

## 9.0

# CONCLUSION

Updating the Long-Range Transportation Plan allows MUMPO, as it does any MPO, the opportunity to incorporate the most recent data, identify any changes in factors affecting travel demand, and modify policies, programs or projects based on the most recent information and conditions. This *2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan* is different from the previous LRTP (the *2025 LRTP* produced and adopted 3 years ago) for the general reasons mentioned above.

MUMPO is responsible for long-range transportation planning and programming for an area where jobs and households have grown rapidly during the past thirty years. Demographic projections (*Chapter 5.1*) show growth is expected to continue at a rapid pace for the foreseeable future. Even during the last five years, when the national economy's job growth slowed and tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs evaporated from other counties in the Carolinas, Mecklenburg and Union Counties continued to steadily attract new jobs and residents.

That past and recent growth has increased the demand for transportation facilities and services in MUMPO's planning area. MUMPO's past commitments to investing in transportation infrastructure have helped the area attract and cope with the current growth in people and their trips, as well as more economic activity and freight movements.

This LRTP describes the investments in freeways, other roadways, and rapid and other forms of transit that will provide additional capacity to serve the increase in travel demands projected through 2030. Billions of dollars will be spent, based on this LRTP, to widen and extend freeways and other roadways in the MUMPO planning area, and greatly expand transit services, particularly in Mecklenburg County. Tens of millions of dollars will be spent to enhance the efficiency and capacity of intermodal freight facilities and Charlotte/Douglas International Airport.

## Challenges

Even with the anticipated increases in funding for transportation assumed for this LRTP, there are four specific challenges facing MUMPO, and to an increasing extent, also the adjacent MPOs in this bi-state metropolitan region:

1. responding effectively to **regional issues** – from managing growth to developing collaborative solutions across various jurisdictional boundaries;
2. providing more **transportation choices** – beyond building roadways solely for motor vehicles;
3. securing the **financing** necessary to overcome the first two challenges; and
4. demonstrating conformity with North or South Carolina's State Implementation Plan(s) for attaining (or not violating) the National Ambient **Air Quality** Standards.

## 1. Regional Issues

While this LRTP reflects and incorporates several regional data collection and modeling initiatives, there are still various regional planning issues that will need to be addressed in upcoming LRTPs prepared by MUMPO and adjacent MPOs. The following regional initiatives were successfully accomplished during the past three years:

- compiling the first-ever inventory of land uses and socio-economic data,
- producing the first-ever projections of employment and population,
- creating a new travel forecasting model covering all or parts of ten counties in the bi-state region, and
- preparing (the first-ever) region-wide forecasts of highway and transit travel.

As a result of this work, a strong *technical* foundation for transportation, and other related types of planning now exists in the Greater Charlotte region. However, the *organizational* foundation for implementing ongoing planning efforts involving the region's four MPOs is more tenuous than are the technical data and travel forecasting model described above.

The region's four MPOs collaborated to accomplish the technical activities accomplished during the past three years. Updating the demographic, economic and land use data, as well as any other travel-related assumptions necessary to produce travel forecasts, must now evolve into a continuous undertaking so that the investments made to date in regional data and the new travel forecasting model are not wasted. Travel flows and air quality impacts are already affecting the entire region, which is an area larger than that included in all four MPOs.

The need to prepare forecasts based on region-wide highway or transit networks, and region-wide land use or socio-economic assumptions will make the MPOs more interdependent. Crafting the agreements involving the four MPOs and various other entities to establish the funding and staffing arrangements to update data required for modeling and to produce new forecasts remains to be accomplished.

## 2. Transportation Choices

The projections of future traffic that cannot be accommodated solely on the MPO's Thoroughfare Plan – together with increasing interest in creating pedestrian-scale activity centers or villages – can only lead to the conclusion that a greater emphasis on multimodal choices is necessary.

Consequently, MUMPO's LRTP recommends extensive expansions of the services provided by the Charlotte Area Transit System. A five-corridor rapid transit system is expected to provide a new form of transportation capacity that will make available high-quality transportation services for an ever-growing percentage of persons traveling in Mecklenburg County.

However, since large increases in population and employment are also projected to occur beyond Mecklenburg County, the growth in the magnitude of travel across Mecklenburg County's boundaries will account for increasing percentages of the travel occurring on the

freeways and major thoroughfares in the region's central county. More express bus routes and bus trips and (where appropriate) rapid transit guideways, will need to be provided in order to reduce the vehicle miles of travel into Mecklen-burg County, especially by commuters.

More HOV and/or HOT lanes will also need to be part of the region's future transportation network. Constructing toll roads or instituting managed lanes can help create new revenues to meet the challenge of securing all the financing necessary for transportation projects in this rapidly growing region.

### **3. Financing**

MUMPO and the adjacent MPOs will need to devise new funding arrangements and give more priority to serving travel crossing the boundaries of MPOs, especially to implement facilities intended to serve transit riders and/or persons traveling in carpools or vanpools.

While innovative financing methods (particularly toll roads) are being proposed, additional financial partnerships will become more important in order to build and/or operate transportation facilities that cross MPO boundaries. Extensions of transit guideways or bus routes beyond Mecklenburg County will require local funding commitments to cover portions of the construction and/or operating costs.

Reaching agreements on the transit funding levels to be allocated to each MPO, counties within MPOs, or other local governments, will take months of negotiations. Without undertaking and successfully concluding those negotiations – probably focused on specific transit project or service proposals – offering transit options for travel across Mecklenburg County will not be possible.

### **4. Air Quality Standards**

Continued employment and population growth in MUMPO's planning area – and in the other areas that also comprise the bi-state metropolitan area – will increase the vehicle starts and miles of travel that are this area's leading cause of air pollution. It is likely that the entire region's ability to successfully demonstrate air quality conformity will become a more crucial issue, especially with the new 8-Hour Ozone Standard. Demonstrating how this LRTP complies with the air quality conformity requirements is the subject of a separate, but related document.