

TRANSPORTATION DECISIONMAKING

Information Tools for Tribal Governments

Introduction to Transportation Planning



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

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Introduction to Transportation Planning

Prepared by:

FHWA Office of Planning

In Coordination with:

Bureau of Indian Affairs

FHWA Federal Lands Highway

FHWA Resource Center

Federal Transit Administration



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ABBREVIATIONS

BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
DOT	Department of Transportation
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FLH	Federal Lands Highway
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
IRR	Indian Reservation Roads
IRRTIP	Indian Reservation Roads Transportation Improvement Program
LRTP	Long-Range Transportation Plan
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
STIP	State Transportation Improvement Program
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TTIP	Tribal Transportation Improvement Program

This module, “Introduction to Transportation Planning,” is one of eight in the series *Transportation Decisionmaking Information Tools for Tribal Governments*, written by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Planning to assist Tribes with transportation planning. It explains the basic components of the transportation planning process and presents a brief overview of transportation plans, programs, and products that are part of the planning process. Figure 1 shows all the modules in the series:

1. Introduction to Planning
2. Developing a Long-Range Transportation Plan
3. Developing the Transportation Improvement Program
4. Funding Resources
5. Public Involvement
6. Data Collection and Use
7. Safety
8. Project Prioritization



Figure 1. Modules in Series *Transportation Decisionmaking Information Tools for Tribal Governments*

Transportation helps shape an area’s economic health and quality of life. Not only does the transportation system provide for the mobility of people and goods, it also influences patterns of growth and economic activity by providing access to land. The role of transportation planning is to identify and understand these influences and relationships—such as those highlighted in Figure 2—to make well-informed decisions.

In addition to developing their own transportation planning processes, Tribes should be involved in the transportation planning

processes of Bureau of Indian Affairs Indian Reservations Roads (BIA IRR) program, metropolitan planning organizations (MPO)—governmental agencies that do transportation planning for an entire metropolitan area—and the State Department of Transportation (DOT). This will allow Tribes to influence transportation planning decisions that will affect life on Indian lands.

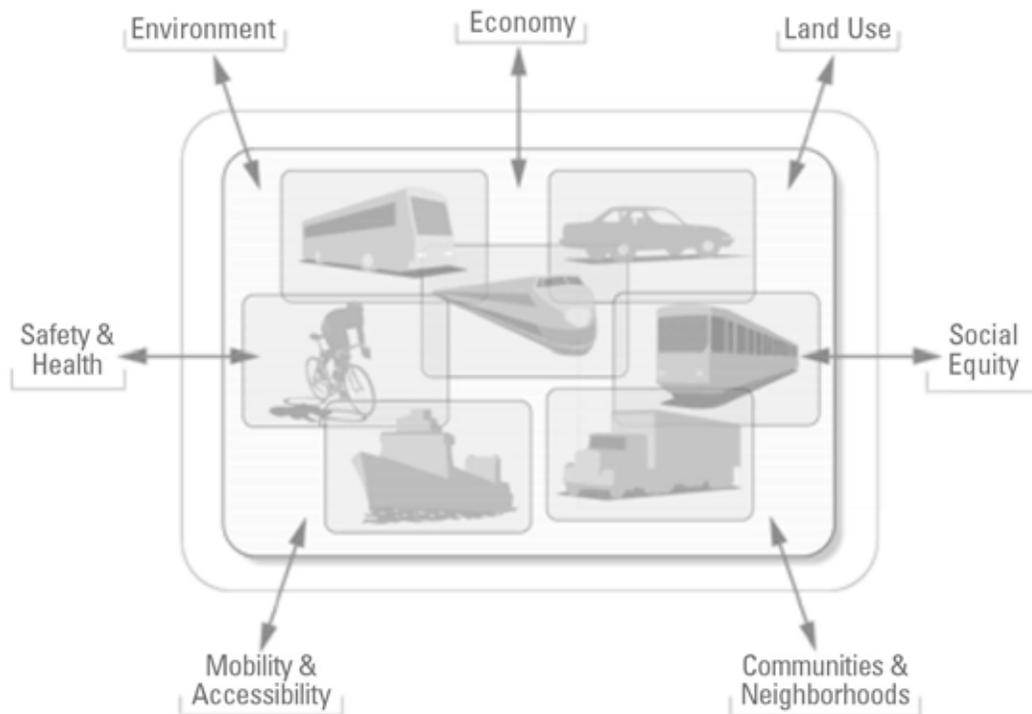


Figure 2. Links between Transportation and Societal Goals

II. WHAT IS TRANSPORTATION PLANNING?

Transportation planning is more than listing highway and transit projects. It requires developing strategies for operating, managing, maintaining, and financing the area's transportation system to achieve the community's long-term transportation goals. It looks for ways to solve current transportation problems while anticipating and addressing issues likely to occur in the future.

The planning process:

- Links transportation goals to the goals of land use, cultural preservation, social, economic, environmental, and quality of life for the area covered by the plan;
- Uses data to examine current transportation operations and identify future transportation needs;
- Helps planners and Tribal governments make well-informed decisions on how to spend money set aside for transportation projects;
- Involves Tribal communities, Federal government agencies, State and local governments, metropolitan and regional planning organizations, special interest groups, and others; and
- Results in workable strategies to achieve transportation investment goals over both the long term (20 years or more) and the short term (three to five years).

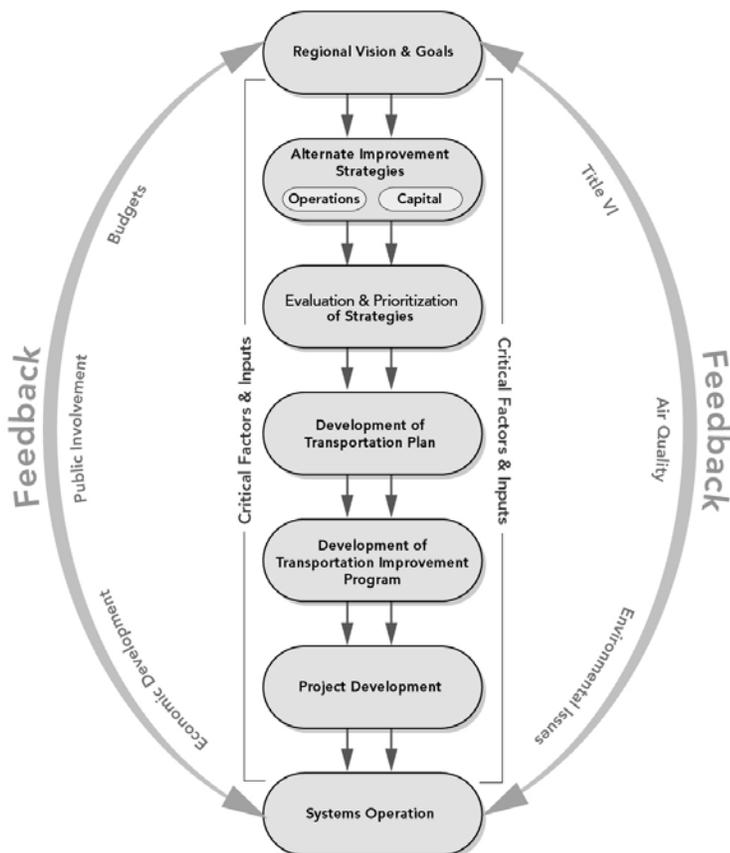


Figure 3. Basic Steps in Transportation Planning and Decisionmaking

III. WHY DO TRANSPORTATION PLANNING?

Transportation planning guides the decisionmaking needed to move towards implementation of the Tribe's envisioned future transportation system. Transportation planning starts with a long-term vision for transportation within the Tribal community. Creating this vision can help develop a better understanding of the factors that the transportation system will impact and those factors that may impact the transportation system vision. Planning provides a framework for effective decisionmaking and efficient investment of limited funds.

Developing a Vision

A vision reflects the Tribe's broad transportation goals and priorities. To develop a vision, a Tribe must consider how growth and other changes over time will affect future transportation needs and priorities such as:

- Projected population growth;
- Projected economic changes;
- Current and future transportation needs of drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users;
- Safety;
- Maintenance, operation, and management of transportation facilities;
- Preserving the human and natural environment; and
- Quality of life.

The transportation goals and vision become the foundation for developing a long-range transportation plan (LRTP) which will guide improvements to the transportation system over the next 20 years or more. Goals and visions can be simple, such as improved safety at intersections or improved pedestrian access, or they can be complex, such as improved roadway access to developing lands and to the existing transportation network.

Decisionmakers Partner to Benefit the Tribes

The Arizona Department of Transportation Tribal Strategic Partnering Team was established to improve coordination, cooperation, and consultation among the several agencies and organizations working on issues related to Tribal transportation planning in the state: the Arizona DOT, FHWA, the Regional Tribal Technical Assistance Program, the Arizona Commission of Indian Affairs, and the Inter-tribal Council of Arizona. By combining technical and financial resources, these agencies support one another in a unique and ongoing effort that helps facilitate decisionmaking for addressing Tribal transportation issues.

IV. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PLANNING?

A transportation plan is a guide that Tribes can use to make well-informed decisions about their transportation network. An important part of the planning process is involving the public so that planners and decisionmakers understand the needs and concerns of the many stakeholders—people and groups who use or otherwise have an interest in the future transportation system. This information helps to clarify needs and the best ways to address these needs in order to meet the transportation vision.

An important part of the planning process is involving the public so that planners and decisionmakers understand the needs and concerns of the many stakeholders.

In addition to identifying future transportation needs, there are other benefits of implementing a transportation planning process:

- Anticipate and manage future growth and development in an orderly manner through land use and transportation planning;
- Minimize cost of right of way acquisition if corridors are protected and preserved;
- Enhance collaboration among agencies; and
- Distribute and spend funding and other resources based on the community vision to create a useful and efficient transportation system.

V. WHAT ARE THE KEY PRODUCTS OF THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS?

There are two key documents developed as part of the transportation planning process: the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

The LRTP is the defining vision for the area's transportation system and services over the next 20 years. The LRTP should:

- Cover at least the next 20 years;
- Address all modes of transportation, including vehicles, transit, pedestrians, and bicycles;
- Contain projects that can be funded based on funds expected to be available;
- Address potential environmental problems and their solutions; and
- Be developed with early and continuous public involvement.

Federal regulations require MPOs, Federal Lands Highway (FLH) of the U.S. Department of Transportation, and State governments to develop a LRTP for their jurisdictions. Tribes are also encouraged to develop a LRTP as part of the IRR program to help ensure funds are directed toward meeting the Tribe's transportation goals.

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The TIP is a multiyear prioritized list of transportation projects proposed for Federal, State, and local funding. For a project to be included in a TIP, there must be funds available for the project over the life of the TIP, usually three to five years. A TIP:

- Is a means of allocating limited transportation funds to projects and programs;
- Is a list of transportation projects to be implemented in the next three to five years;
- Includes all transportation projects proposed for Federal funding; and
- Identifies funding for each project by funding source.

Federal regulations require MPOs, the IRR program, Federal Lands Highway (FLH), and State governments to develop a TIP for their jurisdictions. While not required, Tribes are encouraged to develop their own TIP.

The TIP is a multiyear prioritized list of transportation projects proposed for Federal, State, and local funding.

VI. WHAT ARE THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESSES?

Metropolitan Transportation Planning

In metropolitan areas with a population over 50,000, MPOs are responsible for transportation planning. MPO transportation planning examines travel and transportation issues and needs in a defined metropolitan area.

It includes an analysis of socioeconomic characteristics of the region, as well as an examination of travel patterns and trends. The planning process includes an analysis of alternatives for addressing future transportation needs. In addition to meeting future travel demand, alternatives must also consider the way the projects affect public safety, transportation system efficiency, overall mobility, and the environment.

The MPO planning process involves the participation of key stakeholders including the business community, community groups, environmental organizations, and Tribal governments. Tribes located in or near the metropolitan area will likely be affected by planning decisions made by the MPO. MPOs are required to consult with Tribes located within their planning area to ensure that their concerns are addressed and their needs met. Tribes located adjacent to or near MPO planning areas should also get involved in the MPO planning process to ensure

Tribal concerns are recognized and addressed.

After the LRTP is completed, MPOs, Tribes, and Federal Lands agencies collaboratively develop a list of short-range transportation projects and services intended to implement the planning vision and goals. These projects are compiled into the second key planning product, the MPO TIP.

Statewide Transportation Planning

Federal regulations require that States conduct transportation planning for the entire state. As part of the planning process, they are required to coordinate their planning activities with those of every MPO in the state.

Federal regulations require States to consult with Tribes when developing the State LRTP. States are also required to consult with Tribal governments when considering environmental issues. As part of the LRTP process the State must include a discussion of possible environmental mitigation activities for environmentally sensitive areas are likely to be adversely affected when implementing the State LRTP.

The statewide planning process should reflect the needs and interests of a wide variety of stakeholders and transportation system customers. Through comprehensive

How can Tribes benefit from being involved in the MPO process?

In Washington State, the coordination between the Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC), the Nisqually Indian Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation provides an example of strong partnership and collaboration between tribes and an MPO. TRPC is an intergovernmental board comprised of representatives from local government jurisdictions within Thurston County and the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation and the Nisqually Indian Tribe. TRPC serves as both the federally designated MPO and the State-designated regional transportation planning organization. The cooperation between TRPC and these two tribes has resulted in improved visibility of tribal needs in the county, improved regional coordination of projects, more and better data, and awareness of regional transportation needs that the organizations have in common.

public involvement efforts, stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the plan.

The statewide transportation plan covers at least the next 20 years. Generally, the statewide transportation plan:

- Focuses on issues and system characteristics that are of statewide concern such as the state's designated National Highway System, which includes the interstate system;
- Considers all modal components of a state's transportation system, including rail, transit, air, non-motorized and freight;
- Is intermodal, considering connections between the various transportation modes within the statewide system;
- Describes the availability of financial and other resources needed to implement the plan;
- Is coordinated with other regional and metropolitan transportation plans; and
- Addresses the preservation and most efficient use of the existing transportation system.

States are also required to develop a State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)—a prioritized list of every transportation project in the state that is planned to be developed over the life of the STIP, usually four years. This includes projects planned by the MPO, under the IRR program, and other projects funded through and by the Tribes. One of the most important elements of the STIP—as with the other TIPs—is that every project included must have funding already identified. Projects that are not included in the STIP are not eligible to receive Federal funding. However, the STIP can be modified to include new projects as the need arises and funding becomes available.

How do Tribal liaisons ensure coordination between Tribes and States when developing the STIP?

In 1999, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), with the help of the State's Native American Advisory Committee, worked with the California Transportation Commission to pass a regulation requiring that Tribes must be consulted when preparing the STIP, which includes all MPO TIPS, Indian Tribe TIP, and the IRR TIP. To complement these rules, Caltrans is now training its staff to look for evidence of Tribal consultation in all aspects of the plan, not only in reference to cultural resources.

Indian Reservation Roads Transportation Planning

The IRR Program is one of the funding categories under the Federal Lands Highway Program. IRR facilities are public roads that provide access to and within Indian lands. In states where Tribes do not have reservations, public roads that serve Indian communities or are primarily used by Tribal members may be designated as IRR facilities.

The Indian Reservation Road Transportation Improvement Program (IRRTIP) is a multi-year listing of transportation improvement projects programmed for construction by a BIA regional office, with IRR Program funds, for the next three to five years. The IRRTIP contains eligible projects from the various TTIPs. A separate IRRTIP is prepared for each State within each BIA regional jurisdiction.

The MPO planning process involves the participation of key stakeholders including the business community, community groups, environmental organizations, and Tribal governments.

The IRR TIP:

- Must include eligible projects from all TTIPs in the BIA region;
- Is selected by BIA from TTIPs or other Tribal actions;
- Is organized by year, State, and Tribe; and
- May include non-IRR projects for inclusion into the STIP.

The IRR planning process has several characteristics not found in the metropolitan or state planning processes:

- Interpretation of the guidelines is liberally construed for the benefit of Indian Tribes;
- The BIA, FHWA, and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must encourage and assist Tribes in transportation planning;
- The BIA, FHWA, and FTA must assist Tribes in transportation planning activities upon a request from a Tribe;
- The FHWA and FTA require State governments and MPOs to consult with Tribes and consider their best interests when developing transportation plans and programs;
- Tribal Technical Assistance Programs (TTAP) should actively coordinate with the BIA and Tribes to provide training and technical assistance in transportation planning activities to Tribes;
- Up to two percent of IRR construction funds can be used for transportation planning; and
- All IRR projects must be included in the STIP.

VII. HOW CAN TRIBES MAINTAIN THEIR SOVEREIGN STATUS WHILE COORDINATING TRANSPORTATION PLANNING WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES?

The BIA and FHWA support Indian Tribal Government sovereignty when coordinating transportation planning with States and metropolitan areas. Things to consider regarding Tribal sovereignty and the transportation planning process include:

- States must coordinate and consult with Tribes throughout the planning process. Tribal Governments have the right to participate and provide input into State transportation planning and decisionmaking.
- MPOs are required to coordinate and consult with Tribes throughout the transportation planning process. Tribes are encouraged to work with the MPO to coordinate and communicate Tribal transportation needs.
- Conflicts sometimes arise between State or MPO planners and Indian Tribal Governments. While awaiting resolution

of these conflicts, Tribal governments should not let the conflict alienate them from the transportation planning process. Tribes should continue to be involved in the planning process to the extent possible.

- To define and clarify jurisdiction, Indian Tribal Governments can enter into Joint Powers Agreements with other governmental entities, including States and MPOs.

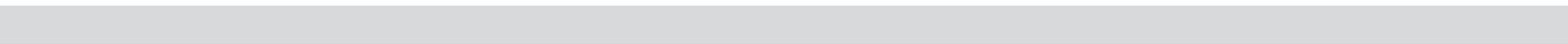
VIII. WHAT BARRIERS EXIST FOR TRIBAL PARTICIPATION IN THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS?

There are some important barriers Tribes face when doing transportation planning. It is important to identify, understand, and address these barriers. Below are common barriers along with suggested solutions or approaches to help resolve each barrier:

BARRIER	APPROACH/SOLUTION
Tribes' interpretations of Federal regulations governing the IRR Program and other programs sometimes differ with those of other government entities, creating a conflict between Tribal governments and FLH.	Tribes should work closely with FLH/FHWA and BIA to ensure interpretations are appropriate, and access support for the development of their Tribal planning and decision-making processes.
Differences in skills and experience between Tribal planners and those of planners in other transportation organizations and agencies can discourage coordination and affect communication.	Modules similar to this one are available to help familiarize tribes with planning practices and processes. In addition, Tribes may access resources available through the TTAPs and FHWA Tribal Capacity Building Program.
Training opportunities for Tribal governments are scarce because of significant financial and staff-time shortages.	Tribes may receive training through the TTAPs and may request specialized peer exchanges to address specific expertise needs through the FHWA Tribal Capacity Building Program.
Many Tribes have not developed transportation visions and plans. This limits their ability to identify Tribal goals that are consistent with those of regional and State transportation planning processes. This might make it difficult for Tribes to express their needs and goals and to have them reflected in metropolitan, State, and local transportation plans.	FLH, BIA and TTAPs offer assistance in the development of LRTP and TTIPs. This includes developing a vision and goals.
Tribal planners frequently have other responsibilities that might be higher priorities than transportation issues, limiting the time staff can dedicate to transportation planning.	FLH, BIA, and TTAPs offer assistance in the development of LRTP and TTIPs.

APPENDIX. USEFUL LINKS AND REFERENCES

Consultation and Public Involvement Statutory/Regulatory Requirements: Working with Tribes within the Statewide/Metropolitan Transportation Planning Processes (August 2007):	http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/tribaltrans/consult.htm
Federal Planning Regulations (23 CFR 450):	http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&rgn=div5&view=text&node=23:1.0.1.5.11&idno=23
Federal Aid Highway Program:	http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/funding.htm
FHWA Field Tribal Contact:	http://www.tribalplanning.fhwa.dot.gov/contacts_fhwa.aspx
FHWA Headquarters Tribal Contacts:	http://www.tribalplanning.fhwa.dot.gov/contacts_fhwa.aspx
Federal Lands Highway Program:	http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/flh/index.htm
Final Rule on Indian Reservation Roads Program:	http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/E8-6007.htm
Indian Reservation Roads Program:	http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/flh/indresrd.htm
Planning Glossary:	http://www.planning.dot.gov/glossary.asp
State Tribal Contacts:	http://www.tribalplanning.fhwa.dot.gov/contacts_state.aspx
Tribal Transportation Capacity Building:	http://www.planning.dot.gov/tribal.asp
Tribal Transportation Website:	http://www.tribalplanning.fhwa.dot.gov





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