

## **GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS**

The goals and objectives of the NATS LRTP are intended to guide the development of the 2035 LRTP, the NATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the overall transportation planning processes in the area. They are based on the premise that transportation and land use planning are intertwined. The region's roads are a highly visible component that ties together multiple land uses into a functioning system. Therefore, the NATS transportation system is developed and maintained for the advancement of each participating local unit of government as well as the region as a whole. Accordingly, NATS seeks to provide the transportation infrastructure and modes necessary to produce the highest quality of life and opportunities for its residents.

The goals and objectives that follow were developed following a review of the goals and objectives contained in the 2030 LRTP, the results of public input sessions, as well as federal and state documents and law. A subcommittee comprised of NATS TAC and Policy Committee members convened in April and again in May 2008 to discuss, review, and refine the goals, objectives, and strategic actions from the 2030 LRTP. The results and recommendations were presented to the TAC and Policy Committee at their May and June regular meetings. Committee members discussed the goals, made minor revisions, and recommended that the goals be released for public comment. Notices regarding a 10-day public comment period and public meeting were sent via e-mail to the local news media (print and radio), member communities, public libraries, and to many area residents and business owners using the SWMPC contacts database.

A public meeting to gather public input on the goals and objectives was held on August 11, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. at the Niles City Council Chambers. A brief presentation was made, and the floor was opened for comments.

It is important to note that the goals and objectives listed below are in no particular order. In addition, it may appear that some of the goals and objectives conflict with one another. These goals are designed to accommodate all of the various modes of transportation, from bicycles to airplanes, and it is the intent of NATS to avoid conflict among these goals and objectives whenever possible through coordinated transportation and land use planning.

### **Goal I: Enhance the Economic Vitality of Southwest Michigan**

#### Objectives:

- Improve the competitiveness of the regional economy through efficient and improved multi-modal facilities and mode linkages.
- Promote intergovernmental cooperation and coordination of transportation planning with economic development and all other elements of regional planning.
- Ensure that the transportation system continues to serve the needs of commerce effectively and safely.
- Support regional tourism and recreation, as well as local economic development efforts that are compatible with the long range transportation plan.
- Promote coordination of construction activities and schedules among the various agencies within the MPO.
- Maximize investments in the transportation system from all available sources, including private partners.

#### Strategies:

- Establish a clearinghouse to regularly coordinate construction activities and schedules of all the agencies.
- Provide letters of support for Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF) and other economic development grant applications.

### **Goal II: Promote Safety Conscious Planning and System Security**

#### Objectives:

- Promote safety as a factor in developing the TIP.
- Promote safety-conscious design for all proposed projects in coordination with state and federal guidelines.
- Promote access management plans.
- Educate users to become safer road users, passengers, and pedestrians.
- Encourage work for continuing dialogue between officials of local communities and railroads to improve rail-highway intersection safety.
- Promote traffic signal, sign, and pavement marking uniformity among local communities.

- Consider safety and security of the individual as an integral part in the establishment and promotion of any form of transportation.
- Promote awareness of, and plans to address, problems associated with an increasing elderly population.
- Promote a coordinated interface between various modes of transportation.

Strategies:

- Encourage studies to identify and correct perceived safety issues.
- Coordinate with law enforcement agencies as necessary to promote system safety and security.
- Conduct local safety summits.
- Utilize the local schools as a source of disseminating safety information.

**Goal III: Ensure the Equitability and Accessibility of the System**

Objectives:

- Provide connectivity among individual entities, the NATS urban area, and the surrounding areas.
- Provide adequate access and connectivity to employment, healthcare, education, shopping, and other consumer services and locations.
- Encourage alternative modes of transportation for short trips within the urban area.
- Promote enhanced responsiveness, efficiency, and of transit and ride-sharing services.
- Seek transportation solutions that respond to customer needs.
- Encourage public participation throughout the transportation planning process.
- Increase the efficiency of transportation corridors.
- Encourage public participation throughout the planning and decision-making process.
- Coordinate public transportation services among transit agencies, human service agencies, school systems, and local governments to minimize the duplication of service and to provide more complete coverage of the NATS area.
- The transportation system should minimize barriers which disadvantage mobility-limited persons, seniors, and those who cannot or who choose not to drive a personal automobile.

Strategies:

- Conduct a public involvement program to gather information from system users.
- Distribute transportation information in local newsletters and in press releases.
- Target populations identified in the environmental justice regulations in public outreach efforts.
- Conduct continuous evaluation of public involvement efforts in the transportation planning process.
- Complete the Berrien Public Transit Study.
- Participation in quarterly public transit service reviews.

**Goal IV: Preserve the Regional Transportation System**

Objectives:

- Maintain the existing roads of the regional transportation system, encouraging coordination and cooperative projects for possible cost savings where possible.
- Maintain and improve public transportation services and options.
- Promote coordination and cooperation among local jurisdictions and utilities on scheduling construction projects and activities.
- Maintain and improve active rail services (passenger and freight) for the area.
- Preserve active and abandoned rail corridors for future transportation service.
- Maintain and improve the St. Joseph River corridor and related facilities.
- Maintain and improve existing aviation facilities.
- Maintain, improve, and connect non-motorized facilities

Strategies:

- Establish a framework for coordinating project activities and schedules with local cities, villages, townships, county road commissions, and MDOT for possible cost savings through the timing and bidding of projects.
- Review and reporting of TIP projects quarterly by NATS.
- Assist local entities in developing and maintaining asset management plans.
- Explore and evaluate new revenue sources.
- Support resurface, rehabilitation, and reconstruct projects.
- Utilize the modeling process, when appropriate, in decision making.

- Draft corridor studies to insure that corridors are examined from a system-wide viewpoint and examine alternative solutions to deficiencies.

### **Goal V: Promote Livable Communities and Environmental Responsibility in Southwest Michigan**

#### Objectives:

- Acknowledge and encourage the use of smart growth initiatives.
- The transportation system will reflect the individual characteristics and shared priorities of its member jurisdictions.
- The transportation system will have options for linking each of the municipalities and will tie into the statewide system.
- Planning consideration will be given to how each mode of transportation has distinct needs while being dependent and influential upon the others.
- Appropriate discussion will be given to non-motorized, water-based, and air-related transportation activities, as well as environmental concerns, economic issues, education, and social concerns.
- Study and promote alternatives to the single occupant vehicle in order to reduce overall vehicular volume and stress on roadways.
- Encourage walking, cycling, and other non-motorized transportation forms for their benefits to community health and the environment.

#### Strategies:

- Incorporate local land use plans and other initiatives into the transportation planning process and LRTP.
- Encourage local governments to incorporate transportation planning in local planning.
- Incorporate local recreation and non-motorized plans into the LRTP.
- Develop area-wide plan for pedestrian/bicycle routes particularly to retail, medical, and recreational complexes and schools.
- Consider pedestrian and bicycle features (e.g., dedicated lanes, bulb outs, cross walks) as a part of transportation projects during the initial design phases.
- Request that transportation projects consider a beautification/environmental component, and include it where appropriate.
- Consider methods for protection of highway scenic vistas and publicize this information.

- Participate and/or co-sponsor public education programs aimed at increasing walking and other forms of non-motorized commuting.
- Provide letters of support for enhancement and other non-motorized grants.

### **Goal VI: Efficiently and Effectively Move People, Goods, and Services within Southwest Michigan**

#### Objectives:

- Promote alternatives to the single occupant vehicle in order to reduce overall vehicular volume and stress on roadways.
- Study commercial and retail needs within the NATS area.
- Improve efficiency of truck and rail routes in and through the urban area.
- Promote multi-modal facilities and modal linkages.

#### **Strategies:**

- Encourage quarterly coordination meetings among public and private transit providers.
- Optimize traffic signals throughout the region.
- Identify and collaborate with private freight partners.
- In cooperation with local units of government, explore locations and the feasibility of multi-modal facilities for air, rail, and roads.

### **NATS Goals and SAFETEA-LU Planning Factors**

According to SAFETEA-LU, the metropolitan planning process shall be continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive, and provide for consideration and implementation of projects, strategies, and services that will address the following factors:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency (Goal I)
2. Increase safety for motorized and non-motorized vehicles (Goal II)
3. Increase the security of the transportation system (new, used to be combined with safety)
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people for freight (Goal VI)

5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life (Goal V)
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight (Goal III, Goal VI)
7. Promote efficient system management and operation (Goal III, Goal VI)
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system (Goal IV)

It is by design that the NATS goals align with the eight SAFETEA-LU planning factors (see **Table 2.0** below). Therefore, by implementing projects, strategies, and services that are consistent with the goals, NATS municipalities and agencies are, by default, addressing the planning factors.

**Table 2.0**  
**How SAFETEA-LU Planning Factors Align with NATS Goals**

<b>Planning Factor</b>	<b>NATS Goal</b>
1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency	I
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users	II
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users	II
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight	III, VI
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	V
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight	III, VI
7. Promote efficient system management and operation	III, IV, VI
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system	IV