

2.0 Goals, Objectives and Policies

The Gaston MPO has many goals and policies relating to various responsibilities placed on the organization. One of these is for the development and direction of a continuing comprehensive transportation planning process implemented cooperatively by the state of North Carolina, through its Department of Transportation, and local communities in Gaston County in conformance with federal guidelines for transportation planning within the Gaston Metropolitan Area. In addition, the MPO is responsible for the general review, guidance, and coordination of the transportation planning process for the Gaston Urban Area, the facilitation and coordination between the various urban area jurisdictions of the North Carolina Department of Transportation, developing MPO alternative transportation plans, and adopting a finalized transportation plan for the metropolitan planning area.

2.1 Mission

Programs and projects recommended for implementation by this Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) were selected by assessing future travel conditions and a variety of land development and environmental factors. The assessment was based on the Goals and Objectives for the Gaston Urban Area described in the following pages.

The Gaston MPO will provide a system of transportation modes that are consistent with the development and growth desired for the jurisdictions that comprise the Gaston Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (GUAMPO). The system of roadway, transit, bicycles, and pedestrian travel modes will deliver safe and efficient movement of people and goods. GUAMPO will strive to implement transportation choices and mobility that positively coexist with the natural and built environments and strengthen the economic prosperity of the region.

2.2 Goals

- Provide a safe, comprehensive, and efficient transportation system that allows the movement of goods and people within Gastonia and from Gastonia to other places.
- Improve the quality of life for residents of the Gaston MPO area
- Provide a transportation system that affords the public with mobility choices including walking, bicycling, and transit options.
- Provide transportation system that is sensitive to significant features of the natural and human environment.
- Provide equitable transportation options to low income and minority neighborhoods.

2.3 Objectives

2.3.1 Mecklenburg County Connectivity - Catawba River Crossing

- ✦ **Require and promote transportation improvements to better connect Gaston County to other cities in the region, particularly Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.**
 - Promote additional bridge crossings (Gaston East-West Connector, Mount Holly North Loop and widen existing) over the Catawba River to handle increases in traffic on I-85 and US 29/74.
 - Strengthen Gastonia's connection to the regional transportation network.

2.3.2 Land Use

- ✦ **Promote land use patterns that combines different uses such as industrial, retail and residential.**
 - Require right-of-way dedication, payments in lieu of construction, installation of transportation improvements when warranted for new development.
 - Promote efficient land development that improves both cost benefit and functional efficiency of the MPO's transportation system.
 - Always evaluate the impact of land use on the transportation system when new development, plans are adopted and policy decisions are made.

2.3.3 Streets and Highways

- ✦ **Develop an efficient street and highway network capable of providing an appropriate level of service for a variety of transportation modes.**
 - Develop streets and highways in a manner consistent with adopted Land Use Plans. Improve access to city and town centers.
 - Enhance mobility by increasing the connectivity of the existing street network.
 - Develop regionally significant streets and highways in a manner which minimizes travel times and distances.
 - Optimize the inter-city, inter-regional and intra-regional capacities of major transportation corridors
 - Develop streets and highways that are accessible to, or compatible with, multiple modes of transportation.
 - Develop visually attractive corridors.
 - Minimize accident potential and severity
 - Incorporate sidewalks and bicycle facilities into the design of roadways to accommodate and encourage pedestrian and bicycle travel

2.3.4 Public Transportation

- ✦ **Promote an integrated multimodal local and regional public transit system.**
 - Promote a safe, efficient and diverse public transportation system that is accessible to various segments of the population.
 - Operate safe and efficient scheduled transit service that minimizes travel times and distances.
 - Implement and use strategies that maximize the potential for transit patronage and coverage.
 - Develop and use land density criteria for transit centers and corridors.
 - Establish programs and incentives that encourage ridesharing and/or eliminate barriers thereto.
 - Enhance the visibility and public image of the Gastonia Transit system.
 - Serve the elderly and transportation disadvantaged populations with convenient transportation to needed services.
 - Increase transit's patronage as a percentage of total trips.
 - Maximize transit's coverage area to the extent feasible.
 - Reserve designated rail and transit corridors for future needs.

2.3.5 Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation

- ✦ **Develop a transportation system that integrates pedestrian and bicycle modes of transportation with motor vehicle transportation and encourages the use of walking and bicycling as alternative modes.**
 - Increase the design sensitivity of specific transportation projects to the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists.
 - Assist the development of pedestrian and bikeway systems for both recreation and transportation purposes.
 - Improve the transportation system to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle access along roadways through design and facility standards.
 - Increase pedestrian and bicycle safety through public awareness programs.
 - Provide linkages for pedestrian and/or bicyclists between neighborhoods, employment centers, services, cultural facilities, schools, parks, and businesses.

2.3.6 Rail and Air Transportation

- ✦ **Maximize rail and air transportation opportunities.**
 - Support expansion opportunities for the Charlotte/Douglas International Airport that will increase the attractiveness of the airport as a major passenger and cargo facility.
 - Maintain the airport's ongoing long range planning function.
 - Promote future opportunities for inter-regional mobility with enhancements to inter-city rail service and the provision of high-speed rail service.
 - Promote a new airport in Gaston County in order to provide relief to the Charlotte-Douglas International Airport.

2.3.7 The Environment

✦ Develop a transportation system that preserves and coexist with the natural and built environments.

- Develop transportation systems and programs that maintain or improve air quality.
- Design transportation facilities that minimize transmission of traffic noise to surrounding properties.
- Design transportation systems and facilities that preserve and complement the areas natural features.
- Plan transportation facilities that promote systems that reinforce the communities standard of appearance.
- Plan transportation facilities that minimize neighborhood disruption and related impacts.
- Designate safe routes with minimal urban exposure for the transport of hazardous materials.
- Designate truck routes that minimize exposure to neighborhoods and historic and cultural resources.

2.3.8 Freight and Goods Movement

✦ Support and promote a freight transportation system which supports the movement of goods.

- Develop a transportation system supporting Charlotte's position as a major distribution center, improving and maintaining access for freight to other markets via a network of highways, railroads and airways.
- Develop streets and highways that are accessible to and compatible with multiple modes of transportation.
- Facilitate coordination among transportation modes through the establishment of intermodal facilities.
- Identify opportunities to share rail corridors with transit.
- Support expansion opportunities at Charlotte/Douglas International Airport that increase the attractiveness of the airport as a major cargo facility.
- Designate safe routes, with minimal urban exposure, for the transport of hazardous materials.
- Designate truck routes that minimize exposure to neighborhoods and to historic and cultural resources.

2.3.9 Financial

✦ Make investment decisions for transportation modes that make the most efficient use of limited public resources.

- Minimize implementation and operation costs of transportation projects.
- Develop transportation projects that enhance the local and regional economies.
- Actively explore new sources of revenue.
- Work with the local legislative delegation to revise the State's Highway Equity Formula and Highway Trust Fund to increase the amount of road dollars that come to the Gaston MPO Area.