

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The goals and objectives of the TwinCATS Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) are intended to guide the development of the 2035 LRTP, the TwinCATS 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 TwinCATS 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, TwinCATS 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 TwinCATS 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), to member communities, public libraries, and too many area residents and business owners using the SWMPC database.

A public meeting to gather public input on the goals and objectives was held on July 21 at 6:00 p.m. at the St. Joseph City Hall. A brief presentation was made, and the floor was opened for comments. Comments made are discussed in the previous section on Public Participation.

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 TwinCATS to avoid

conflict among these goals and objectives whenever possible through coordinated transportation and land use planning.

Goal I: Support the Economic Vitality of Southwest Michigan

Objectives:

- Improve competitiveness of the regional economy through efficient and improved multi-modal facilities, modes, and linkages.
- Promote intergovernmental cooperation and the coordination of economic development with transportation planning and land use planning processes.
- Ensure that the transportation system continues to effectively and safely serve the needs of commerce.
- Maximize use of existing facilities and infrastructure by encouraging economic development on existing vacant or underutilized sites, especially in the urban core.
- Promote coordination of construction activities and schedules among the various agencies within the MPO.
- Support regional tourism and recreation and other projects that promote the economic vitality of the area.

Strategic Actions:

- Assist in the development of a plan to protect recreational and commercial use of the Harbor with other appropriate agencies and jurisdictions.
- Advocate the completion of US 31 to the proposed connection point with I-94 BL on the eastside of Benton Harbor.
- Provide letters of support for Transportation Economic Development Fund and other economic development grants.

Goal II: Promote Safety Conscious Planning and System Security in Southwest Michigan

Objectives:

- Promote safety as a factor in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) development.
- Promote safety-conscious design for all proposed projects.
- Promote access management plans for major corridors within and leading into the urban area.
- Educate the public to become safer road users, passengers, and pedestrians.

- Work for continuous dialogue between local communities and railroads to improve rail/highway intersection safety.
- Promote traffic signal, sign, and pavement marking uniformity among local communities.
- Consider individual safety and security as an integral part in the establishment and promotion of any form of transportation.
- Promote a coordinated interface between various modes of transportation.
- Promote effective, coordinated emergency/disaster planning that considers the transportation network

Strategic Actions:

- In cooperation with local units of government, county road commissions, and MDOT, study corridors of interest and identify solutions.
- Continue support of the Southwest Michigan Transportation Safety Committee sponsored by AAA of Michigan and the Office of Highway Safety Planning as well as other safety initiatives.
- Coordinate with law enforcement and other relevant agencies to ensure system safety and security.

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

Objectives:

- Provide connections among individual entities, the TwinCATS urban area, and the surrounding areas.
- Provide adequate access and connections to employment, healthcare, education, shopping, and other consumer services.
- Enhance responsiveness, efficiency, and funding of transit and ride-sharing services.
- Seek transportation solutions that anticipate and/or respond to customer needs.
- Increase efficiency along transportation corridors.
- Actively encourage public participation throughout the transportation planning and decision-making process.
- Coordinate public transportation services among transit agencies, human service agencies, school systems, and local governments to minimize duplication of service and to provide more complete coverage of the TwinCATS area.

- The transportation system should minimize transportation barriers which disadvantage mobility-limited persons, seniors, and those who cannot or who choose not to drive a personal automobile.

Strategic Actions:

- Identify and communicate with transportation-disadvantaged populations to bring their ideas and needs into the planning process.
- Conduct a public involvement program and surveys to gather information from users.
- Distribute transportation information in local newsletters and press releases.
- Conduct continuous evaluation of public involvement efforts in the transportation planning process.
- Actively partner with other agencies and organizations to obtain greater participation in and information about the diverse needs of the population.
- Investments from all available sources (including the private sector) in the transportation system should be maximized.
- Complete the Berrien Public Transit Study.
- Study transit funding structures and identify a funding strategy that includes local funding to support public transportation.
- Continue to advocate and facilitate responsive, coordinated, and cooperative alternatives for public transportation.

Goal IV: Preserve the Regional Transportation System

Objectives:

- Maintain existing road surfaces and their structural integrity.
- Maintain and improve public transportation services and equipment.
- Maintain and improve Lake Michigan and St. Joseph River Harbor navigation channels and related facilities for both commercial and recreational use.
- Maintain and improve existing aviation facilities.
- Maintain, improve, and connect non-motorized facilities.
- Maintain and improve passenger rail service in the entire TwinCATS area and through the Cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph.

Strategic Actions:

- Support resurface, rehabilitate, and reconstruct projects.

- Collect and maintain a reliable database of system characteristics.
- Assist local entities in developing and maintaining asset management plans.
- Encourage the development of a five-year investment strategy from corridor studies.
- Develop four-year Transportation Improvement Program list of projects.
- Explore and evaluate new revenue sources.
- Utilize the modeling process when appropriate in decision-making.
- Draft corridor studies to insure corridors are examined from a system-wide viewpoint and examine alternative solutions to system deficiencies.
- Continue to advocate for high speed rail in Berrien County.

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

Objectives:

- Coordinate and incorporate local land use plans and priorities into the Long Range Transportation Plan.
- Encourage the use of smart growth principles in transportation planning activities.
- Encourage alternative modes of transportation for trips in the urban area.
- Reflect the individual characteristics and shared priorities of the TwinCATS member communities.
- Give appropriate consideration to non-traditional modes of transportation as well as environmental concerns, economic issues, education, and societal concerns.
- Provide a transportation system for linking and traversing each of the municipalities, as well as tying into the statewide system.
- Encourage walking and other forms of non-motorized movement for community health and environmental improvements.
- Promote Berrien County Go! Rideshare program, as well as other carpooling and vanpooling programs.

Strategic Actions:

- Incorporate local land use plans and other initiatives into the transportation planning process and Long Range Transportation Plan.
- Encourage local governments to incorporate transportation planning in local planning

- Establish an ongoing coordination procedure with the Berrien County Planning Department to provide regular inputs to the land use plan process.
- Develop plan for area-wide pedestrian/bicycle routes particularly to retail, medical, and recreational complexes and schools.
- Consider pedestrian and bicycle features (e.g., dedicated lanes along roadways and bridges, bulb outs, cross walks) as a part of transportation projects during the initial planning and 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:

- Improve competitiveness of regional economy through efficient and improved multi-modal facilities and modal linkages.
- Consider the commercial/retail delivery needs within the urban area.
- Improve the efficiency and use of truck and rail routes in and through the urban area.
- Encourage the use of existing commercial sites in and around the urban core for efficiency in deliveries of goods.
- Promote access management as a means of improving/enhancing deliveries and customer contacts.
- Maintain, improve, and advocate for passenger rail service along Lake Michigan.
- Promote access to water-based transportation.

Strategic Actions:

- Co-sponsor a construction coordination summit with MDOT, the Berrien County Road Commission, local units of government, area emergency service providers, school personnel, and other agencies in the fourth quarter of the year to discuss planned construction activities and schedules.

- Survey businesses to solicit their views of transportation inefficiencies (e.g. truck routes, parking facilities, access to business).
- In cooperation with Berrien County and local units of government, explore locations and the feasibility of multi-modal facilities for harbor, air, rail, and roads.
- Identify lack of connection between different modes.
- Preserve active rail corridors and abandoned rail corridors for future transportation service needs.
- Encourage commuter rail from the TwinCATS area to Chicago.
- Identify and collaborate with private freight partners.

TwinCATS 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.
2. Increase safety for motorized and non-motorized vehicles.
3. Increase the security of the transportation system.
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people for freight.
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.
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.

It is by design that the TwinCATS goals align with the eight SAFETEA-LU planning factors (see **Table 1.0** below). Therefore, by implementing projects, strategies, and services that are consistent with the goals, TwinCATS municipalities and agencies are, by default, addressing the planning factors.

Table 1.0
How SAFETEA-LU Planning Factors Align with TwinCATS Goals

Planning Factor	TwinCATS Goal
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