

2. What is the Plan?

This document contains the 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plans for the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Planning Organization.

These plans are the guiding documents for future investments in roads, transit services, bicycle and pedestrian facilities and related transportation activities and services to match the growth expected in the Research Triangle Region.

2.1 Why Do We Need A Plan?

A transportation plan is essential for building an effective and efficient transportation system. The implementation of any transportation project, such as building a new road, adding lanes to a highway, purchasing transit buses, constructing a rail system, or building bicycle lanes with a road widening project, often requires several years to complete from concept to construction.

Once a community determines that a project is needed, there are many detailed steps to be completed: funding must be identified; analysis must be completed to minimize environmental and social impacts; engineering designs must be developed, evaluated, and selected; the public must be involved in project decisions; right-of-way may have to be purchased; and finally, the construction must be contracted and completed.



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No matter which step one might consider the most important in this long process, the project always begins with the regional transportation plan. In fact, this basic planning concept is so important, that federal regulations require that a project must be identified in a long-range transportation plan in order for it to receive federal funding and obtain federal approvals.

Federal regulations not only require a long-range plan, the regulations stipulate the contents of the plan and the process used in its development. The plan must have:

- A vision that meets community goals.
- A multi-modal approach that includes not only highway projects, but provides for other modes such as public transportation, walking, and bicycling.
- A minimum 20-year planning horizon.
- A financial plan that balances revenues and costs to demonstrate that the plan is financially responsible and constrained.