



Chapter 1. Introduction

Overview

The Grand Forks/East Grand Forks (GF/EGF) Metropolitan Transportation Plan identifies existing and future needs to maintain a robust regional, multimodal transportation system in the near- and long-term future. This plan was successfully developed through ongoing collaboration among Grand Forks, East Grand Forks, Polk County, Grand Forks County, North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT), Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT), the Cities Area Transit (CAT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), citizens and business throughout the region, and the Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization. With input from these stakeholders, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan outlines outcomes and standards to advance the locally identified issues, vision, goals, and performance targets.

The sections that follow focus on the street and highway components of the region's multimodal transportation system, as illustrated in Figure 1-1. This street and highway plan accounts for changes in the metropolitan area since the last plan adopted in 2013. Actions and strategies outlined here are complemented by the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transit Development Plan (adopted July 2017) and Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (adopted December 2018). The three documents work together to guide planning and funding for multimodal transportation in the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks metropolitan area.

Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act)

This plan is structured to address the planning requirements in the FAST Act that advance a streamlined, performance-based, multimodal transportation system and planning process. Guiding principles of that legislation aim to improve safety, maintain infrastructure quality, reduce traffic congestion, and accordingly improve efficiency of the system and freight movements, while minimizing environmental impact and reducing delays in project delivery.

To be consistent with federal requirements, the GF/EGF MPO aims to:

- Utilize performance-based planning and programming focused on national transportation goals to improve transportation investment decisions and increase accountability of the Federal Highway Programs
- Position programs within a streamlined and simplified program structure with a smaller number of broader core programs
- Comply with federal prioritization of the National Highway System (NHS) and its maintenance
- Identify "State of Good Repair" projects that improve ride quality or extend the life of a roadway, as opposed to expanding the system

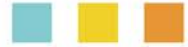
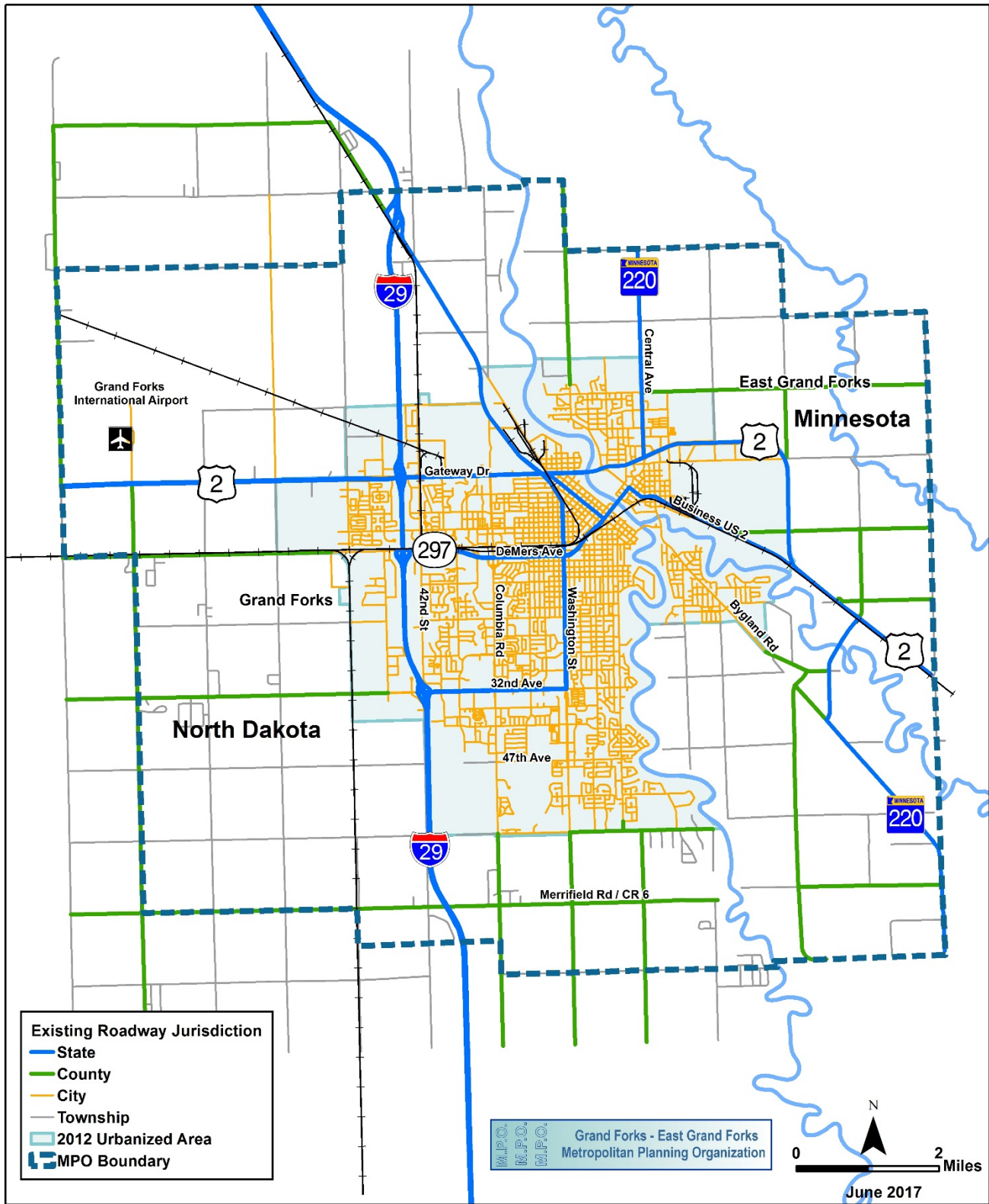


Figure 1-1: Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Street and Highway System



Source: Grand Forks-East Grand Forks MPO



The Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update Process

The Grand Forks/East Grand Forks MPO leads the region's multimodal transportation planning process. While this Plan highlights the street and highway components of a multimodal approach, they are just one element of larger regional planning efforts.

This Plan is guided by goals and performance measures that grew out of community values. These objectives represent a wide range of social, technical, environmental, and economic factors that influence the region's transportation system.

Plan Chapters

The following chapters and topics address the GF/EGF transportation system from Plan development through implementation strategies.

Vision, Goals, Objectives, Standards, Performance Measures and Targets

Development of the Plan is based in community input on the vision, goals, objectives, standards, performance measures, and performance targets. Through consultation with the Technical Advisory Committee, Policy Board, and the general public, stakeholders identified priorities for the region's current and future transportation system. The goals, performance measures, and performance targets have been updated to address the FAST Act.

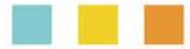
Existing Conditions and Special Studies

To address future needs of the multimodal system, this chapter highlights the current state of the street and highway system and findings from special studies. The chapter addresses:

- Demographics and land use
- Natural and environmental resources
- Carbon footprint
- Roadway characteristics including jurisdiction, number of lanes, functional classification, pavement condition, and bridge condition
- Existing traffic conditions including traffic volumes, intersection level of service, and roadway level of service
- Crashes
- Freight routes, volumes, and crashes
- Programmed regionally significant improvements
- Recent highway studies and their results
 - I-29 Traffic Operations Study (2017, Grand Forks)
 - US 2 and US 2 Business Study (2017, East Grand Forks)
 - Bygland Road Study (2016, East Grand Forks)
 - Glasston Railroad Crossing Study (2016, Grand Forks)
 - North 42nd Street Traffic Operations Study (2016, Grand Forks)
 - 32nd Avenue Safety Audit Review / 32nd Avenue Signal Coordination Plan Update (2016, Grand Forks)
 - US 2 Access Study (2015, Grand Forks)
 - South Columbia Road Traffic Operations Study (2015, Grand Forks)
 - 42nd Street Railroad Grade Separation Study (2014, Grand Forks)
 - Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Freight Rail Access Study (2014, Grand Forks)
 - Grand Forks Air Force Base Traffic Study (2013, Grand Forks)

Identification of System, Issues, and Opportunities

To effectively advance a long-term multimodal plan, project staff worked with stakeholders to address community concerns and desires. This chapter summarizes engagement efforts and frequently occurring themes that shaped



the issues and opportunities addressed throughout the Plan. The planning process included a variety of stakeholder and community engagement opportunities:

- Public meetings and open houses in August 2017 in Grand Forks and December 2017 in East Grand Forks
- Interactive mapping, surveys, and comment forms on the project website: www.theforksstreets2045.org
- MPO Facebook updates and postings
- MPO website updates
- Agency and stakeholder meetings
- Local media press releases and interviews with MPO staff

Some of the key issues identified include:

- Additional southern Red River crossing
- 32nd Avenue South
- Proposed interchange improvements along I-29
- Byglund Road
- Columbia Road
- Washington Avenue
- Belmont Road
- Proposed railroad grade separations at DeMers Avenue and US Highway 2
- US Highway 2
- Demers Avenue through the Grand Forks and East Grand Forks downtowns
- Minnesota TH 220

Range of Alternatives

This chapter identifies potential roadway improvement alternatives to address the identified transportation needs. It provides a summary of the process used to develop various street and highway improvements to address short-, mid-, and long-range issues. The range of alternatives process is intended to result in a comprehensive list of potential improvement projects that address goals, objectives, standards, performance measures and targets, and issues.

The range of alternatives list was developed by identifying improvements in existing planning documents, existing transportation improvement programs, and recent studies. Additional improvements, such as river crossing alternatives, were identified based on stakeholder input and Street/Highway Plan technical analysis results. Public input and partner agency feedback also contributed to the development of the list of projects for evaluation.

The range of alternatives includes projects in six categories:

- MPO TIP: Included in current regional TIP
- Existing + Committed (E + C) Network: Projects expected to be completed using Non-Federal/Non-State funds
- Safety/Operations - HSIP: Projects that will improve the safety and operation of the existing system
- Multimodal, Streetscape, Studies: Projects emphasizing multimodal or streetscape improvements or studies
- State of Good Repair: Projects related to maintenance and preservation of the existing system
- Discretionary: All remaining projects not listed previously

Financial Plan

As a crucial component of the Transportation Plan, the Financial Plan establishes the fiscal context for potential capital and operating investments. This chapter identifies potential funding programs to advance potential improvement projects. It also presents anticipated revenue amounts by program and jurisdiction.

The planning process based the revenue forecast in a locally-derived methodology approved by each State DOT and local partners:

- Establish historical transportation improvement funding programs and amounts
- Establish new transportation improvement funding programs and amounts
- Establish revenue growth rates
- Identify future available revenues for short-range (2023-2027), mid-range (2028-2037), and long-range (2038-2045) timeframes

Recommended Network Improvements and Implementation Program

The long-range planning process concludes by identifying a program of projects for implementation. The process to develop the Implementation Program merges the Range of Alternatives with goals, objectives, standards, and network performance with available revenues. The Implementation Program is also called the fiscally constrained or Current Revenue scenario. Projects listed in the Current Revenue Scenario are eligible to compete for federal transportation funding through the GF/EGF MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process.

Development of the Current Revenue Scenario considered:

- Goals, objectives, standards, and network performance outcomes
- Revenue available by timeframe, short-range (2023-2027), mid-range (2028-2037), and long-range (2038-2045)
- Public input – including input on identification and prioritization of needs
- Ability to help maximize useful life of existing pavement and bridge infrastructure by corridor
- Existing investment programs
- Project costs in year of expenditure
- Local knowledge

Current Revenue Scenario

The fiscally constrained Current Revenue Scenario includes \$267 million in investments as illustrated in Table 1-1. The Current Revenue Scenario identifies specific projects for Safety/Operations, North Dakota Main Street, State of Good Repair: Interstate, and State of Good Repair: Non-Interstate National Highway System. The majority of investments will go toward maintaining existing pavement and bridges (state of good repair), with some investments emphasizing safety (safety/operations) and livability (North Dakota Main Street). These projects supplement those identified in the 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program.

Table 1-1: Current Revenue Scenario Project Type Investment Amounts

Project Type	Investment Amounts	Share
Safety	\$4.8 million	2%
North Dakota Main Street	\$39.1 million	14%
State of Good Repair: Interstate	\$28.9 million	11%
State of Good Repair: Non-Interstate NHS	\$194.1 million	73%
Total	\$267 million	100%

Illustrative Projects

Some regionally significant projects were not included in the Current Revenue Scenario. These illustrative projects have a regionally significant transportation purpose and need, but costs exceed forecast revenues. Table 1-2 lists some of the highest ranked illustrative projects. The Red River crossing projects, 32nd Avenue S and Merrifield Road, shown on the bottom of the table are included on the list as a result of policy direction from the GF/EGF MPO Board that was made considering input from this planning process and public input. The river crossing projects will provide regional connectivity across the Red River, supplementing the three existing river crossings that are forecast to operate with significant congestion in 2045.



Table 1-2: Illustrative "Projects of Significance"

Project Type	Project Description
State of Good Repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Non-NHS Federal Aid Eligible Streets/Highways
Intersections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 32nd Avenue/South Washington Street ■ Central Avenue: 17th Street to 23rd Street ■ US 2 (Gateway Drive): Washington Street to Mill Road ■ US 2 (Gateway Drive): Cambridge Street to Columbia Road
Additional Lanes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Columbia Road: 14th Avenue S. to 24th Avenue S.
Interstate 29 Interchange Upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ North Washington ■ US 2 (Gateway Drive) ■ DeMers Avenue ■ 32nd Avenue
New Grade Separations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ US 2 (Gateway Drive) east of Interstate 29 ■ 42nd Street: North of DeMers Avenue
New River Crossings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 32nd Avenue ■ Merrifield Road

Environmental Considerations

The GF/EGF MPO's transportation planning activities are performed at the regional level and projects identified in this plan require more detailed scoping and design analysis to identify detailed social, economic, and environmental impacts. These analyses will be performed as projects are further developed.

The GF/EGF MPO solicited input from several Federal, State, and Tribal land management, wildlife, and regulatory agencies on possible environmental mitigation activities that may be appropriate for the types of system improvement projects identified in the plan. Agencies were notified via letter and requested to provide input on the projects and proposed environmental mitigation activities identified during the planning process. There were 50 different agencies from which comments were solicited. The GF/EGF MPO and its jurisdictional partners are committed to minimizing and mitigating the negative effects of transportation projects on the natural and built environments.

Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898 directs Federal agencies to take appropriate and necessary steps to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse effects of Federal projects, including the transportation planning process, on the health or environment of minority and low-income populations to the greatest extent practical and permitted by law. USDOT Order 5610.2(a) sets forth the USDOT policy to consider environmental justice (EJ) principles in all (USDOT) programs, policies, and activities. It describes how the objectives of EJ will be integrated into planning and programming, rulemaking, and policy formulation. The Order sets forth steps to prevent disproportionately high and adverse effects to minority or low-income populations through Title VI analyses and EJ analyses conducted as part of Federal transportation planning and NEPA provisions. Disproportionate is defined in two ways: the impact is predominantly borne by the minority or low-income population group, or the impact is appreciably more severe than that experienced by non-minority or non-low-income populations.

The MPO addresses Environmental Justice to ensure non-discrimination concerning enacted transportation-related laws, regulations, and policies. The MPO has developed an Environmental Justice Program Manual



designed to provide guidance in meeting EJ mandates and structuring a public participation plan at the project or study level. To certify compliance with, and to address environmental justice, the MPO:

- Identifies residential, employment, and transportation patterns of low-income and minority populations so that their needs can be identified and addressed, and the benefits and burdens of transportation investments can be fairly distributed.
- Ensures that the long-range transportation plan and the transportation improvement program (TIP) comply with the tenets of Environmental Justice.
- Utilizes public involvement processes to eliminate participation barriers and engage minority and low-income populations in transportation decision making.

These areas will be evaluated further as Current Revenue Scenario projects are further developed.

Performance Based Planning

MAP-21 and FAST ACT requires incorporation of performance based planning in the development of the Grand Forks – East Grand Forks MPO metropolitan transportation plan. The requirement in these US Laws defined that the Plan shall include, to the maximum extent practicable, a description of the anticipated effect of the Plan toward achieving the performance measures by linking them with the investment priorities.

The 2045 Street/Highway Plan implements the now promulgated required national performance measures. The Plan integrates the safety plans developed by partner agencies, including each state's Strategic Highway Safety Plan and more localized strategic highway safety plans that apply state-level emphasis areas and strategies consistent with local context and intent to implement. The 2045 Plan also identifies projects for Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding (see Chapter 7 Table 7-8 and Table 7-13). These projects are expected to have a positive impact toward meeting safety targets in North Dakota.

This plan also acknowledges the need to update plans that prioritize safety-related projects for HSIP funding. A concern with these safety plans, particularly on the Minnesota side, has been the lack of MPO inclusion in the safety planning process. The most recent Minnesota Strategic Highway Safety Plan greatly improved MPO engagement, but this practice has not carried forward with each respective District and/or County Safety plan update. Further, the Minnesota process for programming funds from the Highway Safety Improvement Program has historically neglected the active engagement of MPOs. Routinely, MnDOT solicits, vets and programs projects without involvement from Greater Minnesota MPOs. This plan recommends improvements to the HSIP project solicitation process, and efforts are underway to improve it.

The 2045 Street/Highway Plan emphasizes projects that support State of Good Repair for pavement and bridges on the Interstate, non-Interstate National Highway System, and Federal Aid-Eligible System in North Dakota and Minnesota (see Chapter 7 Table 7-4, Table 7-5, Table 7-6, Table 7-7, Table 7-10, Table 7-11, and Table 7-12). These projects are expected to have a positive impact toward meeting pavement and bridge condition targets in North Dakota and Minnesota.

The Grand Forks-East Grand Forks MPO understands it is in the early stages of developing a fully compliant, performance-based MTP. As multiple years of data is collected for the performance measures and their targets, the MPO will monitor performance and evaluate if trends are moving toward meeting the targets. The Grand Forks-East Grand Forks MPO commits to making adjustments to planning strategies to meet the performance targets if the desired results are not being met.