

Transportation Planning Terminology and Acronyms

Most of these definitions were taken from the HATS/MPO's plans as well as from the Federal Highway Administration. To view a more comprehensive listing of transportation planning terminology, visit the FHWA's website at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/glossary/>. The acronyms were derived from the HATS/MPO plans and from the Federal Highway Administration Correspondence Manual.

Transportation Planning Terminology

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)	The legislation defining the responsibilities of and requirements for transportation providers to make transportation accessible to individuals with disabilities.
Apportionment	1) A term that refers to a statutorily prescribed division or assignment of funds. An apportionment is based upon prescribed formulas in the law and consists of dividing authorized obligation authority for a specific program among the State. 2) The distribution of funds as prescribed by a statutory formula.
Appropriation	Authorization of funding expenditures from Congress.
Arterial	A class of roads serving major traffic movements (high speed, high volume) for travel between major points.
Attainment Area	An area considered to have air quality that meets or exceeds the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) health standards used in the Clean Air Act. Nonattainment areas are areas considered not to have met the standards for designated pollutants. An area may be an attainment area for one pollutant and a nonattainment area for others.
Authorization	Basic substantive legislation or that which empowers an agency to implement a particular program and also establishes an upper limit on the amount of funds that can be appropriated for that program.
Authorized Project	A project, or a phase of a project for which funding has been made readily available, so that work may progress toward its completion. (For instance, right of way can be purchased, bids can be awarded for construction, etc.)
Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT)	The total volume of traffic on a highway segment for one year, divided by the number of days in the year.
Bikeway	1) Any road, path, or way which in some manner is specifically designated as being open to bicycle travel, regardless of whether such facilities are designated for the exclusive use of bicycles or are to be shared with other transportation modes. (23 CFR 217) 2) A facility designated to accommodate bicycle travel for recreation or commuting purposes. Bikeways are not necessarily separated facilities; they may be designed and operated to be shared with other travel modes.
Capacity	A transportation facility's ability to accommodate a moving stream of people or vehicles in a given time period.
Capital Costs	Non-recurring or infrequently recurring costs of long-term assets, such as land, public transit transfer facilities or stations, buildings, and vehicles.
Census	The complete enumeration of a population or groups at a point in time with

respect to well-defined characteristics, for example: Population, income, employment, etc...

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)	A compilation of the general and permanent rules of the executive departments and agencies of the federal government as published in the Federal Register. The code is divided into 50 titles that represent broad areas subject to Federal regulation.
Collector Street	A functional classification of streets that provides land access and traffic circulation within residential, commercial, and industrial areas.
Commute	Regular travel between home and a fixed location, such as work or school.
Commuter	A person who travels regularly between home and school.
Congestion	The volume of traffic at which transportation facility performance is no longer operating at an acceptable level of service.
Congestion Management System	Systematic process for managing congestion. Provides information on transportation system performance and finds alternative ways to alleviate congestion and enhance mobility of people and goods, to levels that meet state and local needs.
Corridor	A broad geographical band that follows a general directional flow connecting major sources of trips that may contain a number of streets, highways, and transit route alignments.
Delay	A unit of time measure reflecting driver discomfort, frustration, additional fuel consumption, and increased travel time.
Demand Response Vehicle	A non-fixed route vehicle that operates in response to calls from passengers or their agents to the transit operator or dispatcher. An example of this locally is the Handi-Ride vehicle or the TRAM vehicle.
Demand Response Transit Service	Descriptive term for a service-type, usually considered paratransit, in which a user can access transportation service that can be variably routed and timed to meet changing needs on an as-needed basis. An example of this service locally is the Handi-Ride service or the TRAM service.
Department of Transportation	Establishes the nation's overall transportation policy. Under its umbrella there are ten administrations whose jurisdictions include highway planning, development and construction; urban mass transit; railroads; aviation and the safety of waterways, ports, highways, and oil and gas pipelines. The Department of Transportation (DOT) was established by act of October 15, 1966, as amended (49 USC 102), "to assure coordinated, effective administration of the transportation programs of the Federal Government" and to develop "national transportation policies and programs conducive to the provision of fast, safe, efficient, and convenient transportation at the lowest cost consistent therewith."
Enhancement Projects	Various scenic, historic, and environmental activities as well as the provision of facilities for pedestrians or cyclists that are eligible for project funding under the Surface transportation Program STP) element of Federal transportation funding resources.
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)	Report developed as part of the National Environmental Policy Act requirements, which details any adverse economic, social, and environmental effects of a proposed transportation project for which Federal funding is being sought. Adverse effects could include air, water, or noise pollution; destruction or disruption of natural resources; adverse

employment effects; injurious displacement of people or businesses; or disruption of desirable community or regional growth.

Environmental Justice	Environmental justice assures that services and benefits allow for meaningful participation and are fairly distributed to avoid discrimination.
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	The federal regulatory agency responsible for administering and enforcing federal environmental laws, including the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, and others.
Environmental Restoration	Re-establishment (including all site preparation activities) of natural habitats or other environmental resources on a site where they formerly existed or currently exist in a substantially degraded state. This may also include the on-site or offsite replacement of wetlands and other natural habitats lost through development activities.
Environmentally Sensitive Area	An area of environmental importance having natural resources which if degraded may lead to significant adverse, social, economic or ecological consequences. These could be areas in or adjacent to aquatic ecosystems, drinking water sources, unique or declining species habitat, and other similar sites.
Existing + Committed Network	A modeled transportation network that takes into account all projects currently under construction as well as those that are planned for construction in the adopted Transportation Improvement Program
Expressway	A controlled access, divided arterial highway or through traffic, the intersections of which are usually separated from other roadways by differing grades.
Federal Aid Highways	Those highways eligible for assistance under Title 23 U.S.C. except for those functionally classified as local or rural minor collectors.
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	A division of the US Department of Transportation which administers the funds for highway planning and capital programs.
Federal Register	A daily publication which provides a uniform system for making regulations and legal notices issued by the Executive Branch and various departments of the federal government available to the public.
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)	A division of the US Department of Transportation that is the principal source of federal financial assistance to America's communities for transit planning and capital/operating programs.
Financial Analysis	Estimating costs, establishing a revenue baseline, comparing revenues with costs and evaluating new revenue sources.
Financial Capacity	Refers to the ISTEA requirement that an adequate financial plan for funding and sustaining improvements be in place prior to programming Federally-funded projects. Generally refers to the stability and reliability of revenue in meeting proposed costs.
Financial Planning	The process of defining and evaluating funding sources, sharing the information, and deciding how to allocate the funds.
Financial Programming	A short-term commitment of funds to specific projects identified in the Transportation Improvement Program.
Fiscal Constraint	Making sure that a given program or project can reasonably expect to receive funding within the time allotted for its implementation.

Fiscal Year	The period of time beginning October 1 and ending September 30 of each year, for which Federal funding is provided.
Fixed Route	Term applied to transit service that is regularly scheduled and operates over a set route; usually refers to bus service.
Formula Capital Grants	Federal transit funds for transit operators; allocation of funds overseen by FTA.
Free Flow	Roadway conditions in which vehicles are almost completely unimpeded in their ability to maneuver within the traffic stream.
Freeway	A divided arterial highway designed for the unimpeded flow of large traffic volumes. Access to a freeway is rigorously controlled and intersection grade separations are required.
Functional Classification	The grouping of streets and highways into classes or systems, according to the character of service they are intended to provide.
Functional Classification Map	A map that identifies streets and highways per their class or system. Roads that are highlighted on this map are eligible for federal aid.
Future Needs	Represents the gap between the vision and the current or projected performance of the system.
Grants	A federal financial assistance award making payment in cash or in kind for a specified purpose.
Greenway	Corridors of protected open space along natural features, such as streams and ridges, or along man made features, such as abandoned railroad corridors and scenic highways. A trail or other designated system developed to provide transportation or recreational opportunities for pedestrians or bicyclists.
High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV)	Vehicles carrying two or more people. The number that constitutes an HOV for the purposes of HOV highway lanes may be designated differently by different transportation agencies.
High Occupancy Vehicle Lane	Exclusive road or traffic lane limited to buses, vanpools, carpools, and emergency vehicles.
Highway	Any road, street, parkway, or freeway/expressway that includes rights-of-way, bridges, railroad-highway crossings, tunnels, drainage structures, signs, guardrails, and protective structures in connection with highways. The highway further includes that portion of any interstate or international bridge or tunnel and the approaches thereto.
Highway Trust Fund	An account established by law to hold Federal highway user taxes that are dedicated for highway and transit related purposes. The HTF has two accounts: the Highway Account and the Mass Transit Account.
Infrastructure	1) In transit systems, all the fixed components of the transit system, such as right of way, tracks, signal equipment, stations, park-and-ride lots, bus stops, maintenance facilities. 2) In transportation planning, all the relevant elements of the environment in which a transportation system operates. 3) A term connoting physical underpinnings of society at large, including, but not limited to roads, bridges, transit, waste systems, public housing, sidewalks, utility installations, parks, public buildings, and communications networks.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)	The application of advanced technologies to improve the efficiency and safety of transportation systems.
Intermodal	A transportation system connecting or including different modes of transportation.
Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficient Act of 1991 (ISTEA)	Legislative initiative by the U.S. Congress that restructured funding for transportation programs. ISTEA authorized increased levels of highway and transportation funding from FY 92-97 and increased the role of regional planning commissions/MPOs in funding decisions. The Act also required comprehensive regional and Statewide long-term transportation plans and placed an increased emphasis on public participation and transportation alternatives.
Interstate	Limited access divided facility of at least four lanes designated by the Federal Highway Administration as part of the Interstate System.
Interstate Highway (Freeway or Expressway)	A divided arterial highway for through traffic with full or partial control of access and grade separations at major intersections.
Interstate Highway System (HIS)	The system of highways that connects the principal metropolitan areas, cities, and industrial centers of the United States. Also connects the US to internationally significant routes in Canada and Mexico.
Interstate Maintenance (IM)	The Interstate Maintenance (IM) program provides funding for resurfacing, restoring, rehabilitating and reconstructing most routes on the Interstate System.
Land Use	Refers to the manner in which portions of land or the structures on them are used, i.e., commercial, residential, retail, industrial, etc.
Let	A contract that has either been awarded or is being bid. For example: "The contract has been let for the construction for the Memorial Parkway overpasses."
Level of Service (LOS)	1) A qualitative assessment of a road's operating conditions. For local government comprehensive planning purposes, level of service means an indicator of the extent or degree of service provided by, or proposed to be provided by, a facility based on and related to the operational characteristics of the facility. Level of service indicates the capacity per unit of demand for each public facility, or the quality of flow in the moving stream of people or vehicles. 2) This term refers to a standard measurement used by transportation officials which reflects the relative ease of traffic flow on a scale of A to F, with free flow being rated LOS-A and congested conditions rated as LOS-F.
Local Street	Functional classification for streets that are not on a higher functional classification system and provide the lowest level of mobility with through traffic being discouraged.
Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	A 20 year forecast plan that must consider a wide range of social, environmental, energy, and economic factors. The plan focuses on overall regional goals and how transportation can best meet those goals within financial limits.
Major Arterial	Major streets or highways, many of multi-lane or freeway design, serving high-volume traffic corridor movements that connects major generators of travel. A functional classification for high volume roadways which carry the major portion of daily trips to centers of activity in the metropolitan area.

Mass Transportation	Another term for public transit.
Matching Funds	Funds which one funding source requires from others as a condition of receiving the funds from that funding source. The match is typically set as a percentage of the total project or project phase cost.
Metropolitan Planning Area	The location in which the MPO carries out its transportation planning responsibilities and which has been designated by the MPO and the Governor of the State in accordance with federal regulations.
Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	Regional policy body, required in urbanized areas with populations over 50,000, and designated by local officials and the governor of the state. Responsible, in cooperation with the state and other transportation providers, for carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning requirements of federal highway and transit legislation, and developing transportation plans and programs for the metropolitan area.
Metropolitan Transportation Plan	Another name for the Long Range Transportation Plan.
Minor Arterial	A class of road serving major traffic movements and trips of moderate length within a relatively small geographic area.
National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)	Established a national environmental policy requiring that any project using federal funding or requiring federal approval, including transportation projects, examine the effects of proposed and alternative choices on the environment before a federal decision is made.
National Highway System (NHS)	The system comprised of interstate highways and roads designated as most important to interstate travel, national defense, intermodal connections, and international crossings.
National ITS Architecture	A systems framework to guide the planning and deployment of ITS infrastructure. The national ITS architecture is a blueprint for the coordinated development of ITS technologies in the U.S.
Non-Attainment Area	Any geographic area that has not met the requirements for clean air as set out in the Clean Air Act of 1990.
Obligation	The Federal Government's legal commitment or promise to pay or reimburse the States or other entities for the Federal share of a project's eligible costs.
Obligation Limitation	A restriction, or "ceiling" on the amount of Federal assistance that may be promised during a specified time period. This is a statutory budgetary control that does not affect the apportionment or allocation of funds. Rather, it controls the rate at which these funds may be used.
Obligational Authority	The total amount of funds that may be obligated in a year. For the Federal-Aid Highway Program this is comprised of the obligation limitation amount plus amounts for programs exempt from the limitation.
Paratransit	1) Comparable transportation service required by the American Disabilities Act (ADA) for individuals with disabilities who are unable to use fixed route transportation systems. 2) A variety of smaller, often flexibly scheduled-and-routed transportation services using low capacity vehicles, such as vans, to operate within normal urban transit corridors of rural areas. These services usually serve the needs of persons that standard mass-transit services would serve with difficulty, or not at all. Often, patrons include the

elderly and persons with disabilities.

Peak	The time period when the maximum amount of travel occurs. It can be further specified as morning (a.m.) or evening (p.m.) peak.
Pedestrian	Any person not in or on a motor vehicle or other vehicle. Excludes people in buildings or sitting at a sidewalk café. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration also uses another pedestrian category to refer to pedestrians using conveyances and people in buildings. Examples of pedestrian conveyances include skateboards, nonmotorized wheelchairs, rollerskates, sleds, and transport devices used as equipment.
Pedestrian Walkway	A continuous way designated for pedestrians and separated from the through lanes for motor vehicles by space or barrier.
Performance Measures	Indicators of how well the transportation system is performing with regard to such things as average speed, reliability of travel, and accident rates. Used as feedback in the decision making process.
Planning Funds (PL)	Primary source of funding for metropolitan planning designated by the FHWA.
Preliminary Engineering (PE)	The preparation of a detailed design of a project. Preliminary engineering involves surveying, mapping, preparation of plans and contract documents, environmental analyses, required public hearings, any other required state or federal procedures, and in some instances right of way related activities which includes field and office work prior to the acquisition of property.
Problem Identification	An element in the planning process which represents the gap between the desired vision, goals, and objectives and the current or projected performance of the system.
Programming	Prioritizing proposed projects and matching those projects with available funds to accomplish agreed upon stated needs.
Public Involvement Meeting, Public Hearing, or Public Meeting	A public gathering for the express purpose of informing and soliciting input from interested individuals regarding transportation issues.
Public Participation	The active and meaningful involvement of the public in the development of transportation plans and programs.
Public Transit	Passenger transportation services, usually local in scope, that is available to any person who pays a prescribed fare. It operates on established schedules along designated routes or lines with specific stops and is designed to move relatively large numbers of people at one time.
Public Transit Agency	A public entity responsible for administering and managing transit activities and services. Public transit agencies can directly operate transit service or contract out for all or part of the total transit service provided.
Public Transportation	Transportation by bus, rail, or other conveyance, either publicly or privately owned, which provides to the public general or special service on a regular and continuing basis. Also known as “mass transportation”, “mass transit”, and “transit”.
Public Road	Any road under the jurisdiction of and maintained by a public authority (federal, state, county, town, or township, local government, or instrumentality thereof) and open to public travel.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)	Provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for motorized and non-motorized recreational trail uses.
Regionally Significant Project	A project that is on a facility which serves regional transportation needs. Locally, an example would be the Southern Bypass or the Memphis to Atlanta Highway.
Revenue	Remuneration received by carriers for transportation activities.
Right of Way	The land (usually a strip) acquired for or devoted to highway transportation purposes.
Road	An open way for the passage of vehicles, persons, or animals on land.
Rural Highway	Any highway, road, or street that is not an urban highway.
Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)	The most recent transportation legislation signed into law on August 10, 2005 that authorizes Federal funding through September 30, 2009 primarily for highway, highway safety and public transportation purposes.
Safety Management System	A systematic process that has the goal of reducing the number and severity of transportation related accidents by ensuring that all opportunities to improve safety are identified, considered and implemented as appropriate.
Sponsor	A public entity or agency that backs and typically provides the matching money for a transportation project per agreement.
Stakeholder(s)	1) Person or group affected by a transportation plan, program, or project. Person or group believing that they are affected by a transportation, plan, program or project. Residents of affected geographical areas. 2) Individuals and organizations involved in or affected by the transportation planning process. Includes federal/state/local officials, MPOs, transit operators, freight companies, shippers, and the general public.
State Planning and Research Funds (SPR)	Primary source of funding for statewide long-range planning.
State Transportation Agency	The State highway department, transportation department, or other State transportation agency to which Federal-aid highway funds are apportioned.
State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)	A staged, multi-year, statewide, intermodal program of transportation projects, consistent with the statewide transportation plan and planning processes as well as metropolitan plans, TIPs, and processes.
Statewide Transportation Plan	The official statewide intermodal transportation plan that is developed through the statewide transportation planning process.
Surface Transportation Program (STP)	Federal-aid highway funding program that funds a broad range of surface transportation capital needs, including many roads, transit, sea and airport access, vanpool, bike, and pedestrian facilities.
Telecommuting	Communicating electronically (by telephone, computer, fax, etc.) with an office, either from home or from another site, instead of traveling to it physically.
Title VI	Title VI of the civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination in any program receiving federal assistance.

Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ)	The smallest geographically designated area for analysis of transportation activity.
Transit Vehicle	Includes light, heavy, and commuter rail; motorbus; trolley bus; vanpools; automated guideway; and demand responsive vehicles.
Transportation Control Measures (TCM)	Transportation strategies that affect traffic patterns or reduce vehicle use to reduce air pollutant emissions. These may include HOV lanes, provision of bicycle facilities, ridesharing, telecommuting, etc.
Transportation Demand Management (TDM)	Programs designed to reduce demand for transportation through various means, such as the use of transit and of alternative work hours.
Transportation Enhancement Activities (TE)	Provides funds to the States for safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities, scenic routes, beautification, restoring historic buildings, renovating streetscapes, or providing transportation museums and visitors centers.
Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)	Authorized in 1998, TEA-21 authorized federal funding for transportation investment for fiscal years 1998-2003. Approximately \$217 billion in funding was authorized, which was used for highway, transit, and other surface transportation programs.
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	A document prepared by a metropolitan planning organization, in conjunction with the state and local transit operator(s), that prioritizes transportation improvements to be implemented with Federal funds over a four year period. All TIP projects must be consistent with the MPOs' long range transportation plan.
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment	Any modification to a previously approved TIP. Amendments can include the addition or deletion of projects or phases of projects, changes to the costs of projects, and the addition or deletion of capital projects.
Transportation Management Area (TMA)	1) All urbanized areas over 200,000 in population, and any other area that requests such designation. 2) An urbanized area with a population over 200,000 (as determined by the latest decennial census) or other area when TMA designation is requested by the Governor and the MPO (or affected local officials), and officially designated by the Administrators of the FHWA and the FTA. The TMA designation applies to the entire metropolitan planning area.
Transportation Network	A map or schematic representation of the roadway or transit system that shows a series of links and nodes in a computer database.
Travel Demand Forecasting	The technical process of estimating the number of future users by mode of a system and their particular travel times and routes.
Trip Distribution	The estimate of travel taken between traffic analysis zones.
Trip Generation	The estimate of trips that will be produced and/or attracted to a geographic unit based upon the population and employment characteristics of that unit.
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	The management plan for the metropolitan planning program. Its purpose is to coordinate the planning activities of all participants in the planning process. The plan breaks down the planning process into various tasks and designates funding sources and the specific allocation of funds for each specific task.
United States Code (USC)	The United States Code contains a consolidation and codification of all general and permanent laws of the U.S.

Urban Highway	Any road or street within the boundaries of an urban area. An urban area is an area including and adjacent to a municipality or urban place with a population of 5,000 or more. The boundaries of urban areas are fixed by State highway departments, subject to the approval of the Federal Highway Administration, for purposes of the Federal-Aid Highway Program.
Urbanized Area	An area that contains a city of 50,000 or more population plus incorporated surrounding areas meeting size or density criteria as defined by the U.S. Census.
Visioning	A variety of techniques that can be used to identify goals.
Volume/Capacity Ratio (V/C Ratio)	A ratio that defines traffic flow on a roadway versus the capacity of the road to handle the traffic flow. A V/C Ratio that exceeds 1.0 indicates that the roadway is congested, and that traffic does not move freely. See Level of Service (LOS) for more information.