Mr. Al Vanderberg, Chairperson  
Grand Valley Metro Council  
678 Front Ave NW, Suite 200  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  

Mr. David Wresinski, Director  
Bureau of Transportation Planning (B340)  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
Lansing, MI

Dear Mr. Vanderberg and Mr. Wresinski:

The FTA and FHWA completed a joint certification review of the urban transportation planning process in the Grand Rapids area in June 2014. The objective was to determine if the process meets the federal transportation planning requirements which are prerequisites to the advancement of federal transportation projects in urbanized areas.

We found the process does meet the requirements of the federal planning regulations and therefore jointly certify the transportation planning process for the Grand Rapids metropolitan region.

The details of our review and findings are contained in the enclosed report. We look forward to working with your staff to implement the recommendations in the report and to continue to improve the planning process.

We sincerely appreciate the cooperation of your staff in assisting us with the review. Please contact Ms. Rachael E. Tupica, FHWA, at (517) 702-1829 or Mr. Stewart McKenzie, FTA, at (312) 353-2866 if you have any questions regarding this certification report and findings.

Sincerely,  

Russell L. Jorgenson, P.E.  
Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration

Sincerely,  

Marisol R. Simón  
Regional Administrator  
Federal Transit Administration
Metropolitan Transportation Planning Certification Review

For the

Grand Rapids, Michigan Transportation Management Area

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council

Final Report Issued
February 3, 2015
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Acronyms

CFR  Code of Federal Regulations
CMP  Congestion Mitigation Process
EJ  Environmental Justice
FHWA  Federal Highway Administration
FTA  Federal Transit Administration
GVMC  Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
ITP  Interurban Transit Partnership – The Rapid
MAP-21  Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)
MDOT  Michigan Department of Transportation
MOU  Memorandum of Understanding
MPA  Metropolitan Planning Area
MPO  Metropolitan Planning Organization – urbanized area with > 50,000 population
MTP  Metropolitan Transportation Plan
NPRM  Notice of Proposed Rule Making
PBPP  Performance-Based Planning and Programming
SHSP  Strategic Highway Safety Plan
STIP  Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
TIP  Transportation Improvement Program
TMA  Transportation Management Area – MPO with > 200,000 population
UPWP  Unified Planning Work Program
USC  United States Code (law)
Preface

"The Secretary shall ensure that the metropolitan planning process of a metropolitan planning organization serving a transportation management area is being carried out in accordance with applicable provisions of Federal law."


The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning in a transportation management area (TMA) at least every four years. In general, the reviews consist of three primary activities: a desk review of planning products (in advance of the on-site review), an on-site review, and creation of a report that summarizes the review and offers findings. The review process is individually tailored to focus on topics of significance in each metropolitan planning area. The certification review is not just a review of the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) staff; rather, it's a review of the planning process conducted by all member agencies (local road agencies, State, and transit operators) charged with cooperatively carrying out the planning process on a daily basis. The review focuses on compliance with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), challenges, successes, and experiences of the cooperative relationship between the MPO, the State, and transit operators as they conduct the metropolitan transportation planning process.

The certification review process is only one of several methods used to assess the quality of a local metropolitan transportation planning process, compliance with applicable statutes and regulations, and the level and type of technical assistance needed to enhance the effectiveness of the planning process. Other intermediate activities provide opportunities for this type of review and comment, including reviewing the unified planning work program (UPWP), the metropolitan transportation plan (MTP), metropolitan transportation improvement program (TIP), air-quality conformity determinations (in nonattainment and maintenance areas), as well as a range of other formal and less formal contact provide both the FHWA and FTA an opportunity to comment on the planning process. The results of these other processes are considered in the certification review process.

While the certification review report itself may not fully document those many intermediate and ongoing checkpoints, the “findings” of the certification review are, in fact, based upon the cumulative findings of the entire review effort. The reports and final actions are the joint responsibility of the appropriate FHWA and FTA field offices, and their content will vary to reflect the planning process reviewed, whether or not they relate explicitly to formal “findings” of the review. To encourage public understanding and input, the FHWA and FTA will continue to improve the public involvement process and the clarity of the certification reports.
Executive Summary

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council 2014 Certification Review

Purpose
The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are required by law to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process for each transportation management area (TMA) at least every four years. The certification review process helps ensure that the planning requirements of 23 U.S.C.134 and 49 U.S.C. 5303 are being satisfactorily achieved.

Methodology
This certification review consisted of a/an:
- Desk audit, conducted by the federal review team prior to the on-site visit,
- Public meeting conducted June 17th with public comment period open through July 31st,
- On-site review, conducted June 18 – 19, 2014,
- Discussion with Policy Committee members, conducted during the on-site review June 18, and
- Documentation of findings, developed from formal review and routine oversight, in a certification report.

Scope
A certification review is an assessment of the transportation planning products and processes conducted by all partners charged with cooperatively carrying out the required transportation planning process. Topics covered at this on-site visit were:
- Metropolitan Planning Organization Structure,
- Planning Agreements,
- Unified Planning Work Program,
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan,
- Travel Demand Model & Congestion Mitigation Process,
- Transportation Improvement Program, and
- Safety.

Findings
The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) jointly certify the transportation planning process for the Grand Rapids urbanized area as the process meets the requirements of Federal law. This certification is valid for four years from the date on the report cover sheet. FHWA and FTA’s routine stewardship and oversight as well as with information collected through public participation, the desk audit, and the on-site visit provide the primary basis for this determination.

The review identified:
- 3 commendations,
- 9 recommendations, and
- 0 corrective actions.
Summary of GVMC 2014 Certification Review Findings

Commendation 1: Metropolitan Transportation Plan
GVMC is commended for developing a comprehensive MTP that addresses the changes in federal law and findings from the last certification review, along with a format that will make it easy for the public to understand the planning process.

Commendation 2: Policies and Practices for Programming Projects
GVMC is commended for the Policies and Practices for Programming Projects document as it's a great tool for committee members and the public to understand the requirements for programming new projects in the MTP and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Commendation 3: Safety Planning
GVMC is commended for developing and using a Strategic Safety Planning Process as documented in a June 20, 2010 report. The 2035 LRTP appears to have been informed by this more considered approach to safety. The MPO is encouraged to continue refining and implementing their approach to safety.

Recommendation 1: Transit Representation on GVMC Board
It is recommended that the GVMC and ITP, in cooperation with FTA and FHWA, review the finalized MAP-21 Planning CFR, when released, and determine if their membership meets the requirements for transit representation on the MPO board.

Recommendation 2: Planning Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)
It is recommended that the GVMC, MDOT and ITP, in cooperation with FTA and FHWA, review the finalized MAP-21 Planning CFR, when released, and work cooperatively to update and adopt a single Planning MOU between all parties to reflect a performance-based planning process, including roles, responsibilities, and timeframes. FHWA and FTA will provide guidance and examples of commendable MOUs under MAP-21 as they are developed.

Recommendation 3: Unified Planning Work Program
It is recommended that the GVMC include a schedule that shows target dates for completion of major products. This would better convey the interrelationship of work program activities, such as those that depend on others before they can proceed. The GVMC is also encouraged to continue efforts to improve monitoring and sharing work progress, completion of major work and the impact of that work within the community. Efforts to keep committee members and the public informed and engaged in the transportation planning process, whether through the annual business report, monthly committee reports, or the Final Acceptance Reports demonstrate a transparent, productive planning process.

Recommendation 4: Performance-Based Planning and Programming
GVMC should analyze the long- and short-range planning process for necessary updates to ensure compliance with MAP-21 PBPP requirements. It is recommended that the MPO use the PBPP Self-Assessment Tool that was released December, 2014, attend Michigan's PBPP Peer Exchange, scheduled for April 2015, along with any other tool necessary.
Recommendation 5: MTP Environmental Justice Analysis

It is recommended that GVMC expand the MTP environmental justice analysis to regional measures such as accessibility to opportunities (e.g., employment, education, health care, etc.). This analysis will give a comparative assessment of the benefits and burdens across the spectrum of populations, assuming implementation of the MTP and TIP. Noting the fact that 57% of the Grand Rapids metropolitan planning area is comprised of environmental justice defined minority groups, this additional analysis is prudent and necessary. It is also recommended that MPO staff attend FHWA environmental justice training to assist them in completing this recommended next step in a comprehensive environmental justice systems level approach.

Recommendation 6: Transportation Planning Education Campaign

During the certification review process, participants from the GVMC Policy Committee as well as the public indicated a desire for a transportation planning education campaign for the Grand Rapids metropolitan planning area. We recommend GVMC staff research this idea (format, topics, etc.) and discuss the research with the Policy Committee and applicable partners.

Recommendation 7: Travel Demand Model

It is recommended that GVMC look into the Travel Model Improvement Program (TMIP) as a resource for technical assistance and training for improving the travel demand model. If interested, contact your Planning representative in the FHWA Michigan Division. [http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/tmip/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/tmip/)

Recommendation 8: Transportation Improvement Program

It is recommended that GVMC continue to be involved in the Financial Working Group and look for ways to improve financial planning processes, including estimating local revenue and operations, and identifying operations and maintenance costs.

Recommendation 9: Safety Planning

It is recommended that GVMC include more information on safety on the MPO website. GVMC is doing a lot of good work that could be made more accessible to the community. It is also recommended that GVMC explore approaches for addressing safety as a consideration in the project selection process. Finally, we recommend GVMC address safety on all public roads in the MPO study area.
Introduction

Purpose
The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are required by law to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process for each transportation management area (TMA) at least every four years. The certification review process helps ensure that the planning requirements of 23 U.S.C.134 and 49 U.S.C. 5303 are being satisfactorily achieved.

Methodology
This certification review consists of a/an:
- Desk audit, conducted prior to the on-site visit,
- Public meeting conducted June 17th with public comment period open through July 31st,
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- A discussion with Policy Committee members, conducted during the on-site review June 18, 2014 and
- Documentation of findings, developed from formal review and routine oversight, in a certification report.

Scope
A certification review is an assessment of the transportation planning products and processes conducted by all partners charged with cooperatively carrying out the required transportation planning process. Topics covered at this on-site visit were:
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Structure
- Planning Agreements
- Unified Planning Work Program
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan
- Travel Demand Model & Congestion Mitigation Process
- Transportation Improvement Program
- Safety

Certification Report & Findings
For each topic reviewed at the on-site review, this report will document the current status, findings, and regulatory basis. Each section of the report will contain:
- **Current Status** – Defines what the Transportation Management Area (TMA) is currently doing in regards to each planning topic.
- **Findings** – Statements of fact that define the conditions found during FHWA and FTA’s routine stewardship and oversight as well as with information collected through public participation, the desk audit, and the on-site visit provide the primary basis for findings. Findings of the planning process include:
  - **Commendation** – Is a process or practice that demonstrates noteworthy procedures for implementing the planning requirements.
  - **Recommendation** – Ideas for improvement to processes and practices, though there is no Federal mandate.
  - **Corrective Action** – Indicates a serious situation that fails to meet one or more requirements of the transportation planning statute and regulations, thus seriously impacting the outcome of the overall process. The expected outcome is change that brings the metropolitan planning process into compliance with a planning statute or regulation; failure to respond by the identified date will likely result in a more restrictive certification.
- **Regulatory Basis** – Defines where information regarding each planning topic can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).
Certification Findings

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) jointly certify the transportation planning process for the Grand Rapids urbanized area as the process meets the requirements of federal law. This certification is valid for four years from the date on the report cover sheet.

FHWA and FTA’s routine stewardship and oversight as well as with information collected through public participation, the desk audit, and the on-site visit provide the primary basis for this determination. Additional information on these findings is documented below by topic area. The review identified:

- 3 recommendations,
- 9 recommendations, and
- 0 corrective actions.

I. Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Structure

Current Status
The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) is a multipurpose planning agency and was designated as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Grand Rapids urbanized area in 1991. The GVMC Board represents 36 entities within Kent County and eastern Ottawa County. GVMC by-laws were adopted on November 19, 1992. For the purposes of transportation planning, the GVMC has designated two committees: the Policy Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee.

Policy Advisory Committee
The Policy Advisory Committee was created to address all matters related to transportation planning and for developing policies for compliance with the federal rules and procedures. The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council authorizes the Policy Committee to develop and recommend to the Council the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, and Unified Planning Work Program. The Policy Committee is delegated the authority to amend the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program. Policy Committee membership includes:

- Local units of government,
- The Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP),
- Kent County International Airport, and
- The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

Technical Advisory Committee
The Technical Committee is an advisory/recommending body to the Policy Committee. The Committee is authorized to address all technical matters relating to the multi-modal transportation planning process, as well as the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program. The Technical Advisory Committee includes membership from:

- Local units of government,
- Kent and Ottawa County Road Commissions,
- ITP, and
- MDOT.

Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC)

GVMC Board of Directors

Administration

Transportation

Environmental Programs

REGIS

Transport Policy & Technical Committee

REDIS Board & Technical Committee
Findings

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) changed provisions related to transit representation on the MPO board for transportation management areas (TMA) to state:

(2) STRUCTURE.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of the Federal Public Transportation Act of 2012, each metropolitan planning organization that serves an area designated as a transportation management area shall consist of—
(A) local elected officials;
(B) officials of public agencies that administer or operate major modes of transportation in the metropolitan area, including representation by providers of public transportation; and
(C) appropriate State officials.

The Planning Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that addresses requirements of transit representation was released just prior to the on-site review and the CFR will be finalized after this certification report is issued. The MPO staff and ITP had a difference in opinion regarding compliance with this new MAP-21 requirement. At this time, it is not possible for the federal team to determine if the current GVMC board meets the intent of this MAP-21 provision.

Recommendation 1: Transit Representation on GVMC Board

It is recommended that the GVMC and ITP, in cooperation with FTA and FHWA, review the finalized MAP-21 Planning CFR, when released, and determine if their membership meets the requirements for transit representation on the MPO board.

Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(d) requires the designation of an MPO for each urbanized area with a population of more than 50,000 individuals. When an MPO representing all or part of a TMA is initially designated or redesignated according to 23 CFR 450.310(d), the policy board of the MPO shall consist of (a) local elected officials, (b) officials of public agencies that administer or operate major modes of transportation within the metropolitan area, including representation by providers of public transportation; and (c) appropriate state transportation officials. The voting membership of an MPO that was designated or redesignated prior, will remain valid until a new MPO is redesignated. Redesignation is required whenever the existing MPO seeks to substantially change the proportion of voting members representing individual jurisdictions or the State or the decision-making authority or procedures established under MPO bylaws. The addition of jurisdictional or political bodies into the MPO or of members to the policy board generally does not require a redesignation of the MPO.

II. Planning Agreements

Current Status

As a result of the 2010 GVMC certification review, Planning and Travel Demand Modeling Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between the GVMC and MDOT were updated March, 2011, along with the MOU between the GVMC and ITP in July, 2012. The 2010 corrective action was removed by FHWA and FTA on January 28, 2015.

At the time of the certification review, ITP was in the process of updating its Coordinated Plan and referenced Section 5310 funding (Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities), some of the smaller transportation agencies, and referenced the Kent County Needs Assessment effort as recommended by federal certification review team four years ago.
Findings

Current MOUs meet federal requirements. However, MOUs will need to be updated to reflect current planning procedures and responsibilities to meet the MAP-21 requirements once the updated Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) have been released. MDOT is creating a schedule for updating agreements between MPOs throughout the state of Michigan to coincide with MAP-21 requirements.

Recommendation 2: Planning Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)

It is recommended that the GVMC, MDOT and ITP, in cooperation with FTA and FHWA, review the finalized MAP-21 Planning CFR when released and work cooperatively to update and adopt a single Planning MOU between all parties to reflect a performance-based planning process, including roles, responsibilities, and timeframes. FHWA and FTA will provide guidance and examples of commendable MOUs under MAP-21 as they are developed.

Regulatory Basis

23 CFR 450.314 states the MPO, the State(s), and the public transportation operator(s) shall cooperatively determine their mutual responsibilities in carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process. These responsibilities shall be clearly identified in written agreements among the MPO, the State(s), and the public transportation operator(s) serving the MPA. To the extent possible, a single agreement between all responsible parties should be developed.

III. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Current Status

At the time of the certification review, the MPO was operating under the FY 2014 UPWP. The MPO provides copies of the UPWP on their website along with the Cost Allocation Plan and Financial Tables. Documents are available from FY 2009 through FY 2015. The UPWP for FY 2014 (Oct 1, 2013 – September 30, 2014) discusses major issues facing the region and includes air quality related activities. Task descriptions address objectives, procedures and tasks, products, budget with funding sources, and indicate who will perform the work. The Financial Tables provide summaries by work element of expenditure and revenues by funding source. The UPWP contains 8 major work elements, most with significant subtasks:

- Database Management
- Metropolitan Transportation Planning
- Short Range Planning
- Transportation Management Systems
- Ridesharing
- Special Services Planning
- Program Coordination
- Land Use and Transportation Coordination.

Findings

Most of the UPWP work elements continue from year to year. The most notable changes relate to special studies that tend to be addressed as part of the technical assistance work element (3.2). Local communities provide matching funds for special studies conducted in their areas. Missing from the UPWP is the schedule for completion of individual work tasks and an overall schedule that shows when tasks and work products will be completed. Committees are involved in the development of work products and receive final products through the committee review process. The MPO does prepare a Final Acceptance Report that is submitted to MDOT when work elements are completed. The Executive Director also prepares an annual business report on major work completed by the agency. This is in the form of a PowerPoint presentation.

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Recommendation 3: Unified Planning Work Program

It is recommended that the GVMC include a schedule that shows target dates for completion of major products. This would better convey the interrelationship of work program activities, such as those that depend on others before they can proceed. The GVMC is also encouraged to continue efforts to improve monitoring and sharing work progress, completion of major work, and the impact of that work with the community. Efforts to keep committee members and the public informed and engaged in the transportation planning process, whether through the annual business report, monthly committee reports, or the Final Acceptance Reports demonstrate a transparent, productive planning process.

Regulatory Basis

23 CFR 450.308 and 23 CFR 420.111 set forth requirements for each MPO, in cooperation with the state and public transportation operators, to develop a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) that documents:

- A discussion of the planning priorities facing the metropolitan planning area;
- A description of metropolitan transportation planning and transportation-related air quality planning activities proposed by major activity and task (including activities that address the eight planning factors in 23 CFR 450.306(a)) for the next one- to two-year period;
- Who will perform the transportation planning activities (e.g., MPO staff, State, public transportation operator, local government, or consultant);
- The schedule for completion of the work;
- The intended products, including all activities funded under Title 23 and the Federal Transit Act;
- The proposed funding by activity/task; and
- A summary of the total amounts and sources of Federal and matching funds.

IV. Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

Current Status:

GVMC adopted the current GVMC 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan, the MTP for the Grand Rapids urbanized area, on March 4, 2011. A conformity finding by the FHWA and FTA, in consultation with EPA, was made on June 27, 2011. The 2035 Plan addresses SAFETEA-LU MTP requirements, including public participation plan, environmental mitigation, consultation, and congestion management process.

The timing of the federal certification review has been such that the current MTP is being updated and the new MTP will be approved by the MPO less than a year from the on-site review. The federal review team reviews a plan that is close to being out of date and doesn’t allow enough time to provide comments on the MTP in progress to impact its development. It would be beneficial to schedule the next TMA certification review in a timeframe that will correct this timing issue.

Findings:

The 2035 MTP is structured well, using many plain language techniques that make it easy to read and understand. The MPO has been attentive to improving the content and quality of the MTP. The current MTP addresses Federal requirements, including comments from the last certification review. The MTP is fully programmed for the life of the plan with both State and local jobs and is financially constrained. Project tables and financial tables are easy to read and use and demonstrate financial constraint. The plan includes an illustrative list of projects that identify the unmet needs in transportation projects and programs. The region has funding for about one third of the identified needs over the timeframe of the plan. The consultation process was comprehensive and well documented.
GVMC has made a good faith effort to conduct an environmental justice analysis. The review team believes there’s an opportunity for GVMC to expand their analytical tasks to include regional measures such as accessibility to opportunities (e.g., employment, education, health care, etc.). Using the travel demand model as a tool, this analysis will afford a comparative assessment of the benefits and burdens across the spectrum of populations, assuming implementation of the MTP and TIP. Noting the fact that 57% of the Grand Rapids metropolitan planning area is comprised of environmental justice defined minority groups, this additional analysis is prudent and necessary. The FHWA Resource Center Planning Team can provide training and technical assistance to the MPO staff to assist them in completing this recommended next step in a comprehensive environmental justice systems level approach.

The prioritization process used to develop the recommendations in the plan is not easily understood or well documented. The MPO staff prepares a considerable amount of data on various elements related to the goals of the plan (pavement condition, safety, congestion, etc.) that is provided to committee members. It is not clear how the committees use this information to determine what projects to include in the plan and in what time frame. The MPO staff recognizes that the transition to a performance-based planning approach will affect this project selection process.

**Commendation 1: Metropolitan Transportation Plan**

GVMC is commended for developing a comprehensive MTP that addresses the changes in federal law and findings from the last certification review, along with a format that will make it easy for the public to understand the planning process.

**Commendation 2: Policies and Practices for Programming Projects**

GVMC is commended for the Policies and Practices for Programming Projects document as it is a great tool for committee members and the public to understand the requirements for programming new projects in the MTP and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

**Recommendation 4: Performance-Based Planning and Programming**

It is recommended that GVMC analyze the long- and short-range planning process for necessary updates to ensure compliance with MAP-21 PBPP requirements. It is recommended that the MPO use the PBPP Self-Assessment Tool that was released December 2014 and attend Michigan’s PBPP Peer Exchange scheduled for April 2015, as well as utilize any other tool necessary.

**Recommendation 5: MTP Environmental Justice Analysis**

It is recommended that GVMC expand the MTP environmental justice analysis to regional measures such as accessibility to opportunities (e.g., employment, education, health care, etc.). This analysis will give a comparative assessment of the benefits and burdens across the spectrum of populations, assuming implementation of the MTP and TIP. Noting the fact that 57% of the Grand Rapids metropolitan planning area is comprised of environmental justice defined minority groups, this additional analysis is prudent and necessary. It is also recommended that MPO staff attend FHWA environmental justice training to assist them in completing this recommended next step in a comprehensive environmental justice systems level approach.

**Recommendation 6: Transportation Planning Education Campaign**

During the certification review process, participants from the GVMC Policy Committee as well as the public indicated a desire for a transportation planning education campaign for the Grand Rapids metropolitan planning area. We recommend GVMC staff research this idea (format, topics, etc.) and discuss the research with the Policy Committee and applicable partners.
Regulatory Basis

23 CFR 450.322 sets forth requirements for the development and content of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), a key product of the metropolitan transportation planning process.

MTP development requirements include:

- The Metropolitan Transportation Planning (MTP) process shall address at least a 20 year planning horizon;
- The MTP shall include both long- and short-range strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand;
- The MPO shall review and update the MTP at least every four years in air quality nonattainment areas to confirm the transportation’s validity and consistency with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends; and
- The MPO shall base the update on the latest available estimates and assumptions for population, land use, travel, employment, congestion, and economic activity.

MTP content requirements include:

- The projected transportation demand of persons and goods in the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) over the period of the transportation plan;
- Existing and proposed transportation facilities that should function as an integrated metropolitan transportation system, including major roadways, transit, multimodal, and intermodal facilities;
- Management and Operational (M&O) strategies to improve the performance of existing transportation facilities to relieve congestion and maximize the safety and mobility of people and goods (See Congestion Management Process (CMP) section of this report for more information);
- Consideration of the results of the Congestion Management Process (CMP), including identification of Single Occupant Vehicle (SOV) projects that result from a CMP (See CMP section of this report for more information);
- Assessment of capital investment and other strategies to preserve the existing and projected future metropolitan transportation infrastructure and provide for multimodal capacity increases based on regional priorities and needs;
- Design concept and design scope descriptions of all existing and proposed transportation facilities in sufficient detail, regardless of funding sources, in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas for conformity determination under the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) transportation conformity rule (40 CFR part 93);
- A discussion of types of potential environmental mitigation activities and potential areas to carry out these activities, including activities that may have the greatest potential to restore and maintain the environmental functions affected by the MTP (See Environmental Mitigation section of this report for more information);
- Pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities; and
- A financial plan

V. Travel Demand Model & Congestion Management Process (CMP)

Current Status:

GVMC updated their CMP in 2014. The most significant difference between the 2010 and 2014 reports will be the inclusion of the new bus rapid transit (BRT) line in Grand Rapids. The core parameters (e.g., use of the Federal Aid system as the CMP network, a scoring system for suitability of potential solutions, etc.) are continued
from the 2010 to 2014 CMPs. Collaboration and use of the CMP by MDOT occurs at the staff level, with MDOT providing some needed data and each having an awareness of congested locations and potential solutions.

GVMC develops, maintains, and applies their region’s travel demand forecasting model. GV MC collaborates with MDOT staff on data acquisition (e.g., surveys) and to create and maintain model timelines for the next two MTPs. GV MC staff use the model primarily in forecasting highway traffic volumes for use in the CMP and air quality conformity analysis, as well as local studies as requested. The current model forecasts daily traffic. The current transit model is separate from the highway model. Staff has identified enhancements needed to the model to improve its capabilities (logit model, time of day, and travel time data by 2018; land use and economic modeling by 2022).

Findings:

The CMP is designed to support the GV MC Policies and Practices, which governs how GV MC conducts the planning process. This makes the CMP a relevant document to the planning process in Grand Rapids. The timing of the 2014 CMP update has been scheduled such that it can be a valuable resource to the development of the 2040 MTP. The region’s travel demand forecasting model has been a significant resource for the region, providing data for the CMP and local studies. Staff’s identification of needed model enhancements is encouraging, as an indication of their desire to have the right tools to use in providing information to the public and their members.

Recommendation 7: Travel Demand Model

It is recommended that GV MC look into the Travel Model Improvement Program (TMIP) as a resource for technical assistance and training for improving the travel demand model. If interested, contact your Planning representative in the FHWA Michigan Division. http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/tmip/

Regulatory Basis

Travel demand forecasting:

Models are a tool used in the planning process to evaluate the impacts of alternative transportation investments and to identify deficiencies in future years transportation systems. In air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas, they are also used to estimate regional vehicle activity for use in mobile source emission models that support air quality conformity determinations.

Congestion Management Process (CMP):

23 CFR 450.320 sets forth requirements for the congestion management process (CMP), formerly the congestion management system (CMS), in TMAs. The CMP is a systematic approach for managing congestion through a process that provides for a safe and effective integrated management and operation of the multimodal transportation system, based on a cooperatively developed and implemented metropolitan-wide strategy, of new and existing transportation facilities eligible for funding under title 23 U.S.C. and title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 through the use of travel demand reduction and management and operational strategies.

VI. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Current Status

FHWA and FTA approved GV MC’s fiscal year (FY) 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) on November 26, 2013. The Michigan Financial Work Group, which consists of the MDOT, MPO, including
GVMC staff, FHWA, FTA, and transit operators, cooperatively developed and documented the revenue estimates for this TIP period.

Findings
GVMC actively participated in Michigan’s cooperative revenue estimation process for the FY 2014-2017 TIP and used the uniform format for the TIP financial plan. This financial planning process and document is significantly improved from the last TIP. The Policies for Programming Projects was followed for selecting projects to be programmed in the TIP. All findings from the 2010 certification review for the TIP have been addressed. The corrective action requiring the annual listing of obligated projects be updated to include transit projects was met and removed in January, 2011.

Recommendation 8: Transportation Improvement Program
It is recommended that GVMC continue to be involved in the Financial Working Group and look for ways to improve financial planning processes, including estimating local revenue and operations and identifying operations and maintenance costs.

Regulatory Basis
23 CFR 450.324 sets forth requirements for the MPO to cooperatively develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that is consistent with the MTP and is financially constrained. The TIP must cover at least a four-year horizon and be updated at least every four years. Additionally, the TIP must list all projects in sufficient detail outlined in the regulations, reflect public involvement, and identify the criteria for prioritizing projects.

23 CFR 450.324(e-k) sets forth the requirements related to financial planning in the TIP. Separate financial plans for the MTP and the TIP demonstrate how the adopted MTP and TIP can be implemented. TIP financial planning requirements include:

- Demonstrate and maintain financial constraint by year;
- Identify projects to be funded with current and available revenues;
- Identify estimated total project cost, which may extend beyond the four years of the TIP;
- System-level estimates of operation and maintenance costs for Federally supported facilities and services are taken into account when estimating resources remaining available for capital expenditure;
- Cost and revenue estimates incorporate inflation rates to reflect YOE dollars;
- The quality of cost estimates is important in the TIP (and MTP). Cost estimates should be reviewed and the process and methods (and any assumptions) for determining costs should be documented;
- Cost estimates in the TIP should be reviewed and periodically updated, at least as frequently as each TIP update;
- Only projects or phases of projects if full funding can reasonably be expected to be available for the project within the time period anticipated for completion of the project;
- Only projects for which construction or operating funds can reasonably be expected to be available;
- In air quality areas, projects included in the first two years of the TIP shall be limited to those for which funds are available or committed;
- Revenue estimates are cooperatively developed by the State, the MPO, and public transportation operators, as set forth in the MPO Agreement;
- Revenue estimates include public and private sources that are committed, available, or reasonably expected to be available;
- Revenue estimates may include recommendations for new funding sources and strategies for securing their availability;
- The amount and category of Federal funds proposed to be obligated during each program year for each project; and
VII. Safety Planning

Current Status

The GVMC compiles data from the Michigan Traffic Crash Facts website and does extensive analysis to the data for the transportation planning process, including:

- 2010 Strategic Safety Planning Process document – a framework for addressing safety in the planning process.
- 2011 GVMC Traffic Crash Facts, published in 2013 – provides information for safety planning and selection of road projects, identifies top 50 crash intersections, and top 50 crash segments.
- 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan – Safety Management System chapter that identifies regional crash trends, characteristics, and emphasis areas.
- 2014 UPWP Task 3.6 Safety Conscious Planning – indicates products will include safety profile, identification and mapping of crash locations, safety goals and performance measures and integration timetable. No reference in the UPWP task to the 2010 Safety Strategic Plan or its recommendations.

GVMC has a Safety/Incident Management Committee that meets to assess information needed to set priorities.

Findings

From the on-site discussion it appears that the MPO has been working on advancing their efforts to incorporate safety into the planning process. They use the Michigan state crash data system and have prepared profiles of crash trends and issues and identified high crash locations. Much of this work is not documented on their website; it appears to be shared through committee meeting reports. For example, they prepare annual traffic crash facts documents to share with committee members. The MPO has a safety committee that typically meets four times during the year. MPO staff participates in the annual Michigan traffic safety summit. Chapter 14 of the MTP on Safety Management Systems includes statement that they limit corridor crash analysis to the federal aid system. SAFETEA-LU and MAP-21 encourage addressing safety on all public roads.

Commendation 3: Safety Planning

GVMC is commended for developing and using a Strategic Safety Planning Process as documented in a June 20, 2010 report. The 2035 LRTP appears to have been informed by this more considered approach to safety. The MPO is encouraged to continue refining and implementing their approach to safety.

Recommendation 9: Safety Planning

It is recommended that GVMC include more information on safety on the MPO website. GVMC is doing a lot of good work that could be made more accessible to the community. It is also recommended that GVMC explore approaches for addressing safety as consideration in the project selection process. Finally, we recommend GVMC address safety on all public roads in the MPO study area.

Here is a list of helpful Safety related resources:

One useful resource is NCHRP 546 – Incorporating Safety into Long Range Transportation Planning
http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/156716.aspx

Regulatory Background

SAFETEA-LU requires MPOs to consider safety as one of eight planning factors. As stated in 23 CFR 450.306, the Metropolitan Transportation Planning process provides for consideration and implementation of projects, strategies, and services that will increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users. SAFETEA-LU emphasized the importance of safety, as first identified in TEA-21, by separating safety and security into individual considerations in the planning process, thus highlighting the importance of each issue.

In addition, SAFETEA-LU established a core safety program called the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) (23 U.S.C. 148), which introduced a mandate for Strategic Highway Safety Plans (SHSPs) that are collaborative, comprehensive and based on accurate and timely safety data.

23 CFR 450.306 (h) states that the metropolitan transportation planning process should be consistent with the SHSP, and other transit safety and security planning and review processes, plans, and programs as appropriate.

23 CFR 450.322 (h) encourages the inclusion of a safety element in the MTP that incorporates or summarizes the priorities, goals, countermeasures, or projects for the MPA contained in the SHSP, as well as (as appropriate) emergency relief and disaster preparedness plans and strategies and policies that support homeland security (as appropriate) and safeguard the personal security of all motorized and non-motorized users.

Safety also appears in the MTP rule as a consideration in the CMP (450.320), Development and Content of the MTP (450.322), and Development and Content of the TIP (450.324).
Appendix A: Certification Review Notification Letter

Mr. Al Vanderberg, Chairperson
Grand Valley Metro Council
678 Front Ave NW, Suite 200
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Mr. David Wresinski, Director
Bureau of Transportation Planning (B340)
Michigan Department of Transportation
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Mr. Vanderberg and Mr. Wresinski:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) will be conducting a certification review of the transportation planning process for the Grand Rapids metropolitan area June 17-19, 2014 at the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC) office. You and all participants in the planning process are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century continues the requirement for FHWA and FTA to conduct certification reviews in transportation management areas (TMA) every four years. We will evaluate the cooperative transportation planning process conducted by all members of the Grand Rapids TMA, including the State, transit operators, and local governments, to determine if the process meets the requirements of applicable provisions of Federal law. Through this process, we intend to highlight good practices, exchange information, and identify opportunities for improvements. The certification process will rely extensively on knowledge gained from routine involvement in the planning process, as well as a desk review of planning documents, a meeting with the public, and the exchange of information at the on-site review.

Some possible focal points we are proposing for the certification review meeting include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Status of Recommendations from the previous Certification
- The Metropolitan Transportation Plan and update process
- The Transportation Improvement Program
- Performance-Based Planning and Programming.

The following schedule was selected in consultation with the staff of the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC), the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and area transit providers:

**Tuesday, June 17, Public Meeting (evening)**
This is an opportunity for the public, including key MPO committee members and special interest groups, to talk directly with FHWA and FTA in an open public meeting concerning their views on the transportation planning process being conducted in the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. We will also offer the opportunity for any committee members or other local elected officials to meet with us separately, if they so desire.
Wednesday, June 18 – Thursday, June 19th, On-Site Review

This is an opportunity for our review team to exchange information and discuss review topics with your staff. The team will ask questions about items found through the desk review and conversations that were held at the public meeting.

We will be working with your staff to prepare a more complete agenda for each day of the on-site visit. If you have any questions concerning this review, please call Ms. Rachael Tupica, FHWA, at (517) 702-1829 or Mr. Stewart McKenzie, FTA, at (312) 353-2866.

Sincerely,

Marisol R. Simon
Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration

Russell L. Jorgenson, P.E.
Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration

Appendix B: Public Meeting Notice

GVMC    We'd like your input!!

An opportunity for you to talk directly with the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration in an open public meeting concerning your views on the transportation planning process in the Grand Rapids area is scheduled for:

Time: 5:00 – 7:00 pm
Date: Tuesday, June 17, 2014
Place: Grand Valley Metro Council
678 Front Ave NW, Suite 200
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

This public meeting is part of a review that will assess compliance with Federal regulations pertaining to the transportation planning process conducted by the Grand Valley Metro Council, the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Interurban Transit Partnership (The Rapid), and local units of government in the Grand Rapids area.

If you are not able to attend the meeting, written comments will be accepted until June 30, 2014. Please address your comments to:

Rachael Tupica
Federal Highway Administration, Michigan Division
315 West Allegan Street, Room 201
Lansing, MI 48933

OR

Stewart McKenzie
200 West Adams Street, Suite 320
Chicago, IL 60606

Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids for services should contact the Grand Valley Metro Council by Thursday, June 12 in writing or by calling 678 Front Ave NW, Suite 200, Grand Rapids, MI 49504, Telephone: (616) 770-3876, Fax: (616) 774-9292, www.gvmc.org
Appendix C: On-Site Review Participants

Federal Review Team
Stewart McKenzie - Federal Transit Administration, Region V
Andy Pickard - Federal Highway Administration Michigan Division
Jim Thorne - Federal Highway Administration Resource Center
Rachael Tupica - Federal Highway Administration, Michigan Division

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council – Staff
Michael Brameijer
Andrea Faber
Abed Itani
Darrell Robinson
Jim Snell
John Weiss
Mike Zonyk

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council - Policy Committee
Steve Warren
Mark DeClercq
Scott Conners

ITP (The Rapid)
Rod Ghearing
Jan Hoekstra

Michigan Department of Transportation
Joe Grab
Joe Jordan
Dennis Kent
Paul Lott
Dalrois McBurrows
Bradley Sharlow
Kris Stercel
John Watkin
Brandon Wilcox
# Appendix D: Grand Rapids TMA Certification Review Agenda

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council  
678 Front Avenue NW, Suite 200, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

**Wednesday June 18, 2014**  
8:30am – 4:30pm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Certification Review Topic</th>
<th>Federal Team Lead</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 – 8:40</td>
<td>Certification Review Kick-off and Introductions</td>
<td>Rachael Tupica &amp; Stewart McKenzie</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:40 – 9:00</td>
<td>Overview of GVMC</td>
<td>Rachael Tupica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 – 9:30</td>
<td>Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding</td>
<td>Stewart McKenzie</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 – 10:15</td>
<td>Policy Committee Discussion</td>
<td>Rachael Tupica</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:15 – 10:45</td>
<td>Morning Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45 – 11:30</td>
<td>Unified Planning Work Program</td>
<td>Jim Thorne</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 – 12:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30 – 2:30</td>
<td>Metropolitan Transportation Plan</td>
<td>Rachael Tupica</td>
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<td>Stewart McKenzie</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jim Thorne</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:30 – 2:45</td>
<td>Afternoon Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:45 – 3:30</td>
<td>Congestion Mitigation Process &amp; Travel Demand Model</td>
<td>Andy Pickard</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:30 – 4:30</td>
<td>Transportation Improvement Program</td>
<td>Rachael Tupica</td>
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<td>Stewart McKenzie</td>
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**Thursday June 19, 2014**  
8:30am – 11:00am

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<tr>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Certification Review Topic</th>
<th>Federal Team Lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 – 9:15</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Jim Thorne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15 – 10:30</td>
<td>Performance-Based Planning &amp; Programming Discussion</td>
<td>Federal Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 – 11:00</td>
<td>Wrap Up &amp; Feedback</td>
<td>Rachael Tupica</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Stewart McKenzie</td>
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# Appendix E: Status of 2010 Certification Findings

*Provided by Staff at Grand Valley Metropolitan Council*

**Commendation 1 (Non-Motorized)**
The Federal review team would like to commend GVMC Staff on their non-motorized planning efforts. We specifically cite the extensive work they have done in conducting a facilities inventory, prioritizing future improvements, and using effective visualization tools to convey information to stakeholders and the public.

**Corrective Action 1 (Agreements and Contracts)**
The MPO, State, and transit operator must update all of the agreements required by 23 CFR 450.314. To the extent possible a single agreement between all responsible parties should be developed. A draft of the revised agreement(s) must be submitted to FHWA and FTA for review by March 31, 2011 and the final(s) signed by the responsible parties by October 1, 2011. The agreement(s) shall clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all parties and committees in cooperatively carrying out all aspects of the transportation planning process defined in 23 CFR 450 Subpart C, including the development of work programs, fiscally constrained plans and TIPs, air quality conformity findings, and annual reporting of obligated projects. The approach for integrating highway, transit (including the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan), and non motorized planning deserves special attention along with specific timelines for when documents are due and planning cycles are repeated.

**Task Status**
GVMC, MDOT, and ITP updated and consolidated all interagency agreements by the set deadline and the corrective action was removed.

**Corrective Action 2 (Annual Listing of Obligated Projects)**
The Annual Listing of obligated projects must include all obligated transit projects. The Annual Listing document for the past year (2009) must be updated to include transit projects and a copy submitted through MDOT to FHWA and FTA by November 15, 2010. The Annual Listing for the current programming year (2010) must be prepared listing both highway and transit projects within 90 calendar days of the end of the program year.

**Task Status**
The annual listing of obligated projects now includes all obligated projects including transit projects. The 2009 annual listing of obligated projects was updated and submitted through MDOT to FHWA and FTA by the November 15, 2010 deadline. The 2010 annual listing of obligated was prepared listing both highway and transit projects within 90 calendar days of the end of the program year. The corrective action was removed.

**Recommendation 1 (MPO Structure)**
The Bylaws of the GVMC should be updated to clearly define the membership, function, authority, and delegated responsibilities of the Policy Advisory Committee as an entity of GVMC with responsibility of overseeing transportation planning for the region.

**Task Status**
GVMC bylaws were updated to address the recommendations and is posted on GVMC website.

**Recommendation 2 (Unified Planning Work Program)**
It is strongly recommended that the UPWP reflect the work that is being done by GVMC staff. The MPO should align the goals identified at the beginning of the document to the work elements.

**Task Status**
The UPWP only reflects annual work items that are deemed a priority to the MPO and to meet state and federal requirements. The work tasks are designed to help meet the goals and objectives of the plan and the TIP.

**Recommendation 3 (Freight Planning)**
The Federal review team encourages GVMC staff to continue promoting freight planning and to document efforts taking place within the transportation planning process related to freight planning.
Task Status
The MPO in continuing to promote freight planning has been doing so in the development of the TIP and the MTP. Some of the activities the MPO has been involved in are as follows:

Meetings
GR Chamber of Commerce Freight Committee meetings: 1/23/14, 10/24/13, 4/25/13, 1/24/13, 10/25/12, 7/26/12, 3/26/12, 1/26/12 (meetings are from 8-9 a.m. quarterly)
Various Freight meetings – particularly rail related (Contact Dennis Kent or Rick Chapla for more info)

Trainings/Conferences
Michigan Rail Conference on August 27th, 2013 (Included freight breakout session)
National Highway Institute Webinar: Course FHWA-NHI-139006, Session 25252 “Integrating Freight in the Transportation Planning Process (Web-Based Training)” May 2013
Freight Performance Measures Workshop – May 2012
Engaging the Private Sector in Freight Planning – June 2011

Freight Activities/Participation
MDOT State Rail Plan
Worked with The Right Place to gather Freight Subcommittee for the LRTP development
GR Chamber Logistics study

Recommendation 4 (Metropolitan Transportation Plan)
It is strongly recommended the MPO improve the documentation in the financial plan of the MTP. This would start with the GVMC, ITP, and MDOT creating a structured, cooperative, and transparent financial revenue estimation process that would then be documented in MTP. The MPO, ITP, and MDOT should continue working to obtain, refine, and document system-level 51 operations and maintenance cost information that would be deducted from available revenue in the MTP to show revenue available to start new capital projects.

Task Status
The financial plan documentation for the 2035 LRIP has been greatly improved. GVMC participatns in the statewide efforts to standardize this process and will integrate the results of those efforts into future plans. The development of the 2040 financial plan will be completed in much the same way as the TIP. The revenue forecasting process will be a cooperative effort. The Michigan Transportation Planning Association (MTPA), a voluntary association of public organizations and agencies responsible for the administration of transportation planning activities throughout the state, formed the Financial Working Group (FWG) to develop a statewide standard forecasting process. FWG is comprised of members from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), transit agencies, and Metropolitan Planning Organizations, including GVMC. It represents a cross-section of the public agencies responsible for transportation planning in our state. The revenue assumptions for the financial plan will be based on the factors formulated by the FWG and approved by the MTPA. They will be used for all TIP’s and MTP’s financial plans in the state.

Recommendation 5 (Metropolitan Transportation Plan)
The Federal Review team strongly recommends that the GVMC and MDOT staff develop a collaborative approach to assist and prioritize regional capital investments and other strategies or measures necessary to preserve the existing system and to meet future needs to relieve vehicular congestion and maximize the mobility of people and goods for the road network to provide a true 20 year horizon. If funding shortfalls limit what can be included in the adopted plan, consideration should be given to filling this gap by including such improvements in an illustrative plan.

Task Status
GVMC and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) coordinate efforts to identify and prioritize deficiencies in the region. These efforts are documented in the manner in which the 2035 Long Range Plan was developed. Working closely with MDOT staff on planning studies such as the I-196/I-96 Environmental Assessment, the US-131 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) efforts, the Michigan Street Study, the Medical Mile Circulation study, ITS coordination among others, GVMC and MDOT have been able to cooperatively identify and reasonably prioritize improvement efforts in the region. Upon completion of the I-196/I-96 Environmental Assessment, GVMC endorsed the effort and stated the recommendations of the report as priorities for the region. Other improvement recommendations made through this joint approach where sufficient funding is not available are listed in the illustrative portion of the MPO Long Range Plan.
**Recommendation 6 (Metropolitan Transportation Plan)**
The GVMC should update financial constraint demonstration tables and documentation in the MTP when amendments are made to the MTP.

**Task Status**
Within the 2035 LRP, GVMC staff greatly improved the financial constraint portion of the LRP.

**Recommendation 7 (Metropolitan Transportation Plan)**
The GVMC has taken steps to identify EJ areas, but now needs to take a more proactive review of accessibility in the transportation system by comparing the data to the existing transportation network, as well as, applying it in the development of the MTP. An EJ analysis of transit should also be included.

**Task Status**
Ongoing effort. GVMC is working on developing a process to identify locations where there are challenges for those in EJ areas to access adequate transportation. The Environmental Justice Areas have been redefined in conjunction with the release of the 2010 census data. Staff has been evaluating different options to address accessibility to transit for the underserved for the 2040 MTP. This type of information is only available at the geographic extents of census tracts however, so it has been difficult to perform the proper analysis that we would need on a smaller scale. Currently we are looking at areas that have low or minimal access to vehicles and their proximity to vehicles. This or similar accessibility analysis will be included in the 2040 MTP document.

**Recommendation 8 (Travel Demand Model)**
Once the 2035 MTP is adopted, it is strongly recommended that work begin on an approach to use the travel demand models in conjunction with area goals and objectives to evaluate specific transportation improvements or combinations of improvements before they are included in the plan. This approach could help to identify the combination of improvements that, for example, would have the greatest impact in terms of congestion relief for the region as a whole. The approach would better position the area to respond to performance based planning currently being discussed as part of reauthorization. We would urge a meeting with FHWA and MDOT within one year to explore this and develop a workable approach that could be applied in the next update cycle or next plan amendment.

**Task Status**
GVMC Travel Demand Model has been calibrated to the 2010 base year for the 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Staff is working on forecasting socioeconomic data for future years. GVMC travel demand model will be used to forecast future year traffic volumes on the network once the future year socioeconomic data get approved by GVMC committee.
See Technical Memo dated May 13, 2014

**Recommendation 9 (Congestion Management Process)**
MDOT, GVMC, and the ITP should strengthen the CMP by providing decision makers with tools that will help them chose the most effective solution from the "cafeteria listing" from both a project and a systems perspective. The integration of congestion related goals, objectives, and performance measures with the areawide travel demand models would provide a means to perform analyses that compare the benefits of alternative solutions. Such analyses would be performed by the planning staff with recommendations provided to decision makers.

**Task Status**
The 2014 congestion has been updated and uploaded to GVMC website. The new CMP includes identified congested facilities in 2013 in GVMC area, top ranked crash intersections and segments based on traffic crash data in GVMC area from 2010 to 2012, as well as updated cafeteria plan alternatives.

**Recommendation 10 (Safety Planning)**
The Federal review team encourages GVMC staff to continue to pursue and document the efforts taking place within the transportation planning process related to safety planning. The review team hopes that GVMC staff will follow through on the elements laid out in the Strategic Safety Planning Process handout and urges Staff to incorporate the elements of the process into GVMC’s planning documents.

**Task Status**
GVMC safety planning process has been updated based on traffic crash data in GVMC area from 2010 to 2012. There are seven emphasis areas in the plan, including intersection safety, corridor safety, senior mobility and safety, young driver
safety, pedestrian and bicyclist safety, alcohol-involved crashes and deer crashes. The primary purpose of the safety plan is to identify locations on the federal aid system where safety issues may exist and where countermeasures, when applied, can lead to a reduction in the number of crashes at specified locations, thus improving the overall safety of the transportation system in the GVMC region.

**Recommendation 11 (Transit Planning)**
It is strongly recommended that GVMC and ITP work together to more fully coordinate and integrate transit planning into the regional transportation decision-making process.

**Task Status**
In order for the MPO and ITP to work closely together MPO staff attends ITP’s monthly Strategic Planning meeting to be informed of the happenings at ITP. ITP attends the MPO’s Technical and Policy Committee meetings held on a biannual basis. ITP and MPO staff regularly are in contact with each other for various issues.

**Recommendation 12 (Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Plan)**
It is recommend that The Rapid update its Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan to incorporate opportunities for coordination that may result from the Kent County Transit Needs Assessment and take advantage of funding opportunities through the JARC and New Freedom program.

**Task Status**
The Rapids is continuously updating Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan to take advantage of funding opportunities. ITP is no longer applying for JARC funding.

**Recommendation 13 (Transportation Improvement Program)**
It is strongly recommended that the MPO improve the documentation in the financial plan of the TIP. This would start with the GVNC, ITP, and MDOT creating a structured, cooperative, and transparent financial revenue estimation process that would then be documented in the TIP. The MPO, ITP, and MDOT should continue working to obtain, refine, and document system-level operations and maintenance cost information that would be deducted from available revenue in the TIP to show revenue available to start new capital improvements. It is also strongly recommended that GVNC document their year of expenditure (YOE) assumptions.

**Task Status**
The Michigan Transportation Planning Association (MTPA), a voluntary association of public organizations and agencies responsible for the administration of transportation planning activities throughout the state, formed the Financial Working Group (FWG) to develop a statewide standard forecasting process. FWG is comprised of members from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), transit agencies, and Metropolitan Planning Organizations, including GVNC. It represented a cross-section of the public agencies responsible for transportation planning in our state. The revenue assumptions in the financial plan are based on the factors formulated by the FWG and approved by the MTPA. They are used for all TIP financial plans in the state.

**Recommendation 14 (Transportation Improvement Program)**
It is strongly recommended that the MPO create and document a project prioritization process for highway and transit projects that demonstrates how the projects are included in the TIP and implement the multimodal goals and objectives of the MTP.

**Task Status**
The MPO created a document titled “Policies and Practices for Programming Projects”. Within that document staff documented the current policies and practices of the MPO on various activities. In some cases the MPO created new policies in order to conform with Federal/state laws and in other to make transparent the steps it takes to administer the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). For the creation of the Transportation Improvement Program the MPO Committees use this document as a guide in developing a needs list from which MPO communities prioritized and select projects to be included in the TIP.

**Recommendation 15 (Transportation Improvement Program)**
The GVMC has taken steps to identify EJ areas, but now needs to take a more proactive review of accessibility in the transportation system by comparing the data to the existing transportation network, as well as, applying it in the development of the TIP. An EJ analysis of transit should also be included.
**Task Status**

Ongoing effort. GVMC is working on developing a process to identify locations where there are challenges for those in EJ areas to access adequate transportation. The Environmental Justice Areas have been redefined in conjunction with the release of the 2010 census data. Staff has been evaluating different options to address accessibility to transit for the underserved for the 2040 MTP. This type of information is only available at the geographic extents of census tracts however, so it has been difficult to perform the proper analysis that we would need on a smaller scale. Currently we are looking at areas that have low or minimal access to vehicles and their proximity to vehicles. This or similar accessibility analysis will be included in the 2040 MTP document.

**Recommendation 16 (Annual Listing of Obligated Projects)**

The information in the annual listing of obligated projects should be presented with a table that spells out all acronyms used in the listing and not assume that the reader would have examined or be familiar with the TIP to know what all of the acronyms in the listing are.

**Task Status**

The annual listing of obligated projects was dramatically changed from previous versions. The listing was simplified and was presented in plain language. Any acronym shown in the listing was listed in a table that had its own hyperlink and defines what that acronym means.

**Recommendation 17 (Security Planning)**

The Federal review team encourages GVMC staff to continue to promote and document efforts taking place within the transportation planning process related to security planning.

**Task Status**

GVMC participate in monthly meetings with first responders, ands EMS providers. GVMC where appropriate will cooperate with the Homeland Security Agency and its designated planning agency in west Michigan.

**Recommendation 18 (Public Participation Plan)**

Documents that are available for public viewing should be clearly identified and steps should be taken to ensure the GVMC website is updated regularly to reflect the most current documents.

**Task Status**

The Public Participation Plan was updated and approved in January, 2014. The document lays out specific public participation procedures for updating/approving the Public Participation Plan (PPP) itself, as well as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). All four documents are available for public viewing and are currently on GVMC’s website. The PPP also states that the Congestion Management Plan and the Non-Motorized Plan go through public involvement when the MTP is developed and that a separate public involvement process is not necessary. Both documents are, however, available on the website. Also included on the website are the Title VI Plan and the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan.

GVMC staff recently completed a review of the website and ensured that all documents are up-to-date. When new plans are approved, they are forwarded to Mike Brameijer or Andrea Faber for posting on the web. Outdated editions of plans are then removed.

**Recommendation 19 (Public Participation Plan)**

It is strongly recommended that GVMC complete a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) assessment for the planning area and update their Title VI Plan to reflect any needed changes. The updated Title VI Plan should be submitted to MDOT.

**Task Status**

GVMC staff updated the Title VI Plan and the LEP Plan in March with the assistance of MDOT staff. Both plans were submitted to MDOT and are posted on the homepage of GVMC’s website. GVMC staff conducted an informal Limited English Proficiency (LEP) assessment using the records from the organization's public meetings over the last five years. No one identified themselves as being an LEP individual, and no requests for special accommodations, including translation services, were made.

**Recommendation 20 (Public Participation Plan)**

During the next year the Public Participation Plan should be updated, in cooperation with interested parties, to provide for
longer notification timelines and a consistent approach for ADA accommodations. If the results of the LEP assessment identify special needs for accommodating such individuals or groups, the Public Participation Plan should be modified accordingly. A draft of the updated Public Participation Plan should be submitted to MDOT, FHWA and FTA for review prior to the 45 day release for public comment.

**Task Status**
Staff made extensive revisions to the Public Participation Plan during the fall of 2013. A draft copy was completed in October and submitted to FHWA and FTA for review. Staff received numerous comments from FHWA and no response from FTA. The Plan went through its federally required 45-day public comment period between November 23, 2013 and January 6, 2014. Staff sent all of the individuals and agencies (including Technical and Policy Committee members) on GVMC’s Public Involvement List a postcard notifying them of the public comment period for the document in advance. Ads were also placed in the Advance and El Vocero. Four comments were received from the general public. The draft and final document were brought to the Technical and Policy Committees for approval.
During the redevelopment of the PPP, extensive thought was given to the public notification timelines that had been used in the past. Staff wanted to ensure that the public was given adequate advance notice of public meetings and comment opportunities, as well as a reasonable amount of time to review documents and provide comments, while also being mindful that staff themselves needed some flexibility in order to work with the submittal deadlines of the publications used to reach the public. To clarify timelines used, Staff developed a “Public Participation Timeline Summary” which is on page 18 of the document. It clearly spells out the amount of advance notice given to the public for meetings, comment periods, etc., as well as the length of comment periods.
Because the informal LEP assessment did not show any special needs for accommodating specific groups, no changes were made in this area. However, staff does have a clear policy for accommodating LEP individuals in the document:

*In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals needing special accommodations to participate in meetings or individuals with limited English proficiency should contact GVMC Transportation Staff at least four working days prior to the scheduled meeting. As per GVMC’s Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan, GVMC will provide oral and written translation; written interpretation and translation; and sign language, if requested, or as a result of an LEP analysis on any given project or projected program, requiring translation or interpretation.*

**Recommendation 21 (Consultation)**
The MPO should develop a formal, documented and agreed to consultation process, that not only identifies the methods for outreach, but also clearly outlines roles and responsibilities, including periods for comment, what review of consulting agency plans and programs will be done, and response or consideration of comments received, for the various components of the planning process.

**Task Status**
GVCMC staff maintains a consultation mailing list. Agencies to be consulted are contacted by mail and given a reasonable amount of time to respond before major documents (PPP, TIP, and MTP) are released to the public for comment. The mailings indicate that GVMC staff is available for individual meetings with organizations and encourages their participation in the process. Detailed records of the consultation processes employed for the TIP and the MTP are kept within each document.