Chapter 1:

Plan Purpose and Development

The *2012-2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan* (MTP) documents the transportation planning process of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) and its partners. It includes recommended strategies, including projects, that will improve, manage and maintain central Ohio's transportation system over the next 23 years. Planning for the MTP is continuous, comprehensive and cooperative. The next update is scheduled for 2016.

Planning for a transportation system that includes roadways, transit, bicycle facilities, pedestrian facilities, rail and air must reflect federal and local priorities. Just as important, it must also consider any negative impacts on our communities, the environment and air quality.

The plan was developed with guidance from a set of regional goals established to advance the quality of life for residents in central Ohio.

1.1 Transportation Planning Process

The *2012-2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan* (MTP) for the Greater Columbus region:

- Documents the ongoing transportation planning process carried out by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission and its partners, and
- Plans for strategies and projects to improve and maintain the transportation system between 2012 and 2035.

The MTP is also known as the "Regional Transportation Plan." In its publication and adoption, it replaces the *2008-2030 CapitalWays Transportation Plan* in fulfillment of the requirements of an MTP as laid out in federal law.

Many different agencies and local governments conduct studies on and complete improvements to the transportation system. However, MORPC is the principal public agency conducting regional transportation studies for the central Ohio area because it serves as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Columbus Urbanized Area (see "What is an MPO?"). It covers Franklin County, Delaware County and portions of Licking and Fairfield counties (see Figure 1.1).

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WHAT IS AN MPO?

Federal law establishes a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in all regions with an urbanized area having a population of 50,000 or more. Where an MPO is required, it can be a part of another governmental agency or exist as a standalone agency. The MPO carries out the "3-C" transportation planning process. The "3-Cs" describe the process, which must be continuing, cooperative and comprehensive. Only with this process is the area eligible to receive federal transportation funding.

Because an MPO must foster cooperation between various agencies and local jurisdictions, decisionmaking is typically governed by a policy committee made up of local elected and appointed officials. In addition to the director and staff that provide information and guidance to the policy committee, most MPOs have a technical advisory committee and a citizen advisory committee.

The MPO must produce a metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) every four years that looks at least 20 years into the future. It provides the basis for how federal transportation funding is spent to improve highways, transit, freight, bikeways and pedestrian facilities. The four year cycle allows the MTP to account for continually changing conditions. The process is continuous so that the MTP strategies and projects reflect these current conditions.

The MPO must also maintain the transportation improvement program (TIP). It is a short-term program that operates in tandem with the MTP. When an implementing agency - local jurisdiction or the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) - begins pursuing and developing a project on the MTP, they can request it appear on the TIP. Projects on the TIP typically have funding committed for at least one phase.

Titles 23 and 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) guide the work of an MPO. Periodic surface transportation reauthorization acts by the US Congress are reflected in this code. These acts also authorize the funding levels for the surface transportation programs over the life of the act. Congress has extended the current reauthorization, SAFETEA-LU (Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users), which went into effect in August 2005, past its September 2009 end date.

Other federal legislation and action guides the work of an MPO, such as the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations) and the National Environmental Protection Act of 1969.

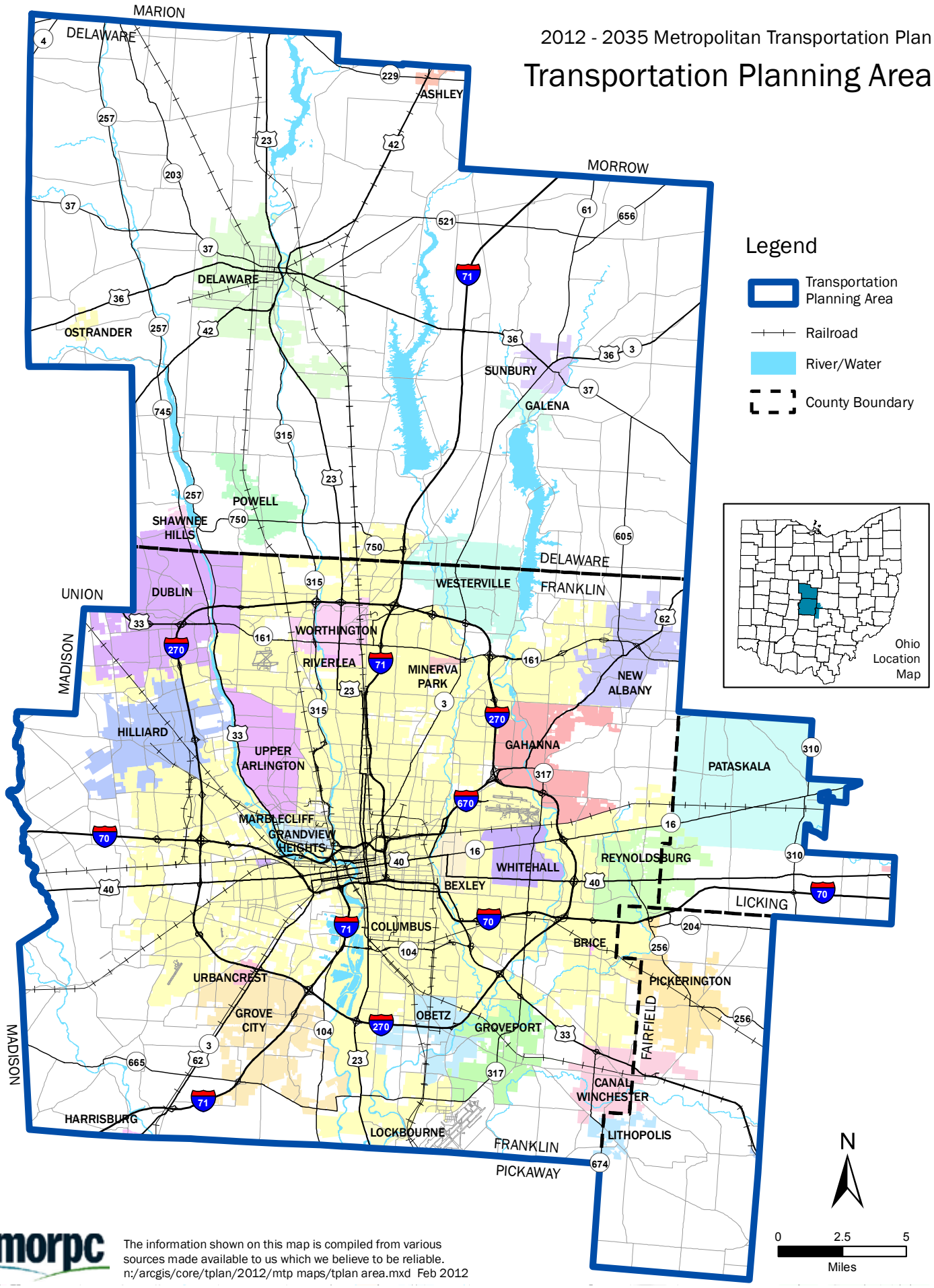

Figure 1.1 Map of Transportation Planning Area

MORPC brings together local governments from around central Ohio as a part of its ongoing transportation planning process. It also coordinates with ODOT and the Licking County Area Transportation Study (LCATS), its sister agency that functions as the MPO for the balance of Licking County. Independently and cooperatively, all of these entities identify transportation needs. Then MORPC prioritizes and coordinates strategies and projects to meet transportation needs between now and 2035 through the following process to:

- Identify regional goals and objectives
- Monitor and forecast development, population and employment growth, and changes to the transportation system
- Forecast travel demand to identify where traffic volumes will exceed capacity, resulting in congestion
- Identify other needs across the multimodal transportation system – including system improvements, system management and the management of travel demand
- Consider projects to be completed and strategies to be implemented that will achieve the transportation goals for the region as well as accomplish key factors as laid out in federal legislation
- Constrain the list of strategies and projects so their cost will remain within the amount of transportation funding estimated to be available through 2035
- Measure the aggregate impact of the strategies and projects on the environment, air quality and social equity

Figure 1.2 is a graphic representation of this process.

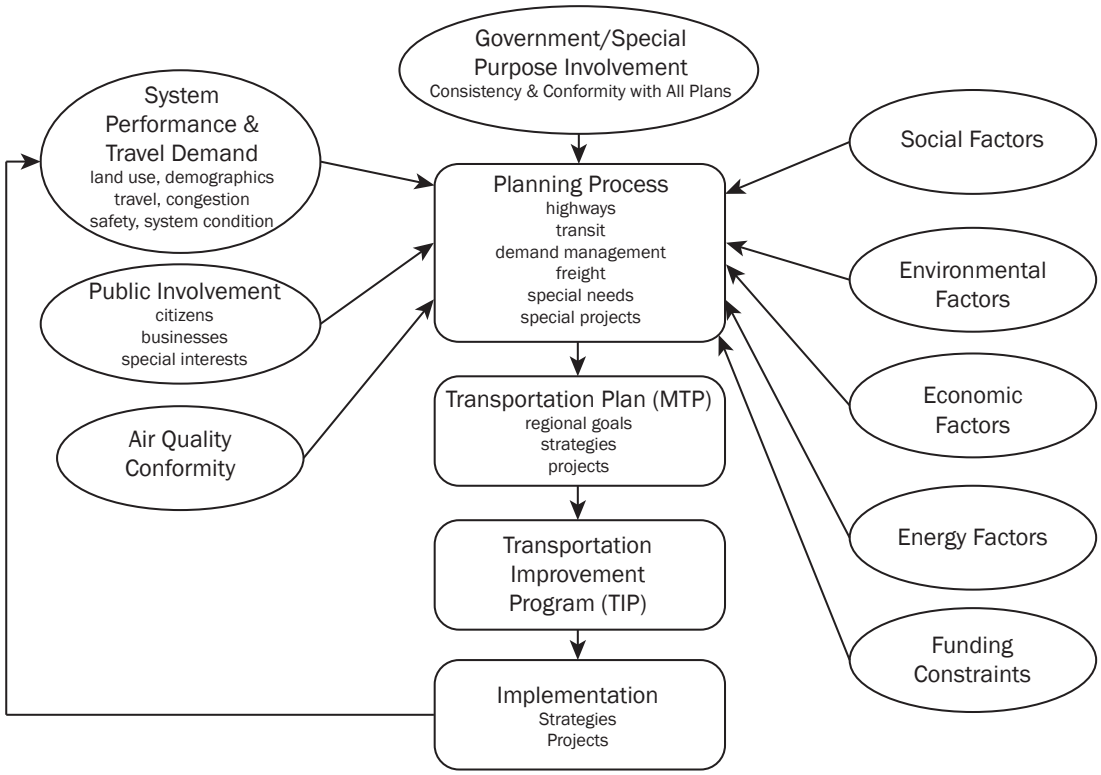

Figure 1.2 Transportation Planning Process

Strategies and projects that emerge from the process are implemented through:

- The shorter-range funding program called the transportation improvement program (TIP) - all projects on the TIP must be derived from the MTP
- Actions identified in MORPC's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP or PWP)
- Actions of other agencies and local governments in the MPO planning area

MORPC tracks the combined effort toward the plan's measurable objectives and goals. By documenting successes and shortcomings, MORPC and the region can make better decisions as the transportation planning process continues into the future.

FEDERALLY-REQUIRED PLANNING FACTORS

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non motorized users
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- Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight
- Promote efficient system management and operation
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system

1.2 Regional Goals

The transportation system is part of a larger societal context. MORPC is in the process of establishing a framework for decisionmaking and planning that goes beyond transportation decisions called "Shaping our Future." This framework covers a 12-county region, which is larger than the area covered by the MPO.

Shaping our Future began in 2009 with a series of 59 focus groups. This input was combined with additional input collected through online outreach to over 6,600 individuals in the region. MORPC then drafted six broad goals.

The content of the goals was checked against a reference document concerning other federal, state and local initiatives to ensure the draft goals were in alignment with federal requirements (see sidebar and Figure 1.3) and local desires, such as Complete Streets and Lifelong Communities (see sidebar following next page).

These goals were presented to various community, non-profit and business groups, as well as local governments, for feedback.

MORPC adopted the resulting goals in July 2010 for both the MTP and Shaping our Future:

1. Promote the reduction of per capita **energy** consumption and the production of energy from renewable local sources to increase affordability and resilience of regional energy supplies
2. Preserve and protect **natural resources** to maintain a healthy ecosystem
3. Position central Ohio to attract and retain **economic opportunity** to prosper as a region and compete globally
4. Create **sustainable neighborhoods** to improve residents' quality of life
5. Increase **collaboration** to maximize the return on public expenditures
6. Use public investments to benefit the **health, safety and welfare of people**

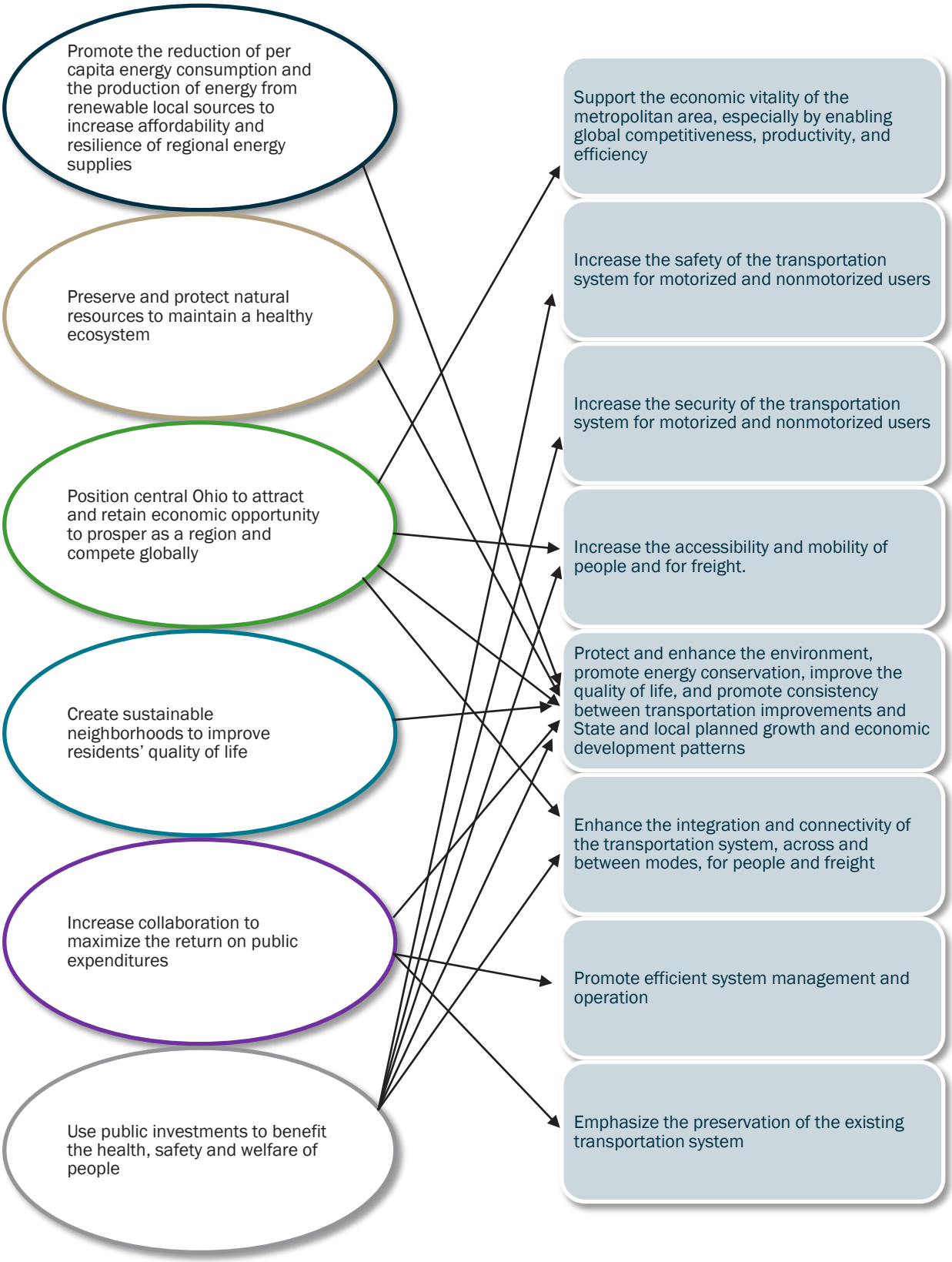

Figure 1.3 Relationship of Goals to Federally-Required Planning Factors

COMPLETE STREETS & LIFELONG COMMUNITIES

MORPC is working to create "lifelong communities." The goal is to ensure central Ohio's cities, villages, townships and counties continue to prosper, attract and retain businesses and residents, and in return have a richer tax base to support important programs, such as infrastructure, education and social services. An important facet of Lifelong Communities is Complete Streets.

Complete Streets are roadways designed to safely and comfortably accommodate all users, including, but not limited to, motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, transit and school bus riders, delivery and service personnel, freight haulers and emergency responders. "All users" includes people of all ages and abilities.

MORPC is leading the effort to implement Complete Streets concepts and policies in central Ohio. In April 2010, MORPC adopted a Complete Streets Policy that requires all projects seeking MORPC-attributable federal funds to accommodate all users. Additionally, MORPC is encouraging its member agencies to adopt complete streets policies that would cover projects utilizing non-MORPC funds. As part of this effort, MORPC has created a Complete Streets Toolkit, which is available online.

MORPC's efforts in the Complete Streets realm are part of a broader effort to foster Lifelong Communities that allow residents to enjoy a high quality of life throughout their lifespan. Over the next 40 years, central Ohio will undergo dramatic changes in demographics (a population that is growing, aging and more diverse), with resulting changes in housing demand, the workforce, and costs related to transportation, the environment, and health.

MORPC is currently working with external partners to address the significant impact these shifts will have on central Ohio's cities, villages, townships and counties, and how to develop in order to remain competitive for all age, ethnic and income groups. MORPC and its partners are preparing a formal lifelong community initiative that capitalizes on MORPC's internal transportation-housing-environment structure.

"Rethinking Streets for Successful Communities" is available on MORPC's website.

This initiative was launched at a community workshop where over 40 community leaders came together to learn and discuss the importance of changing their community landscapes to meet the needs that will arise from shifting demographics. The workshop featured the release of the video called "Rethinking Streets for Successful Communities." The video features local and national experts, planners, developers, and government officials, who discuss the creation of lifelong communities, including rethinking the use of the public realm, the need for homes to retain their value, and the need for a diversity of housing that includes options for people at every stage of life.

1.3 Plan Objectives and Targets

Objectives are the ways to measure achievement of the plan's goals. Specific transportation-related objectives were drafted and modified through a two-part participatory workshop in May and June 2011. Participants included members of the MORPC's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) and Policy Committee, supplemented with individuals from other disciplines representing environmental, energy, demographic, economic development, private development and land use planning expertise. Through this process, MORPC established 16 objectives. The process also identified a variety of measures to track progress toward the MTP goals and objectives. MORPC adopted the objectives and measures in June 2011.

The MTP objectives and related goals are:

1. **Energy**
   - Demonstrate energy savings through technology
   - Increase energy savings through individuals' actions
   - Increase the production and use of renewable fuel sources
2. **Natural Resources**
   - Protect natural habitat quality
   - Improve water quality
   - Reduce air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions
3. **Economic Opportunity**
   - Attract new businesses; expand and retain existing businesses
   - Increase attraction and retention of a skilled workforce
4. **Sustainable Neighborhoods**
   - Improve neighborhood stability
   - Facilitate redevelopment and infill
5. **Collaboration**
   - Increase investments in public projects from non-public sources
   - Increase awareness of regional impact from local decisions
   - Reduce loss of life and property due to natural and manmade disasters
6. **Health, Safety and Welfare**
   - Increase access to transportation choices
   - Increase safety of central Ohio residents
   - Maximize the life of existing infrastructure

The plan measures are discussed, in detail, in Chapter 7. However, the following 13 specific targets influenced the development of strategies and projects to implement the MTP. These targets are listed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 MTP Targets	Increase density of people and jobs per acre in MPO planning area that are within 3/4 mile of arterials to 6 per acre by 2035 (up from 4.5)
Keep percentage of the transportation system under congested conditions less than 5 percent on a daily basis and less than 10 percent during peak periods	Increase the percent of people within 3/4 mile of a transit stop in the urbanized area from 69 percent to 80 percent by 2035
At least ten miles of bikeways per year (800 miles by 2035)	Increase the percent of people within 3/4 mile of a bikeway in the urbanized area from 62 percent to 80 percent by 2035
Meet EPA air quality standards for each criteria pollutant	All communities adopting complete streets policies or policies that contain those elements by 2035
Reduce percentage of commuters driving alone to 78 percent by 2035 (a 5 percent reduction)	Disadvantaged population average trip travel time remains at or below the regional average trip travel time
Reduce crash rates to 2 crashes per million VMT by 2035 (15 percent reduction)	100 percent of communities conducting studies with multi-jurisdictional participation by 2016
Reduce structurally deficient or functionally obsolete bridges by 25 percent by 2035	Maintain pavement condition such that no more than 5 percent of pavement miles are in unacceptable conditions

Table 1.1 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Targets