

Chapter 1

Introduction

In November 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the current federal transportation funding legislation. This is the sixth bill for surface transportation that has shaped the program to meet the nation’s changing transportation needs. The current legislation continues to supply the funds and refine the programmatic framework for investments needed to maintain and grow transportation infrastructure.

As the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Jackson urbanized area, the Region 2 Planning Commission (R2PC), through the Jackson Area Comprehensive Transportation Study (JACTS), is responsible for the development of a multi-modal, Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The LRTP identifies the Jackson area's transportation needs through the year 2050, including the projects and policies to meet those needs. The IIJA continues to require the plan to be updated on a five-year cycle and cover at least a 20-year planning horizon.

The development of the JACTS 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan was a cooperative effort undertaken by R2PC, the Jackson County Department of Transportation (JC DOT), Jackson Area Transportation Authority (JATA), City of Jackson, Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the 2050 LRTP Steering Committee, other local units of government, and concerned residents throughout Jackson County. Development of the plan was initiated in December 2022 with a Steering Committee Kickoff meeting on June 1, 2023.

The Jackson area transportation planning process examined and evaluated the existing transportation facilities and travel characteristics to measure the present operating efficiency. An understanding of the relationships between land use, population, and trip making characteristics is essential for anticipating future needs. The primary concern in the long range planning process is to develop a system that will meet the transportation demands of the Jackson area. In addition to safety and time considerations, emphasis will continue to be on preserving and maintaining the existing facilities.

The plan lays the groundwork for the proposed improvements to the area’s transportation system in a safe, efficient, and economic manner. The projects are then included in R2PC’s short-range plan, known as the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The FY 2023-2026 TIP is a program for scheduling the implementation of projects selected through the long range transportation planning process.

The Jackson Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Federal law requires that each urbanized area with a population of more than 50,000 persons establish a designated MPO to ensure that it has a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process. The “3 C” process that was outlined in the federal transportation bill of 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), provides guidelines for consideration of all transportation interests. The

following are important to remember when engaging in the transportation planning process across jurisdictions:

- **Connections:** The convenient, rapid, efficient, and safe transfer of people and goods among modes that characterize comprehensive and economic transportation services.
- **Choices:** Opportunities afforded by the multi-modal system that allow transportation users to select their preferred means of travel.
- **Coordination and Cooperation:** Collaborative efforts of planners, users, and transportation agencies to address travel demands by investing in dependable, high-quality transportation services either by a single mode or by two or more modes in combination.

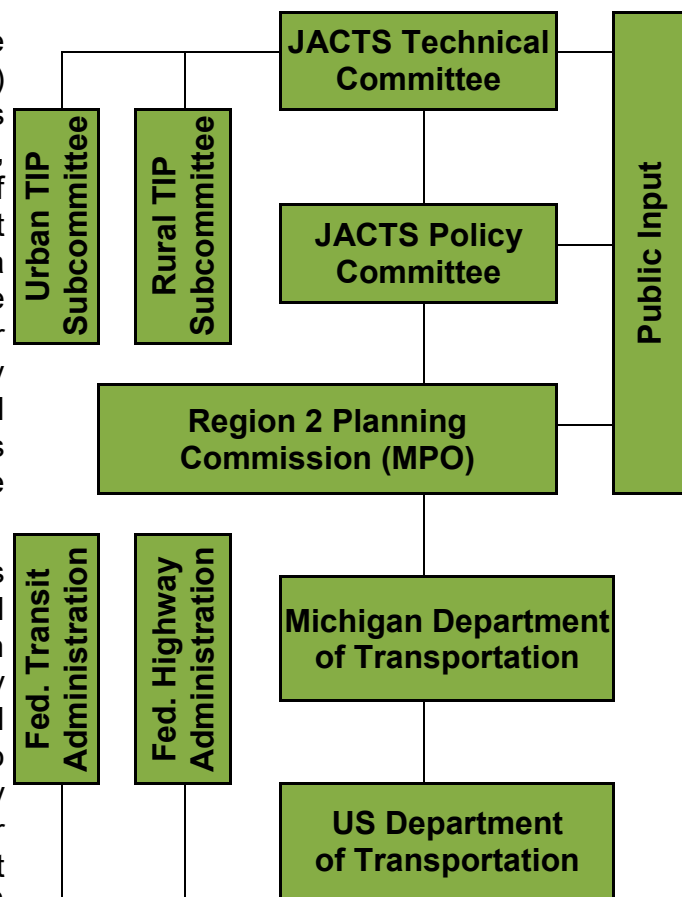
Relevant Boards and Committees

The Jackson Area Comprehensive Transportation Study (JACTS) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is comprised of staff (planners, engineers, managers, etc.) from units of government and modal agencies (transit and airport) within the metropolitan area boundary, representatives from the MDOT, and, a non-voting member representing the Federal Highway Administration. The TAC reviews all plans and programs and makes technical recommendations to the JACTS Policy Committee.

The JACTS Policy Committee is comprised of elected and appointed officials from units of government within the metropolitan area boundary. They are involved in formulating and implementing policies pertaining to transportation matters. The Policy Committee serves as a forum for discussion and analysis of development and improvement issues. The JACTS Policy Committee forwards its recommendations to the R2PC Board.

The R2PC Board, also known as the R2PC Full Commission or R2PC Executive Committee, reviews and affirms the recommendations of the JACTS TAC and/or Policy Committee. Together, the three committees direct the work of the R2PC staff in completing three primary documents, 1) the Unified Work Program (UWP), which documents the work to be completed during the fiscal year; 2) the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which includes a list of the transportation and transit projects

Figure 1-1
JACTS Organizational Structure



to be funded with federal funds within a 4-year time period; and, 3) the Long-Range Transportation Plan.

Study Area

The 2050 LRTP study area encompasses the Jackson metropolitan area boundary, which covers the entirety of Jackson County. The U.S. Census-designated urbanized area boundary for Jackson includes the City of Jackson and parts of Blackman, Leoni, Napoleon, Sandstone, Spring Arbor, and Summit Townships. All Census block areas within this core which have a population density of 1,000 or more persons per square mile are automatically included in the urbanized area, as well as adjacent areas that have developing “urban characteristics.”

Plan Development

This plan is anticipated to be updated in 2028, based on current state and federal transportation requirements.