

# CHAPTER 1:



Introduction

# Introduction

**T**ransportation at its core is about mobility and access. Transportation touches almost every aspect of our lives and plays a pivotal role in shaping human interactions, economic mobility, and sustainability.

Patterns of growth and activity for people and goods across America are fundamentally driven by how well transportation systems deliver mobility and access. Transportation planning recognizes the critical links between transportation needs and other societal goals. The planning process involves more than simply tabulating capital projects. It includes non-motorized strategies for operating, maintaining, and financing the transportation system to advance an area’s long-term goal and the regional community’s shared vision for the future.

## Metropolitan Planning Organizations

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is federally mandated for each urbanized area with a population of more than 50,000 individuals. To be classified as an urbanized area, a central place, and any adjacent area must have a density of at least 1,000 persons per square mile.

An MPO is primarily a transportation planning and policy-making organization. Because MPOs typically neither own nor operate the transportation system they serve, most MPOs are not involved in implementing the transportation project priorities they establish. Rather, MPOs serve an overall coordination and consensus-building in planning and programming funds for projects and operations.

## The Sierra Vista Metropolitan Planning Organization

The Sierra Vista Metropolitan Planning Organization (SVMPO) is the federally designated and funded Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Sierra Vista region. The SVMPO was established in 2013 as a result of the 2010 United States Census.



*Huachuca Mountains*

SVMPO member jurisdictions include Cochise County, City of Sierra Vista, and the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT).



*The first MPOs in the United States were established in 1962. As a result of the 2010 Census, 13 new MPOs were created, of which three new MPOs were created in Arizona including the SVMPO. The other two in Arizona are the Lake Havasu MPO and Sun Corridor MPO (Casa Grande).*

## Overview of Transportation Planning

Transportation planning plays a critical role in a region’s or community’s vision for its future. Transportation planning is a cooperative, performance-driven process by which long and short-range transportation improvement priorities are determined. MPOs carry out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process. This process includes the development of a transportation plan addressing at least a 20-year planning horizon with both short and long-range strategies for an integrated multimodal transportation system that addresses current and future transportation demand. The plan must be updated at least every five years.

In addition, transportation projects must be identified in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to be eligible for federal transportation funds and to move from project concept to programming of funds. Programming is the transition of projects from the planning and design stage to construction and implementation. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

**i** *The Long Range Transportation Plan is synonymous with Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).*

is a summary of transportation projects that are expected to be initiated within a four – five year period and financed in whole or part with federal, state, and local funds. Transportation projects are drawn from the long-range transportation plan, including maintenance projects that are not all listed individually.



## SVMPO Regional Transportation Plan

The SVMPO 2015 – 2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a 25-year, multimodal plan developed by SVMPO in conjunction with SVMPO member jurisdictions that addresses the regional transportation system. The RTP will be updated every five years to meet federal funding requirements and address changing community needs.

**i** *“MPOs...shall develop long-range transportation plans and transportation improvement programs through a performance-driven, outcome-based approach to planning.” 49 USC 5303(c)(1)*

## *Eight Planning Factors*



### *Goal of SVMPO for the RTP*

The purpose of the SVMPO RTP is to provide a strategic document that lays out a vision for the future in a format that effectively communicates **KEY** issues to the public.

### **Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21)**

On July 6, 2012, President Obama signed MAP-21 into law. MAP-21 was the first long-term highway authorization enacted since 2005. MAP-21 created a streamlined, performance-based, and multimodal program to address the many challenges facing the U.S. transportation system. The challenges include improving safety, maintaining infrastructure conditions, reducing traffic

congestion, enhance the efficiency of the system, protecting the environment, and reducing delays in project delivery. MAP-21 built on and refined many of the highway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian programs and policies established by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991.

### *Fixing America's Transportation Act (FAST ACT)*

On December 3, 2015, President Obama signed into law the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act. The Act is the first law enacted in over ten years that provided long-term funding certainty for surface transportation, allowing States and local governments to move forward with critical transportation projects. Overall, the FAST Act maintains current program structures and funding shares between highway and transit.

## **Objectives and Performance Measures**

MPOs are required under federal transportation funding programs to establish performance measures in coordination with the State Departments of Transportation (DOTs). Performance-based planning and programming (PBPP) have become a focus in the transportation community, as transportation agencies, such as the SVMPO, work to ensure that scarce resources are used efficiently and transparently to achieve desired regional and State goals. The RTP is a critical document in the transportation planning and investment decision-making process, identifying key desired outcomes and strategies for the transportation system and setting a framework for all of the investments made within a region.



*View from Fort Huachuca*

## Geographic Setting

The metropolitan planning area boundary refers to the geographic area in which the metropolitan transportation planning process must be carried out. The SVMPO Planning Area Boundary was set when the MPO was established in 2013. The required minimum planning boundary must include the Urbanized Area (UZA), as designated by the 2010 U.S. Census. The planning area boundary should also cover the areas that are likely to become urbanized during the planning horizon - the year 2040. Through

coordination between the City of Sierra Vista and Cochise County, the planning boundary includes all of the City of Sierra Vista incorporated limits, which includes Fort Huachuca, and additional county areas to make a sensible rounded/smoothed boundary (See Figure 1-1 SVMPO Planning Area Boundary).

*Table 1-1: SVMPO Planning Area Land Breakout*

Jurisdiction	Land Area (Acres)
City of Sierra Vista (excluding Fort Huachuca)	16,509
Fort Huachuca	81,147
Cochise County	11,698
TOTAL	109,354

### ***U.S. Army Installation Fort Huachuca***

The United States Army installation Fort Huachuca is located within the urbanized area and SVMPO Planning boundary. As the number one employer in Southeast Arizona, the economy of Sierra Vista and the County relies heavily on the existence of Fort Huachuca. Fort Huachuca is incorporated by the City of Sierra Vista, but as a Federal Military installation, the Fort maintains and plans for their transportation facilities. The City of Sierra Vista transit service, Vista Transit, provides limited service on Fort Huachuca.

The Sierra Vista Municipal Airport is located on Fort Huachuca and serves as a vital economic asset for the City and surrounding areas. The Airport is a joint-use civil-military airport which shares facilities with Libby Army Airfield. The *Sierra Vista Municipal Airport, Airport Master Plan*, is the guiding document for development of the airport for a 20-year planning period.

### ***International***

Sierra Vista is located within an hour drive of the City of Douglas Port of Entry, the second largest commercial port in the State with over \$1 billion in trade passing through the facility. Mexican visitors were responsible for \$211.8 million in sales, 1,763 jobs, and \$36.5 million in income countywide. (Source: Cochise College Center for Economic Research, Economic Outlook, 2015).

## Public Participation

Proactive and effective public participation in the transportation process and development of the RTP allows for input from various interested parties, including persons who have traditionally been underserved by the transportation systems, such as low-income, minorities, or limited English proficiency persons.



*“Public Participation implies an open process. Anyone who is potentially affected, or is just interested in the process, is welcome to participate.” SVMPO Public Participation Plan*

Public involvement provides for opportunities for dialogue to help establish priorities to define further and guide the development of the transportation system in the community. The SVMPO Board of Directors adopted a Public Participation Plan on October 22, 2014, outlining the benefits and importance of, and specific guidelines for,

involving community members, organizations, governments, transportation professionals and others in ongoing and future SVMPO projects, plans, and programs.

### ***Public Outreach***

Public open house meetings are necessary to involve and meet face-to-face with the public. However, attendance is typically low. To improve public participation, it is essential additional strategies are employed to gain necessary public input to the RTP 2040 Plan. The following summarizes opportunities for public involvement and participation in the development of this RTP:



*Public Meeting*

- ❖ Presentations to local governments and service clubs
- ❖ Attend community events such as the West End Fair, SierraVistAbility Day, SACA Home Show, and others with the potential to inform the public and receive input
- ❖ Hold open house meetings throughout the SVMPO Planning Boundary
- ❖ Provide RTP 2040 materials and notices to the public and stakeholders through the SVMPO website
- ❖ Provide an opportunity for follow-up public input on draft chapters of the RTP
- ❖ Develop media releases for activities and notices
- ❖ Notify email list

