Section 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

Transportation planning is the process by which transportation improvements (streets, sidewalks, bikeways, etc.) are conceived, tested, and programmed for future construction. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requires that all urban areas over 50,000 population have a cooperative, comprehensive, and continuous transportation planning process in order to qualify for Federal funding for constructing improvements.

This report summarizes the highlights of the development of the **Year 2035 Transportation Plan** for the Huntsville Transportation Study Area. The City of Huntsville Planning Division conducted the study with technical assistance provided by the Alabama Department of Transportation. The City of Madison, Madison County and the City of Huntsville Engineering and the Parking and Public Transit Division and many others also contributed to this plan document.

1.1 Organization for Transportation Planning

The governing body for the Huntsville Area Transportation Study is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The MPO is composed of elected officials from the participating local governments and a representative of the Alabama Department of Transportation. All federally funded transportation projects in the urban area must be programmed for construction by the MPO and be taken from a plan approved by the MPO.

The MPO receives technical guidance on transportation plans and programs from the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC). The TCC consists of technical and professional members of the community. The TCC reviews procedural aspects of the transportation planning process and recommends alternate transportation plans and programs to the MPO.

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) provides structured public involvement to the MPO. The CAC is comprised of a cross section of area residents appointed to serve by the MPO. Through public hearings, surveys, and regularly held open meetings, the CAC attempts to give all interested parties an opportunity to express their views on transportation related matters. Recommendations on transportation plans and programs are passed from the CAC directly to the MPO. A public involvement process has been adopted by the MPO (see **Appendix A**).

To assure an ongoing transportation planning process and to assist in the operation of the previously discussed committees, a Transportation Planning Process Coordinator is appointed by the MPO. The Director of the Huntsville City Planning Division is the transportation planning coordinator for the Huntsville Area Transportation Study. The coordinator, with support from his staff, is a liaison between agencies involved in the transportation planning process, develops and maintains reports and

records necessary for the administration of the planning process, and actively participates in recommending plans and programs for transportation improvements to the MPO.

1.2 Plan Development

One of the primary responsibilities of the Huntsville Area Transportation Study is to develop and maintain a comprehensive street and highway plan for the Huntsville area. The preparation of this plan is made possible by staff support from the Huntsville Planning Division and the Alabama Department of Transportation. These two agencies, working through the organized committees, provide the functions necessary for development of the major street and highway plan.

The Huntsville Planning Division coordinates the planning effort and generates local data used to predict future levels of travel. The Alabama Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the in-house staff, advises local officials on procedural aspects of the planning process.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization is responsible for official adoption of the Long-Range Transportation Plan. When deciding upon a plan for adoption, the MPO relies on public hearings, the recommendations of the two standing committees, as well as advice from the staff performing the actual planning operations. Once the plan is adopted, it may be amended as changing events may require.

1.3 Parameters of Study

The geographic study area of the long-range transportation plan (as opposed to the "urban area") includes land that is expected to become more densely settled in urban fashion in coming years. The Census Bureau is responsible for delineating the urbanized areas. **Map 1.1** depicts the urbanized area and study area boundaries that were presented for study.

The major transportation network within the study area boundary must be analyzed, including multimodal or intermodal systems which would impact mobility within the boundaries and across the modes of transportation networks. According to **23 CFR 450.322 (b)**, the transportation plan must include both long-range and short-range strategies or actions that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system, facilitating the efficient movement of people and goods. The nation's transportation system began first with seaports and canals, then railroads, followed by a highway system and finally a network of airports. Intermodal transportation links these modes together. Intermodalism attempts to help all modes work better by providing the cross-modal connections our transportation system lacks. Intermodal or multimodal transportation facilities, services, and enhancement strategies are comprehensively addressed in **Section 9** of this plan.

1.4 Identification of Network Improvements

While multimodal enhancement strategies have been identified, the **Year 2035 Transportation Plan** primarily identifies major facilities that need to be built or widened within the study area in order to meet additional capacity needs through the year 2035. The new or widened facilities identified in the plan

will be subject to further detailed engineering, environmental, social and economic analysis before reaching the final construction phase. The current plan has been developed as an integrated system level plan addressing regional transportation problems within the study area, identified by means of transportation planning models.

Map 1.1 Metropolitan Planning Organization Map