

Chapter 1

Introduction

In December 2015, President Obama signed Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), the current federal transportation funding legislation. This is the fifth 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 through the Jackson Area Comprehensive Transportation Study (JACTS) is responsible for the development of a multi-modal, long range transportation plan (LRTP). The plan identifies the Jackson area’s transportation needs through the year 2045, including the projects and policies to meet those needs. The FAST Act 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 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan was a cooperative effort undertaken by the Region 2 Planning Commission, Jackson County Department of Transportation, Jackson Area Transportation Authority, City of Jackson, Michigan Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, the Project Steering Committee, other local units of government and concerned residents throughout Jackson County. Development of the plan was initiated in July 2017 with a Project Steering Committee and a Public Kickoff meeting in August 2017.

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 the 4-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which is a process for scheduling the implementation of projects selected through the long range transportation planning process in order to receive federal transportation funding for a particular year.

The Jackson 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 the federal transportation bill ISTEA – the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991

- outlined provides guidelines for consideration of all transportation interests. The following are important to remember when engaging in the transportation planning process across jurisdictions:

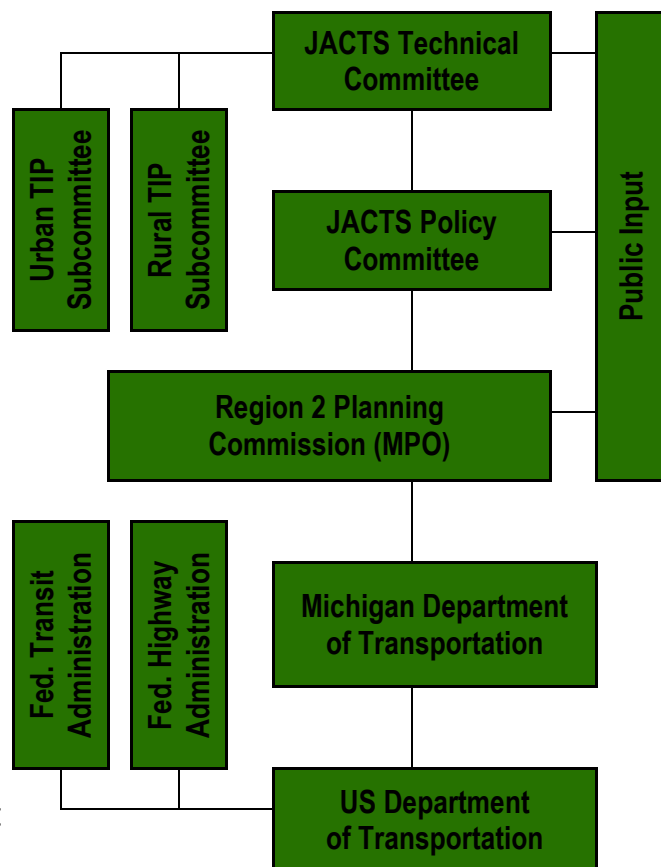
- **Connections:** The convenient, rapid, efficient, and safe transfer of people and goods among modes that characterize comprehensive and economic transportation services.
- **Choices:** Opportunities afforded by the multi-modal system that allow transportation users to select their preferred means 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.

The JACTS Technical Committee is comprised of appropriate staff (planners, engineers, managers, etc) from units of government and modal agencies (transit and airport) within the metropolitan area boundary; representatives from the Michigan Department of Transportation; and, an ex-officio member representing the Federal Highway Administration. The Technical Committee reviews all plans and programs and makes technical recommendations to the JACTS Policy Committee.

The JACTS Policy Committee consists 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 primary tool for addressing the planning work program activities is by recommendations passed onto the Policy Committee from the Technical Committee, and through public comment. The Region 2 Planning Commission is the designated MPO, and reviews and affirms the recommendations and decisions put forth by the Policy Committee. Together, the 3 MPO committees direct the work of the Region 2 Planning Commission staff in completing the annual Unified Work Program that describes the work to be completed during the fiscal year; the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that includes a list of the transportation and transit projects

**Figure 1-1
JACTS Organizational Structure**



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

Study Area

The Plan 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 all or 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 2023, based on current state and federal transportation requirements.