

INTRODUCTION

Located within the San Juan River Valley, the Farmington, New Mexico region has a rich history, diverse population and vibrant community. It serves as the cultural and economic center of the four corners region of New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona.

Just over a year ago, the Farmington Metropolitan Planning Organization (FMPO) came into being. The FMPO was created through a joint powers agreement with San Juan County and the cities of Aztec, Bloomfield and Farmington to assume the transportation planning responsibilities for the area. Formal designation of the MPO was made by the State of New Mexico in April, 2003. As an MPO, the FMPO has access to federal planning funds, formal recognition as the coordinating agency for transportation planning in the area, and the responsibility to ensure a “comprehensive, coordinated and continuing” transportation planning process.

To accommodate the future growth of the region, transportation services and infrastructure are developed and implemented through the regional transportation planning process carried out by the Farmington Metropolitan Planning Organization. This document is a product of that process.



What Key Issues does this Plan Address?

Some of the questions answered in the Plan include:

- Where is future growth likely to occur?
- What transportation improvements are needed to serve that growth?
- What roads will be developed as major corridors?
- What are the best ways for the MPO to meet future transportation improvements?
- How do we prioritize and pay for these transportation improvements?

The transportation plan is for the year 2030 and will include prioritization of improvements for short-term (1 - 6 years), near-term (7 - 20 years) and long term (20+ years) horizons.

The Farmington Metropolitan Transportation Plan is the long-range transportation plan for the urbanized region that includes the Cities of Aztec, Bloomfield, and Farmington as well as parts of San Juan County. The Plan identifies future transportation investments for all modes of transportation. Although the region’s mobility continues to be dominated by the automobile, other modes such as public transit, pedestrian, and bicycle transportation are becoming increasingly important means of travel and are addressed by the Plan. Aviation travel and freight movement are also included in the planning process, but to a lesser extent.

As such, the Farmington Metropolitan Transportation Plan identifies specific services and projects for each mode of travel that will be necessary to meet the transportation needs of the region through 2030. Similar to virtually every community across the nation, anticipated revenues are not sufficient to fund all of

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the transportation needs. Therefore, projects have been prioritized for implementation so that the Plan can respond to financial constraints required by law.

Planning Context

Related Plans

The Farmington Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is the first and most recent transportation plan for the Farmington MPO. Like many planning documents, it incorporates and builds upon the concepts and recommendations from previous efforts. While the MPO is new, transportation planning in the region is not. Numerous plans and studies are underway or have been completed by the cities in the region, as well as the New Mexico Department of Transportation. Some of the plans, studies, and projects related to the development and implementation of the MTP include:

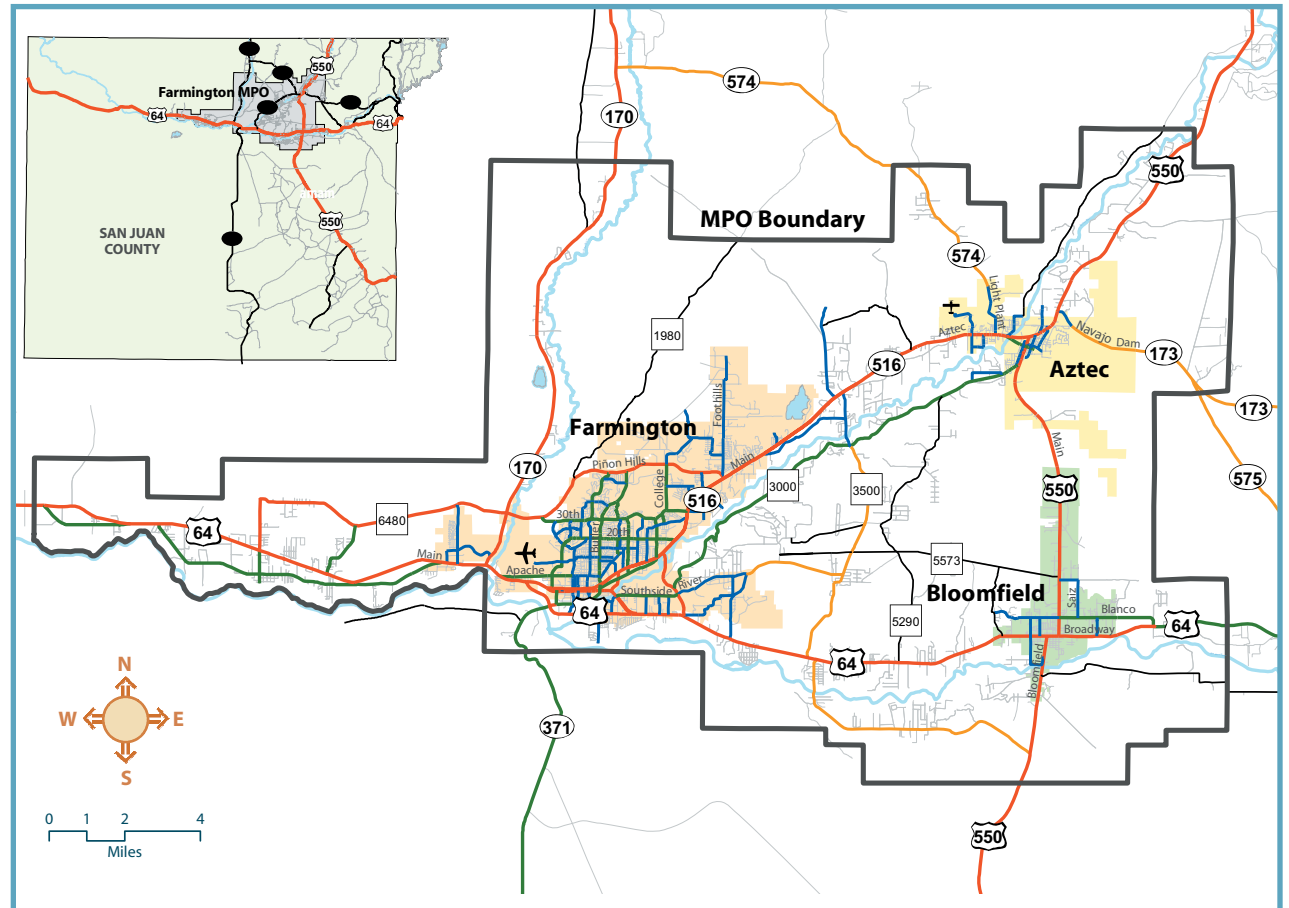
NM 516, Farmington to Aztec. The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) has finished Phase 1A of this study and is currently evaluating different alternatives as part of Phase 1B.

Traffic Counting Program. Traffic counts within the urbanized area are now the responsibility of the MPO. Every year, about one-third of the 185 sections will be counted and the results submitted to the New Mexico Department of Transportation.

Aztec Main Street Project. The City of Aztec is currently planning and designing renovations for Main Street (US 550) from Rio Grande to the intersection of US 550/NM 516.

US 64 from Farmington to Bloomfield. The New Mexico Department of Transportation recently completed Phase 1C for this project to reconstruct US

FARMINGTON MPO STUDY MAP (Fig. 1.1)



64 from Farmington to Bloomfield as a 6-lane urban arterial with some limited access control. The next step will be to fund and program the estimated \$56 million in improvements.

NM 516, Aztec Urban Section. The New Mexico Department of Transportation and City of Aztec is currently examining safety and mobility improvements on NM 516 from Light Plant Road to Navajo Dam Road. The project includes intersection improvements roadway

typical cross sections access management, right of way, bridge replacements, and signed improvements.

Red Apple Transit. The Red Apple Transit System has been breaking records in the number of passengers it carries. At the end of October, 2003, the system revised several routes and expanded service. Overall ridership in April, 2004 was 25% higher than the same time the previous year.



Study Area

TEA-21 requires that MPOs develop transportation plans for the urban area and unincorporated areas under their jurisdiction which are expected to become urbanized during the 20–25 year planning period. The MPO has jurisdiction for transportation planning efforts over an area designated as the Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary (MPAB). The MPO has defined this area to include Farmington, Aztec, and Bloomfield, as well as parts of unincorporated San Juan County. Figure 1.1 identifies the study area boundary.

Plan Approval Process

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan was developed through an open and deliberative planning process, complying with all appropriate government regulations. The development of the MTP included four components. The first component included the enhancement of the City of Farmington’s travel-demand computer model and expansion of that model to the borders of the MPO. The second component included the development of transportation alternatives and a review of the region’s various modal systems. The third component included the identification of roadway and alternative mode alternatives, testing of alternatives, and the development of the draft MTP document. A fourth component includes the adoption of the MTP.

Final approval of the document will include review by the MPO staff and presentation to the Technical Committee, Citizen Action Committee and the Policy Committee. Once that review is completed, a final public hearing will be held to seek public review and comment. The document will also be made available to the public at local libraries. After approval, it will be presented to the governing bodies of the cities of Aztec, Bloomfield and Farmington. Simultaneously, it will be received by the New Mexico Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration.

Plan Elements: Required and Desired

Several laws, regulations, statutes, codes and other documents at the local, state, and federal levels affect the development of the MTP by specifying requirements to be considered in the planning process or to be contained in the MTP. These include the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), existing and proposed metropolitan planning regulations, management and monitoring system regulations, Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and a variety of others.

Of these, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century provides the primary authoritative direction on the development of the MTP. On June 9, 1998, Congress enacted the TEA-21 as Public Law 105-178. TEA-21 authorizes the federal surface transportation programs for highway and transit systems for the six-year period from 1998 to 2003. TEA-21 continues and enhances the federal programs and priorities established in the previous Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA).

Among the many environmental, funding, infrastructure, modal, safety, and other transportation-related provisions of the legislation, TEA-21 specifies that MPO’s

develop transportation plans in cooperation with the State and public transit operators that “provide for the development and integrated management and operation of transportation systems and facilities...that will function as an intermodal transportation system for the metropolitan area.” With this language, Congress has continued its priorities of intermodalism, intergovernmental and public/private partnerships, and system development and management that originated in ISTEA. Further, the process for developing transportation plans shall provide for consideration of all modes and

TEA-21 Planning Factors

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) federal legislation recognizes that transportation investments impact a community’s economy, environment, and quality of life. As such, it states that the planning process “shall provide for consideration of projects and strategies that will:

- support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and freight;
- protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life;
- enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- promote efficient system management and operation; and emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.”

shall be continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive to the degree appropriate.

Project Listings

TEA-21 identifies several categories of projects that are to be included for implementation over the life of a transportation plan. They are

- bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
- transportation enhancement activities;
- strategies for managing the transportation system; and
- capital investments and other measures to preserve the existing transportation system.

A description of all proposed improvements in sufficient detail to develop cost estimates should accompany the project listings.

Financial Plan

TEA-21 specifies that available revenues for implementation of transportation improvements over the life of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan must be developed through a cooperative effort between the MPO, State, and transit operators. The cost estimates for the projects, strategies, and other transportation improvements contained in the MTP must be constrained to the forecasts of available revenues.

When this requirement was enacted over 10 years ago, many communities around the country readily embraced the financial constraint philosophy. In this manner, transportation plans transformed from a wish list of projects that could not be implemented to meaningful plans with specific, identifiable transportation improvements.

Forecast Period

At a minimum, a transportation plan must be comprised of a 20-year planning horizon and be updated every five years. After its approval, the MPO is allowed to make substantial changes to the MTP during the five-year window, but the 20-year forecast period must be maintained. Therefore, the Farmington MPO incorporates an approximately 25-year planning horizon in order to retain the ability to modify the MTP, similar to other progressive communities.

Public Involvement Process

Public involvement is a high priority in the transportation planning process and in the development of the MTP. The Farmington MPO's public involvement procedures reflect the region's approach to public involvement. This process provides complete information, timely public notice, and full public access.