community Village Association	Rio Rancho
March 2, 2010	South West Alliance of Neighbors	Albuquerque
March 4, 2010	North Valley Coalition	Albuquerque
March 23, 2010	Public Meeting	Village of Los Lunas
March 25, 2010	Vecinos del Bosque Neighborhood Association	Albuquerque
April 1, 2010	Public Meeting	Albuquerque
April 8, 2010	Public Meeting	Rio Rancho
April 15, 2010	Mountain View Neighborhood Association	Albuquerque
April 21, 2010	District 4 Coalition of Neighborhood Associations	Albuquerque
May 5, 2010	District 7 Coalition of Neighborhood Associations	Albuquerque
May 24, 2010	East Mountain Coalition	Albuquerque
May 27, 2010	District 8 Coalition of Neighborhood Associations	Albuquerque
August 19, 2010	Taylor Ranch Neighborhood Association	Albuquerque
September 9, 2010	North Valley Coalition	Albuquerque
September 29, 2010	Public Meeting	Town of Bernalillo
October 4, 2010	Public Meeting	Village of Los Lunas
October 7, 2010	Public Meeting	Albuquerque
October 12, 2010	Public Meeting	Rio Rancho
November 11, 2010	Leadership Sandoval	Rio Rancho
November 23, 2010	UNM Course on Regional Planning	Albuquerque
January 11, 2011	League of Women Voters	Albuquerque
March 1, 2011	Public Meeting	Los Lunas
March 2, 2011	Public Meeting	Rio Rancho
March 3, 2011	Public Meeting	Albuquerque
March 4, 2011	American Society of Civil Engineers	Albuquerque

E. Environmental Considerations and Mitigation

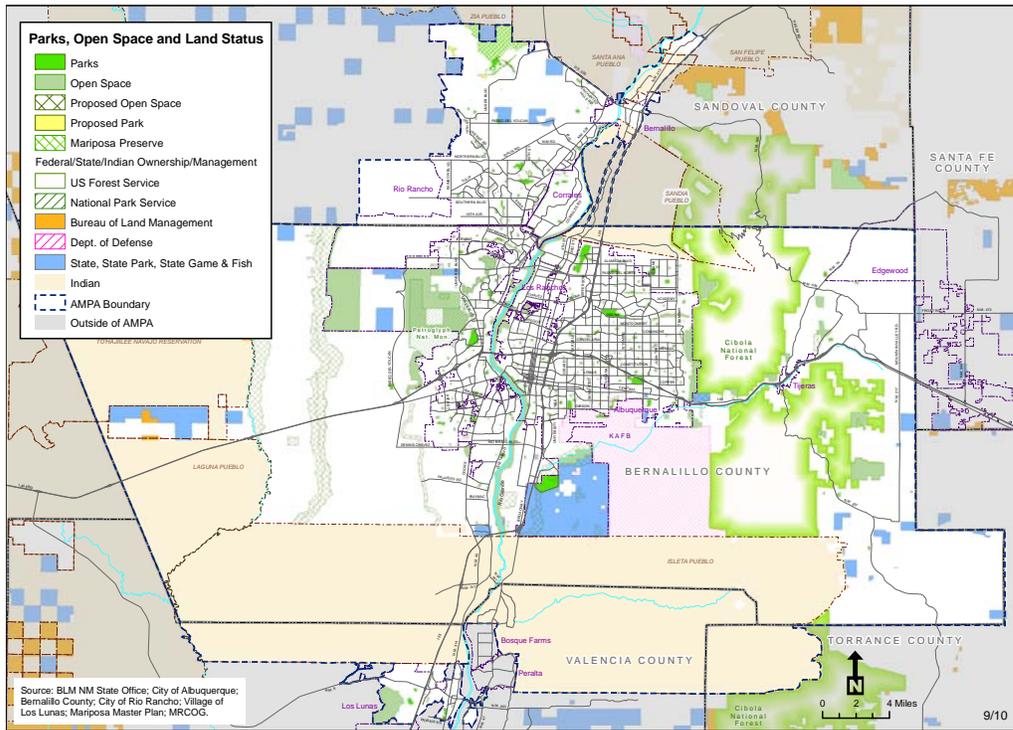
Metropolitan transportation plans must identify potentially-affected environmental resources and discuss potential environmental mitigation activities developed to protect those resources. As part of the 2035 MTP, MRMPO consulted with federal, state and local wildlife, land management and regulatory agencies to identify broad-level mitigation measures appropriate for transportation projects in the metropolitan area. Agencies consulted with included the US Fish and Wildlife service, the Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo and Flood Control Authority and New Mexico State Parks, among others. Environmental resources and issues identified by MRMPO that could potentially be impacted by transportation projects include:

- storm water runoff associated with roadways
- roadway and construction activity impacts to trails
- open space reserves and parks
- arroyo resources
- bosque habitat
- federal and state endangered species critical habitat areas
- habitat loss and fragmentation from human developments such as highways
- maintaining or reestablishing habitat connectivity
- cultural (historic and archaeological) resources

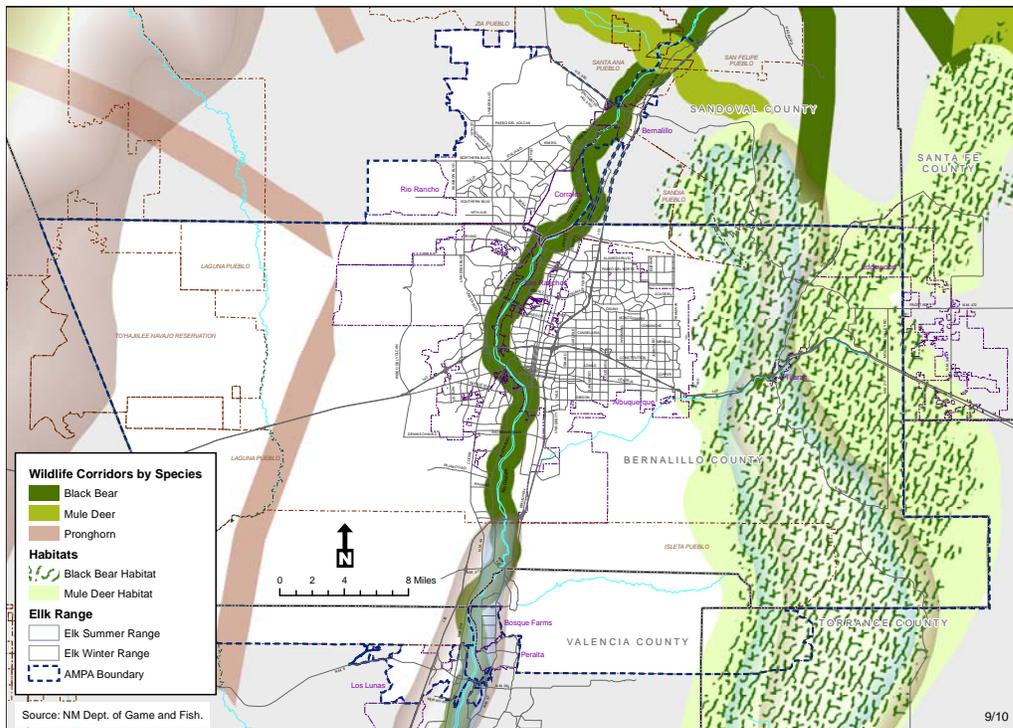
The intent of requiring MPOs to identify mitigation strategies is to encourage better coordination and stronger linkages between planning and environmental processes. Although project-specific mitigation measures are developed during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, the inclusion of broad-level mitigation measures for regional consideration within the metropolitan transportation plan allows for the introduction of environmental considerations early in the transportation planning process.

Spatial data for environmental resources was collected from various agencies and are shown in Maps 1-2 and 1-3.

Map 1-2: Parks, Open Space and Land Status in the AMPA



Map 1-3: Wildlife Corridors and Habitats in the AMPA



Resources were mapped to reveal how they might be impacted by proposed transportation projects and to assist in the development of appropriate mitigation measures. Some resources, such as archaeological resources and certain species occurrences, are not included on the map as that information is not released to the general public.

Wildlife Habitat

Mapping of ranges for wildlife is critical to transportation planning for the protection of wildlife corridors and because of the potential for wildlife/vehicle collisions. Within the AMPA, these incidents are concentrated in the East Mountains and Tijeras Canyon portions of Bernalillo County and along US 550 in southern Sandoval County. Consultation with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish occurs during the development of projects within identified wildlife habitat areas or wildlife corridors.

Natural Resources

The Rio Grande supplies water to many communities downstream from the Albuquerque area. The river itself is fed by other rivers and a system of arroyos throughout the AMPA which channel stormwater runoff while protecting existing infrastructure. Projects that may impact arroyos, arroyo drainage functions or arroyo recreational trails are coordinated with the appropriate agencies in the project development phase. For stormwater impacts, project sponsors work with appropriate tribes and city, county and regional agencies.

Parks and Open Spaces

Impacts to parks and open spaces, both existing and planned, should be considered during project development. Consultation with the agency with jurisdiction over the park or open space should occur as early in the process as possible.

Cultural Resources

Projects may also impact cultural resources, which include both archaeological and historic resources. In general, the density of archaeological sites is higher on Albuquerque's west mesa and along the Rio Puerco than in the more urbanized portions of the AMPA. Archaeological sites are not published for protection purposes and consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, tribes and tribal historic preservation offices should occur early in the project development process to avoid, minimize and mitigate any project impacts to these resources.

F. Environmental Justice Requirements

Environmental justice addresses how low-income and minority populations are affected by actions of the federal government. Environmental justice consideration must apply to all transportation decisions including those made as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process. The three fundamental principles of environmental justice are:

- to avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations
- to ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process
- to prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations

Environmental justice programs stem from Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin and specifies that recipients of federal funds must certify nondiscrimination. Environmental justice requirements were first issued in 1994 Presidential Executive Order 12898, which directed 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. In 1997, the U.S. Department of Transportation expanded upon the requirements of the 1994 environmental justice Executive Order and clarified the role and responsibilities for transportation decisions makers relating to environmental justice. In 1999, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) issued a memorandum to provide guidance for implementing Title VI requirements in metropolitan and statewide transportation planning.

MRMPO must comply with both environmental justice and Title VI requirements. The Federal requirements which MRMPO must follow include:

- ensuring that the MTP and the TIP comply with Title VI
- identifying residential, employment, and transportation patterns of low-income and minority populations so that those populations' needs can be identified and addressed and the benefits and burdens of transportation investments can be fairly distributed
- evaluating and improving MRMPO's public involvement processes where necessary to eliminate participation barriers and to engage minority and low-income populations in transportation decision making

In addition to environmental justice and Title VI requirements, MRMPO must also comply with Executive Order 13166, which requires the organization to take reasonable steps to ensure that Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons have access to programs, services and information provided by MRMPO. Limited English Proficient persons are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English.

G. Project Prioritization Process

Recently MRMPO, with the help of various technical committees, developed a Project Prioritization Process (PPP) to be used for selecting projects to be included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The PPP is a unique tool for making informed decisions and allocating resources based on technical data. It utilizes MRMPO resources and established regional goals and objectives to encourage sound transportation decisions. Both the 2035 MTP and PPP are guided by these established goals and objectives.

Figure 1-4: Project Prioritization Process Evaluation Criteria

<i>PPP Evaluation Criteria</i>
<p>Goal I. Preserve and Improve Quality of Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Quality • Safety • Environmental Justice • Preserve Existing Infrastructure
<p>Goal II. Mobility of People & Goods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic Need • Performance Strategies • Intelligent Transportation Systems • People Movement • Intermodal Connectivity/Transit Connections • Alternate Modes
<p>Goal III. Support Economic Activity and Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment/Activity Areas • Private Sector • Local Priorities

The Project Prioritization Process uses the goals of the MTP and further defines specific evaluation criteria for each goal in order to measure the extent to which a proposed project provides quality of life, mobility or economic benefits. This process provides a quantitative assessment of whether the goals of the MTP are met by individual transportation projects. This integration ensures that the goals reflected in the long-range planning document are also fully assessed when developing the short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The idea of developing a PPP emerged from the Congestion Management Process Committee's desire to see federal transportation dollars allocated to the corridors in the Albuquerque metropolitan area that experience the most congestion and poorest transportation conditions.

The need for a PPP is compounded by the level of growth expected in the region, placing a premium on transportation decisions that lead to the long-term sustainability and continued functionality of the transportation network. The MTP development paralleled this process and was also developed with consideration of these important regional issues.

Feedback from the technical committees indicated the prioritization process needed to evolve beyond the previously employed evaluation system, which asked member agencies to subjectively assess whether proposed projects met the seven goals of the 2030 MTP. To improve upon this process required a meaningful and objective methodology that could incorporate all facets of the transportation planning process and comprehensively evaluate the benefits individual projects would provide to the region.

The PPP provides a quantitative and objective assessment of the benefits and impacts of individual transportation projects. Each project submitted for inclusion in the TIP is evaluated according to a series of performance measures and receives a prioritization score. The performance measures are organized around the three goals of the 2035 MTP and are outlined in Figure 1-4. Projects are also evaluated with criteria specific to different mode types; meaning that roadway, transit, and pedestrian/bicycle projects are judged on criteria which more accurately reflect the needs of those modes.

The performance measures are intended to identify projects which provide a number of contributions to the transportation network. The criteria are varied and wide-ranging, meaning a high score in an individual criterion does not necessarily indicate a beneficial project overall. As a result, even the highest scoring projects may not address all criteria well, while projects with a low overall score may excel in certain criteria. Therefore multifaceted projects which address a number of regional needs and target key locations generally receive the highest prioritization score. The measurement of the MTP is similar to the PPP but focuses on the transportation system as a whole and is assessed using performance targets (see Chapter 5).

PPP and the 2012-2017 TIP

The first opportunity to implement the prioritization process was the 2012-2017 TIP, which was developed in winter 2010-11. The prioritization process served as a tool in assisting in the project selection process, and was not the ultimate determinant in the distribution of federal transportation dollars. Nor was it intended to replace the debate and dialogue associated with the TIP process. Rather, the prioritization process is meant to serve as a guide to shape the discussion around common evaluative criteria and to bring attention to projects which most effectively address the needs of the region. The *Project Prioritization Process Guidebook*, along with the 2012-2017 TIP, is available on the MRCOG website (www.mrcog-nm.gov) in the TIP section.