

Chapter 1: Context and Issues

Introduction

Transportation 2030 (T2030) is the long range transportation plan for the urbanized region that includes the City of Lawrence and surrounding area of Douglas County. *T2030* identifies future transportation investments for all modes of transportation. Although the region's mobility continues to be dominated by the automobile, other modes such as public transit, pedestrian, and bicycle transportation are becoming increasingly important means of travel and are addressed by *T2030*. Aviation travel and freight movement are also addressed in the planning process. *T2030* updates and replaces the *T2025* Long Range Transportation Plan.

T2030 identifies specific services and projects for each mode of travel that will be necessary to meet the transportation needs of the region through 2030. Financial resources available to implement *T2030* have also been identified. Similar to virtually every community across the nation, anticipated revenues are not sufficient to fund all of the transportation needs. Therefore, projects have been prioritized for implementation to meet the federal requirement that *T2030* be financially constrained.

The area has seen steady population and employment expansion for several decades and is expected to continue this trend for years to come. To accommodate this future growth, transportation services and infrastructure are developed and implemented through the regional transportation planning process carried out by the Lawrence/Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Commission. This document is a product of that process.

WHY DO WE NEED A PLAN?

For several reasons:

- As congestion increases on roads due to growth, development, and more travel through the region, it is clear that the current roadway system will not be sufficient to accommodate future needs.
- Citizens of the region are asking for increased multimodal options, consistent with recent federal legislation promoting their use.
- Federal funds make up a significant portion of the region's transportation dollars, and these funds come with a requirement for a long-range transportation plan to ensure proper expenditure of revenues.

Beyond any of these reasons, a long range transportation plan makes sense. Good planning involves citizens, increases efficiency and effectiveness of the investment, and promotes transportation services and infrastructure that are consistent with the community's desires. The planning process enhances the community's character and quality of life by considering the interaction between land use and transportation and their cumulative effect on the built and natural environments.

WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT TRANSPORTATION ISSUES?

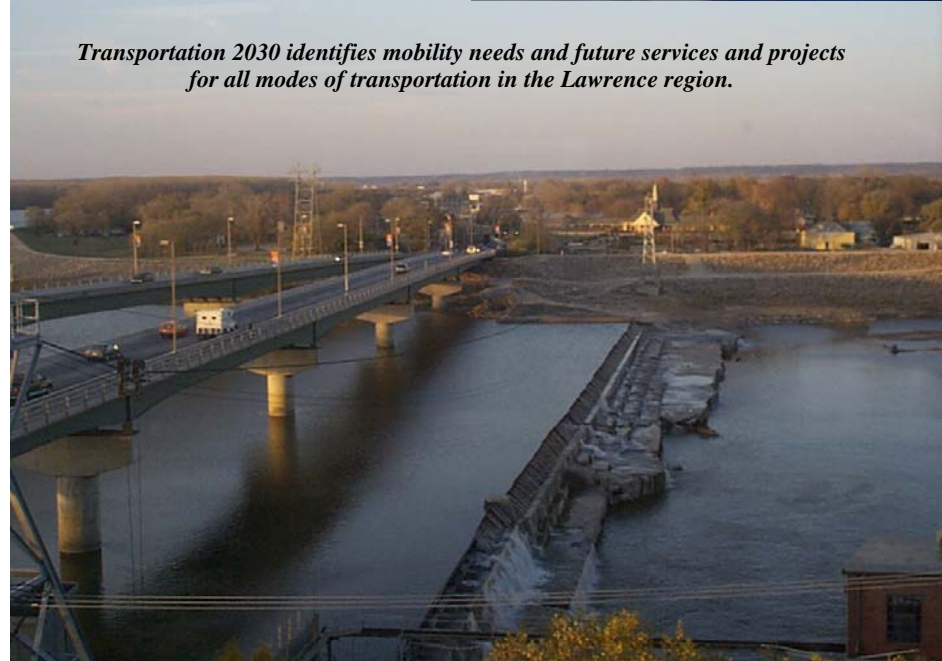
T2030 recognizes a number of emerging trends that will impact travel patterns and mode choice through the year 2030. These include fuel availability, fuel price, the development of alternative fuels, changes in vehicle fuel efficiency, and the desire to reduce green house gases as well as the impacts of population growth and the aging of the region's population.

Through *T2030's* community involvement process, many concerns, desires, ideas, and issues were brought forth for consideration in the planning process. Among these are:

- **enhancing transit options** through expanded services that reflect the needs of a mature city, fleet modernization, connections to other cities, and transit facility and other infrastructure needs;
- **servicing the needs of regional travelers** by providing better roadway connections around Lawrence;
- **constructing sensible and effective roadway improvements** that maintain the character of the City, address congestion, provide for multimodal travel, and are environmentally sensitive;
- **managing congestion** through lower-cost solutions, including travel demand management, transportation system management, technology, and intelligent transportation systems;
- **addressing the growing volume of truck traffic** through identifying future trends in freight movement and planning for appropriate improvements to the transportation system;
- **increasing bicycle travel opportunities** by constructing more bike trails, paths, and lane facilities, as well as providing missing connections in the bicycle system;
- **providing a pedestrian-friendly community** by constructing missing segments in the sidewalk network, increasing pedestrian safety at crosswalks and intersections, and implementing amenities and facilities in activity areas consistent with walkable community objectives; and,
- **balancing land use, transportation, and environmental needs** to enhance quality of life, minimize the effects of sprawl, and promote the economic competitiveness of the region.



Transportation 2030 identifies mobility needs and future services and projects for all modes of transportation in the Lawrence region.



Planning Process and Context

Related Plans and Studies

T2030 is the most recent transportation plan for the Lawrence/Douglas County region. Like many planning documents, it incorporates and builds upon the concepts and recommendations from previous efforts. Comprehensive land use plans address all aspects of a community's future, from land use patterns to sewer and water infrastructure, from parks to open space. Transportation issues typically make up an element of the comprehensive plan, such as *Horizon 2020*. However, due to federal requirements, a separate transportation plan is developed for MPO regions and is often incorporated by reference into comprehensive plans. Corridor studies and modal plans include a greater level of detail and specificity than does the transportation plan. Plans and studies related to the development and implementation of *T2030* include three types:



Comprehensive and Transportation Plans

- *Transportation 2025 – The Long-Range Transportation Plan*
- *City of Lawrence Coordinated Public Transportation Development Plan (2006)*
- *Horizon 2020 – The Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Lawrence and Unincorporated Douglas County (1996)*
- *Kansas Long-Range Transportation Plan (2002 and 2007)*

Modal Plans

- *Regional Commuter Rail Study (2002)*
- *City of Lawrence Airport Feasibility Study (2001)*
- *Kansas Rail Feasibility Study (2000)*
- *Public Transit Implementation Plan (1999)*
- *Bicycle Work Program (2001)*
- *A Plan to Facilitate Public Transportation Alternatives in Lawrence, Kansas (1998)*
- *Bicycle Compatibility Index Study (1998)*



WHAT IS THE MPO?

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a federally designated agency responsible for coordinating transportation planning and programming in urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or more. Long range transportation plans, transportation improvement programs, and other studies done under the guidance of and adopted by the MPO describe how federal transportation funds will be spent within the planning area under the jurisdiction of the MPO.

The Lawrence/Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization serves as the MPO for the region. The Lawrence/Douglas County metropolitan planning office provides staff support for the MPO.

The Lawrence/Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization is responsible for shaping and spearheading the transportation planning process for all of Douglas County.

Transportation 2030 was developed through the planning process conducted by the MPO. In addition to the long-range transportation plan, the MPO is responsible for producing the region's four-year transportation improvement program (currently 2008-2011) and annual work program.

Corridor Studies

- *K-10 Corridor Study (2007)*
- *Burroughs Creek Corridor Plan (2006)*
- *6th Street Corridor Plan (2003)*
- *23rd Street Corridor Study (2002)*
- *31st Street Corridor Study (2002)*
- *South Lawrence Trafficway Corridor Study (2002)*
- *U.S. 59 Corridor Study (2000)*
- *KAW Connects Study (2000)*
- *Louisiana Street Traffic Calming Study (1999)*
- *Access Management Plan for 6th Street (1998)*



Study Area

The federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requires that MPOs develop transportation plans for the urban area and unincorporated areas under their jurisdiction which are expected to become urbanized during the planning period.

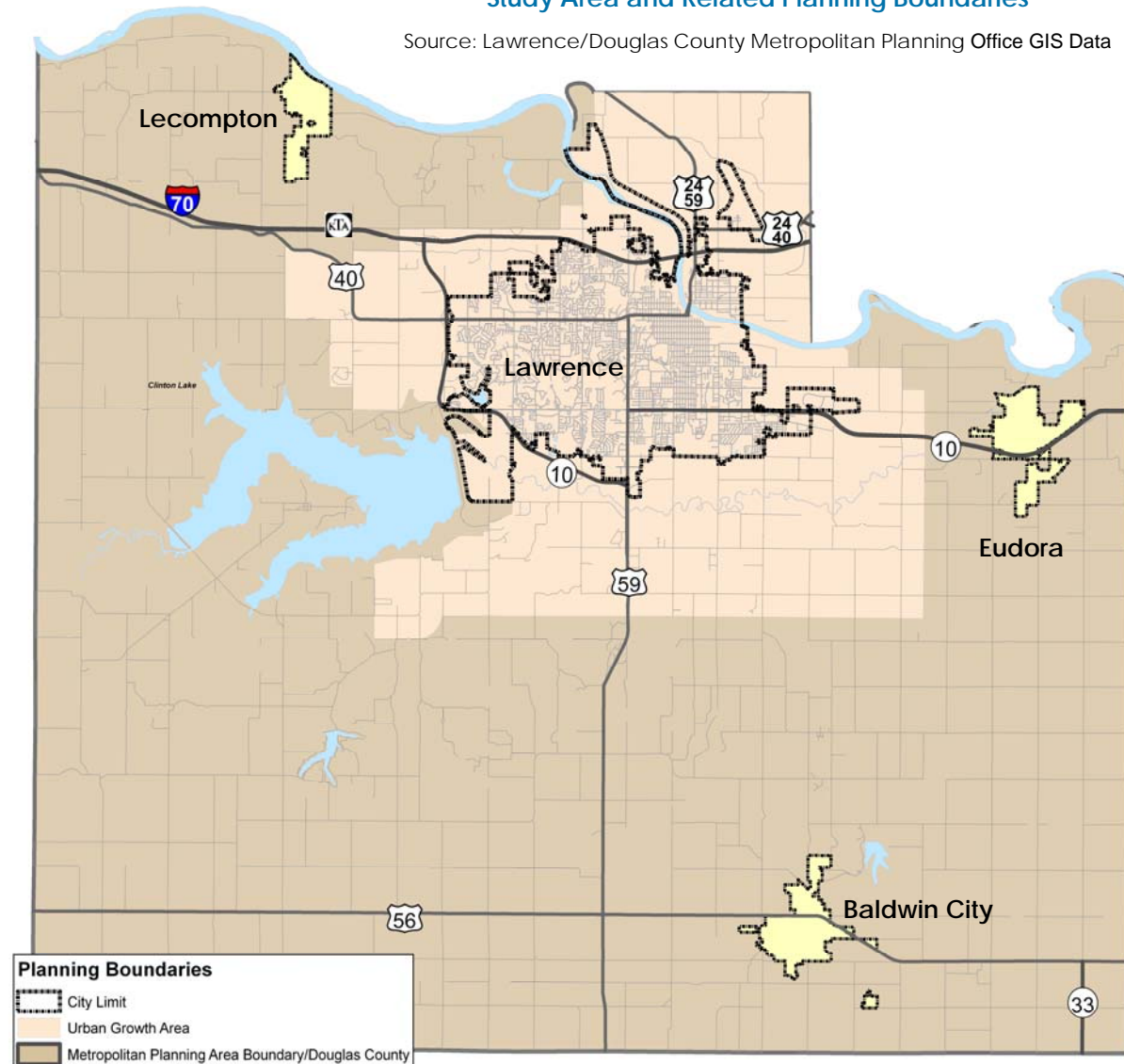
The MPO has jurisdiction for transportation planning efforts over an area designated as the Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary (MPAB). This boundary includes the Urban Growth Area (UGA) as defined by the Lawrence/Douglas County MPO. The MPO has previously defined this area through the land use planning efforts embodied in *Horizon 2020*. As with any plan, the UGA is subject to change as conditions warrant. In addition, the MPAB takes into account other statutory boundaries as defined by the U.S. Census.

The Lawrence/Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization last designated the current Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary in December of 2001. This boundary includes all of Douglas County, including the cities of Baldwin City, Eudora, Lawrence, and LeCompton.

Figure 1.1 identifies the various planning areas and boundaries affecting the development of *T2030*.

Figure 1.1
Study Area and Related Planning Boundaries

Source: Lawrence/Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Office GIS Data



Transportation 2030 addresses transportation issues and needs throughout Douglas County. However, the primary emphasis is on the urbanized area including and immediately surrounding the City of Lawrence. The travel forecasting model developed for the MPO generally encompasses the urbanized area and the immediate environs. Ultimately, the model's coverage may be extended countywide.

T2030 identifies transportation facilities and services throughout Douglas County, including the Cities of Lawrence, Baldwin City, Eudora, and Lecompton.

Plan Approval Process

T2030 was developed through an open and deliberative planning process, complying with all appropriate government regulations and closely following the MPO's approved *Public Involvement for Transportation Planning* procedures.

The development of *T2030* included four components. The first component included the development of a new travel-demand computer model of the area and a diagnostic review of the previous transportation plan. The second component involved the development of transportation alternatives and a review of the region's various modal systems. The third component included the identification of roadway alternatives, testing of alternatives, and the development of the draft *T2030* document. A fourth component includes the adoption of *T2030*.

The approval process for the document included a review by the T2030 Committee and state and federal agencies followed by a 30-day public review period. The Draft Plan was presented to the governing bodies of the Lawrence City Commission and the Douglas County Board of County Commissioners. Upon completion of these efforts, the document was presented to the Lawrence/Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization. The MPO provided the opportunity for a formal public hearing. Simultaneously, it was received by the Kansas Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration.

Plan Elements: Required and Desired

Several laws, regulations, statutes, codes and other documents at the local, state, and federal levels affected the development of *T2030* by specifying requirements to be considered in the planning process or to be contained in *T2030*. These included the federal transportation legislation SAFETEA-LU, existing metropolitan planning regulations, management and monitoring system regulations, Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and others.

SAFETEA-LU represents the largest surface transportation investment in US history. It builds on the two landmark bills that brought surface transportation into the 21st century: the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).



SAFETEA-LU provides the primary authoritative direction on the development of *T2030*. It addresses several challenges prevalent in the current US transportation system. These challenges include improving safety and security, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency in freight movement, increasing intermodal connectivity, public participation and environmental protection. It also lays the groundwork for addressing future challenges.

SAFETEA-LU encourages more “efficient and effective federal surface transportation programs,” as well as giving more flexibility to State and local decision makers to focus on transportation issues in their communities. This includes new schedules to update transportation improvement programs and long-range transportation plans; an improved public and agency participation plan; and a Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) that considers the results of State, regional or local transportation and highway safety planning processes.

SAFETEA-LU includes important transit and environmental elements such as: increased funding for rural transit, funding for non-motorized programs like “Safe Routes to School”, establishes a new Small Starts program as part of the New Starts Program for smaller transit capital projects, streamlines the Section 4(f) environmental requirements, and establishes a new Environmental Review Process for federal EIS projects. SAFETEA-LU also makes some changes to provisions for air quality and the protection of historic and natural resources.

SAFETEA-LU Planning Factors

SAFETEA-LU federal legislation recognizes that transportation investments impact a community’s economy, environment, and quality of life. As such, it states that the planning process shall provide for consideration of projects and strategies that will:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for all motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the ability of the transportation system to support homeland security and to safeguard the personal security of all motorized and non-motorized users.
4. Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight.





5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
7. Promote efficient system management and operation.
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

These SAFETEA-LU planning factors were considered and incorporated into the planning process to the extent practical and were used to set priorities for *T2030*.

Project Listings

SAFETEA-LU identifies several categories of projects that are to be included for implementation over the life of a transportation plan. They are:

- adopted congestion management strategies;
- bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
- transportation enhancement activities;
- strategies for managing the transportation system; and
- capital investments and other measures to preserve and improve the existing transportation system.

A description of all proposed improvements in sufficient detail to develop cost estimates is included with the project listing contained within this Plan.

Financial Plan

SAFETEA-LU specifies that an estimate of available revenues for implementation of transportation improvements over the life of *T2030* must be developed through a cooperative effort between the MPO, State, and transit operators. The cost estimates for the projects, strategies, and other transportation improvements contained in *T2030* have therefore been constrained to the forecasts of reasonably available revenues.

When this requirement was enacted over 16 years ago, many communities around the country readily embraced the financial constraint philosophy. In this manner, transportation plans transformed from a wish list of projects with no clear path toward implementation to a documents that included specific and implementable transportation improvements. The financial plan for *T2030* is discussed in Chapter 14.

Public Involvement Process

Public involvement is a high priority in the transportation planning process and in the development of *T2030*. The Lawrence/Douglas County MPO's *Public Involvement for Transportation Planning* procedures reflect the region's rigorous approach to public involvement. It outlines a process that provides complete information, timely public notice, and full public access. These procedures are included in the Technical Appendix. The stakeholder and public participation process included opportunities for input via the *T2030* website, public meetings, and stakeholder interviews. The draft Plan was made available for a 30-day review period and was presented to the Lawrence City Commission, the Douglas County Commission, and the Lawrence-Douglas County MPO. Comments that were received were discussed by the *T2030* Steering Committee and incorporated in the final document where appropriate. Additional details regarding the development of *T2030* are discussed in Chapter 3: Community Participation.

Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice provisions (Executive Order 12898) require agencies to take steps to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations through the development and implementation of *T2030*. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act requires that no person be excluded from participation in, denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by any federal aid activity. These requirements are addressed in the Chapter 15: Impacts of the Plan.



This page intentionally left blank.