

CHAPTER 1

Introduction & Plan Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview / Summary 1

Introduction & Reaffirmation Process 1

ROCOG Organization..... 3

Study Area and Time Horizon of the Plan 5

Federal & State Planning Requirements..... 6

Public Involvement in Developing the This Plan..... 9

Plan Reaffirmation Schedule..... 10

Overview / Summary

Chapter 1 describes the scope of the ROCOG 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (referred to hereinafter as “the Plan”) and the process that is being followed in reaffirming the Plan. The planning area, time horizon and organizational structure of ROCOG are reviewed, along with federal and state planning guidelines which define the minimum set of factors that must be considered in development of the Plan.

The process used to develop the Plan is reviewed in this chapter, including opportunities for input from the public and other planning, economic development, and resource agencies. The chapter concludes with a discussion of public involvement.

Introduction and Reaffirmation Process

This ROCOG 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Reaffirmation represents another step in the ongoing evolution of regional planning for transportation in the Olmsted County area that began in 1972 with the creation of the Rochester-Olmsted Council of Governments.

The 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan was adopted by ROCOG in August of 2010. Under federal guidelines, the plan needs to be updated every five years, normally with a new horizon year.

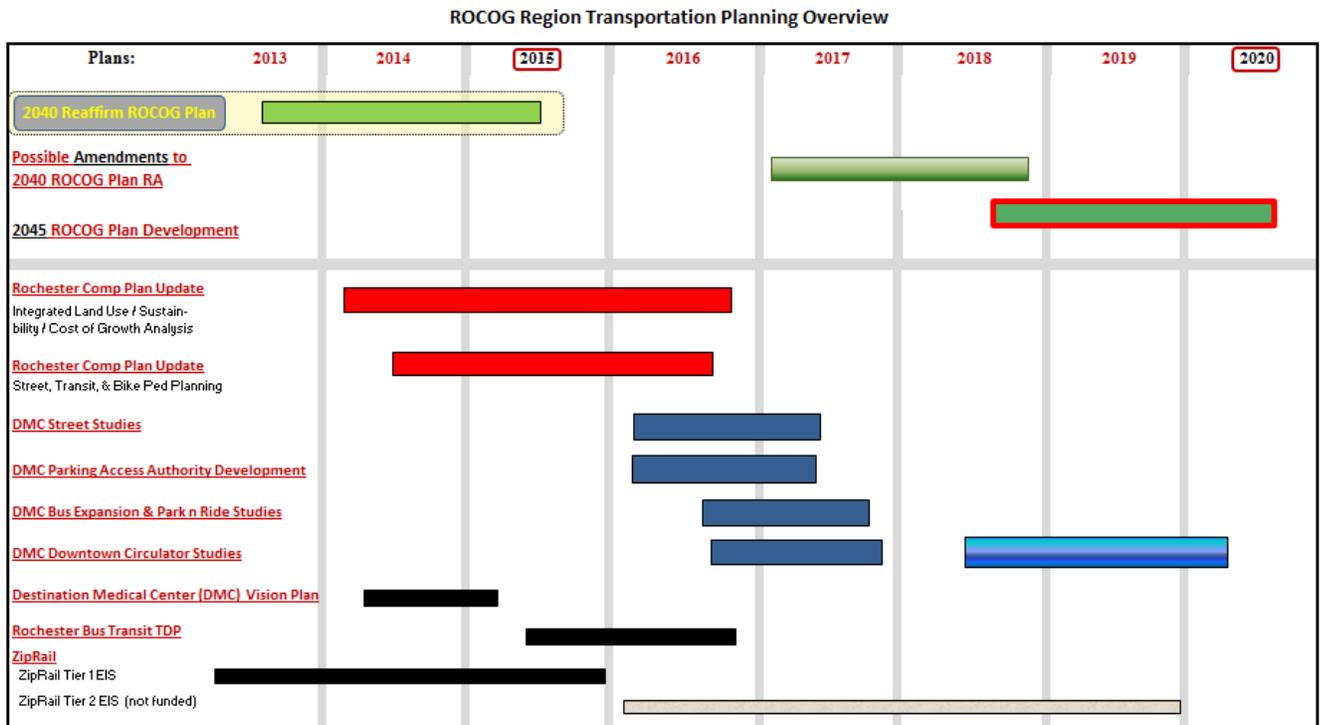
In the year 2013, when work began on the update of the Plan adopted in 2010, the intention had been to extend the horizon of the plan to the year 2045. In June 2013, with input from MnDOT & FHWA, ROCOG changed direction to proceed with a planning process to Reaffirm the current 2040 Plan rather than prepare a fully updated new 2045 Plan. This sort of action is sometimes called a Minor Update, or more recently, a “reaffirmation” by MPOs around the country.

The rationale for this action was two-fold:

- a) Work on several new and important studies and plans were to begin in 2013 that would be best incorporated into the next ROCOG Plan Update (i.e. 2045), and because of study/planning timing, would not be able to fully be integrated into any ROCOG Plan update work beginning in 2013. Without knowing the end dates for the studies that would begin in 2013/2014, the decision was made to reaffirm the current 2040 Plan, thereby ensuring that a Minor-updated Plan would be adopted in August of 2015 when the former plan expired. With this scenario, the 2045 Plan Update work would be undertaken as the next update.
- b) The Great Recession caused serious several years of delay in any normal growth in land use and employment in the Greater Rochester area and Olmsted County. Because of this, ROCOG and staff felt that 2040 socio-economic forecasts were still valid if used for a Minor Update without needing a full set of new 2045 forecasts.

One of the significant new developments that affected timing of the ROCOG Plan Update was the passage of the Destination Medical Center (DMC) state legislation in May, 2013. The DMC initiative, the largest economic development initiative in state history, provides a framework for the use of state, city and county funding for public infrastructure to support doubling of Mayo/Other employment over 20 years. This DMC initiative is also projecting significant increases in downtown residential and new supporting land uses in downtown Rochester. The first step in the DMC initiative process is the creation of a DMC Master Plan, which begun in the spring of 2014 and will be completed mid-year 2015 (refer to Figure 1-1).

Figure 1-1



Key plans underway that will provide eventual input into the next plan update (2045) are listed below (and shown above): They will be in process or beginning during or after approval of the 2040 Plan Reaffirmation.

1. Destination Medical Center Vision Document;
2. City of Rochester Comprehensive Plan Update, to be known as Planning to Succeed (P2S), which will include transit/transportation system plan component;
3. An update to the Rochester Public Transit System Transit Development Plan;
4. ZIP Rail Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement work (between Rochester and the Twin Cities);
5. ZIP Rail Tier 2 Environmental Impact Statement work (between Rochester and the Twin Cities);
6. A first set of implementation studies for the DMC Plan, including a FTA compliant Planning Study for a Downtown Transit Circulator, and development of an Implementation/Business Plan for an Access Management Authority proposed to manage downtown parking and transportation demand management programs.

The Rochester-Olmsted Council of Governments 2040 Transportation Plan Reaffirmation provides a comprehensive look at anticipated transportation system development in Olmsted County for the next 25 years. This Plan reviews and updates the 2040 Plan elements to bring some of the project planning information and cost/revenue information into a 2014-2015 frame of reference. The Plan horizon year of 2040 remains the same, as does the travel demand model base year of 2010 and horizon year of 2040.

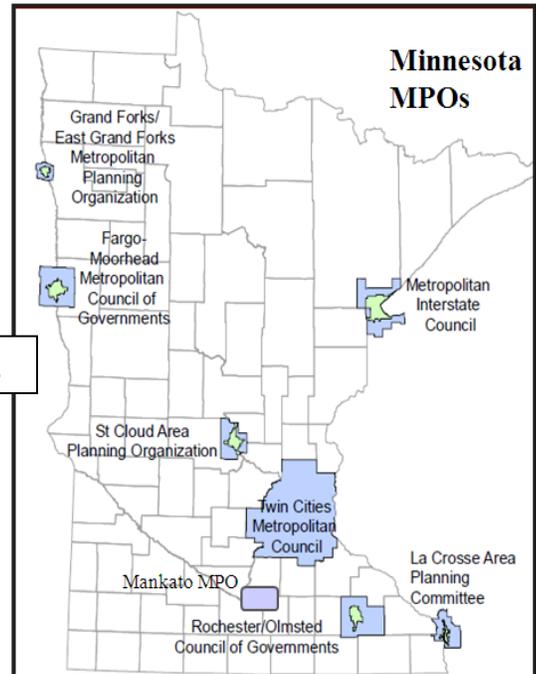


Figure 1-2

ROCOG Organization

ROCOG is one of eight Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the State of Minnesota (Figure 1-2). It is one of 3 that are entirely within the state, as the others are “bi-state” organizations. ROCOG was founded in 1972 following completion of the 1970 Census which found Rochester’s urban area population to exceed 50,000.

The ROCOG organization structure includes a Policy Board, a Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC), a Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) and a Citizen’s Advisory on Transit (CAT). Staffing for ROCOG is provided by the Rochester-Olmsted Planning Department (ROPD), which is the joint planning agency for the City of Rochester and Olmsted County.

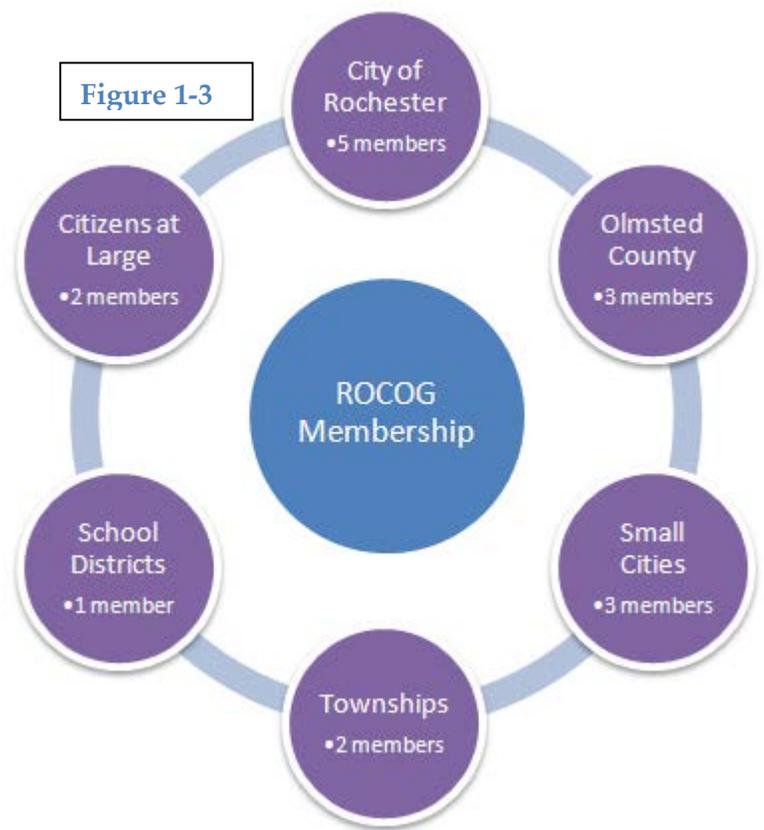


Figure 1-3

The 16 members of the Policy Board represent a cross section of local units of government in Olmsted County and two citizen members (see Figure 1-3). The jurisdictional delegates to ROCOG select the two (2) citizen delegates who act as voting members of ROCOG.

TTAC is composed of agency staff representing those organizations responsible for managing the major transportation systems within Olmsted County. It meets periodically during the year to discuss and coordinate transportation planning matters, with a focus on the Rochester urbanized area and the adjacent area influenced by Rochester’s urban growth patterns.

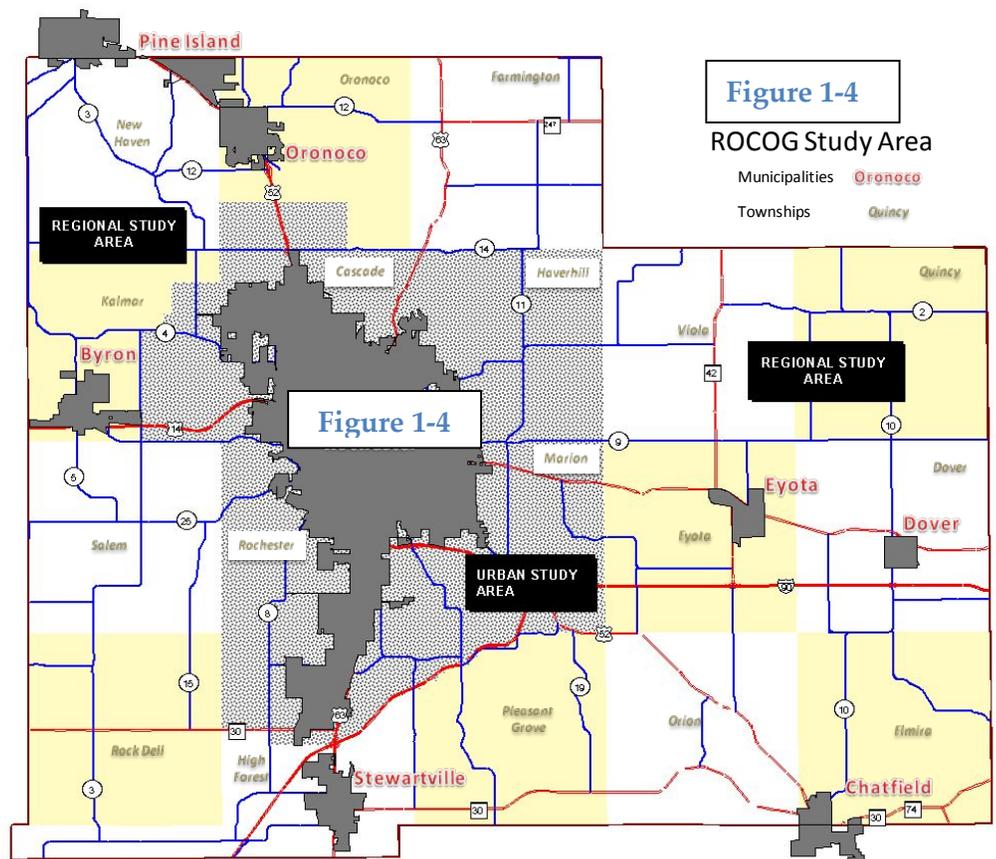
BPAC is a twelve member advisory board appointed by ROCOG comprised of citizen volunteers as well as representatives of organizations such as neighborhood councils and public health. It advises the Policy Board on planning and programming matters related to bicycle and pedestrian needs, and its members are involved directly in various initiatives related to education, encouragement and the promotion of non-motorized modes of travel.

The Citizens Advisory on Transit is a seven member citizen advisory board appointed by the Rochester City Council that assists in the planning and review of public transportation services within the Rochester area. In addition to planning and programming, the committee supports efforts to build community awareness of issues related to public transportation service.

Study Area and Time Horizon of the Plan

The study area for the Long Range Plan encompasses all of Olmsted County, including the planned urban expansion areas of the cities of Pine Island and Chatfield.

The study area is broken into two sub-areas referred to as the Urban Study Area and the Regional Study Area, as illustrated in Figure 1-4. In the Regional Study Area the focus is limited to those facilities or services important to the regional movement



of persons and goods. The Urban Study Area focus is comprehensive in terms of considering issues and needs across the entire transportation system.

A Short History of ROCOG Long Range Plans Updates

Prior to the organization of ROCOG in 1972 most transportation system planning in the Rochester area was done on the jurisdictional level. For example, the City of Rochester developed transportation plans in 1947 and 1960 as part of broader comprehensive planning efforts, and in 1968 through a joint effort with MNDOT. Since ROCOG was organized in 1972, the following comprehensive transportation plan reports have been prepared under the auspices of the ROCOG:

Table 1-1: Past ROCOG Plans

	Transportation LONG RANGE PLANS	
	ROCOG Thoroughfare Plan (1977)	
	ROCOG Thoroughfare Plan Update (1982) <i>Downtown and Medical Campus amendments</i>	
	ROCOG Thoroughfare Plan Update (1985) <i>Northwest Rochester amendments</i>	
	ROCOG Thoroughfare Plan Update (1995) <i>Willow Creek amendments</i>	
	ROCOG Long Range Transportation Plan Update (June 1997) <i>Comprehensive LRTP update</i>	
	ROCOG Interim Long Range Transportation Plan Update (June 2003)	
	ROCOG 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (2005) <i>Comprehensive LRTP update</i>	
	ROCOG 2035 Interim Long Range Plan Update (2007) <i>Policy Review of SAFETEA-LU Priorities</i>	
	ROCOG 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (2010) <i>Comprehensive LRTP update</i>	
	Transportation POLICY PLANS	
	ROCOG Transportation Plan Policies (1977)	
	ROCOG Policy Directions Report (1996)	

Federal & State Planning Requirements

Preparation of a Long Range Transportation Plan is mandated under federal transportation planning guidelines first established in the 1962 Federal-Aid Highway Act. All urbanized areas over 50,000 in population, in order to be eligible to receive federal funding, must maintain a "continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process" that results in the periodic preparation of a Long Range Plan, as well as adoption of an annual program of federally funded projects known as the Transportation Improvement Program.

Federal guidelines require that a **Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)** be organized to provide a forum for cooperative decision-making by officials of the region's general purpose local governments. This organization is established by agreement between the Governor of Minnesota and local units government representing at least 75 percent of the population of the proposed area. In Rochester and Olmsted County, the MPO is the **Rochester –Olmsted Council of Governments (ROCOG)**, organized in 1972.

MAP-21, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141), was signed into law by President Obama on July 6, 2012. Funding surface transportation programs at over \$105 billion for fiscal years (FY) 2013 and 2014, MAP-21 was the first highway authorization enacted since 2005. Note that at the time of this writing, MAP -21 has been extended multiple times.

It identifies a number of planning factors that must be considered in the development of long range transportation plans (Figure 1-5).

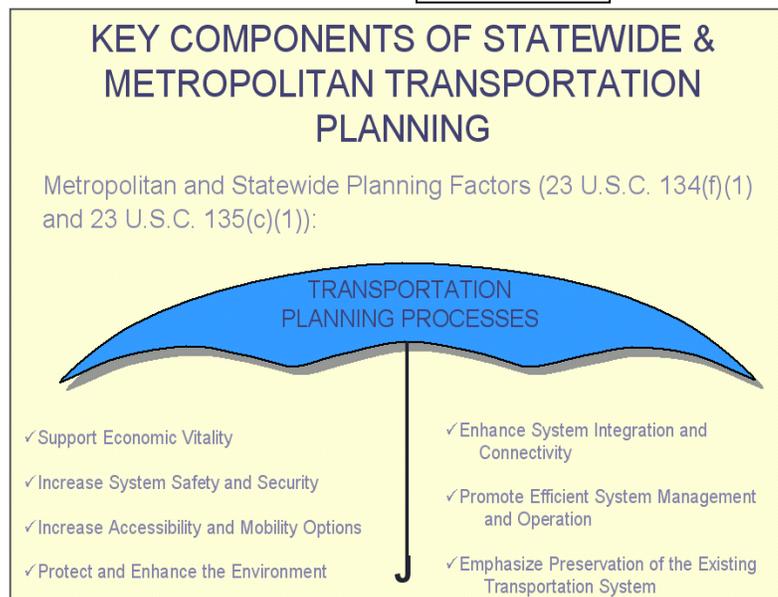
The specific planning factors, from federal statute Title 23 § 450.306, include:

(1) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;

(2) Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;

(3) Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;

Figure 1-5



-
- (4) Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
- (5) 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;
- (6) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- (7) Promote efficient system management and operation; and
- (8) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

In addition to these eight factors, Title 23 § 450.322 identifies two additional areas of emphasis:

Financial planning: The plan must include a financial section that estimates how much funding will be needed over the life of the plan, and how the MPO can reasonably expect to fund the projects included in the plan, including anticipated revenues from FHWA and FTA, state government, regional or local sources, the private sector, and user charges.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning: The plan must ensure that due consideration has been given to the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians in the planning process and facility design.

Federal guidelines require a minimum 20 year horizon to be maintained throughout the life of the plan. For traffic and financial forecasting, a 25 to 30 year horizon is a reasonable and realistic limit for projecting the specifics of traffic volumes or funding availability.

However, given that the life cycle of road facilities varies from 50 to 60 years (for roads) and up to 90 years for bridges, ROCOG has formulated certain aspects of this plan to reflect consideration of those longer time horizons to better guide future planning. For concerns such as corridor preservation or strategic-level planning, a longer view is considered appropriate by ROCOG since land use decisions in the near term may preclude long-term transportation options if not strategically accommodated in the development approval process. In these cases, the plan looks at areas that may be influenced by urban growth trends over a 50-75 year period and considers infrastructure, such as urban rail, that may not be feasible within the 20 year plan horizon but strategically may need to be considered for its long term potential to address long term urban growth and travel needs. By doing so, concepts such as extension of a basic arterial / collector grid, circumferential arterials (beltways) or major transit supportive infrastructure can be considered at an appropriate scale and recommendations such as right-of-way preservation for long term expansion needs can be built into the Plan.

A checklist of how the federal planning factors have been addressed in the 2040 Long Range Plan is provided in Appendix A.

Public Involvement in Developing the This Plan

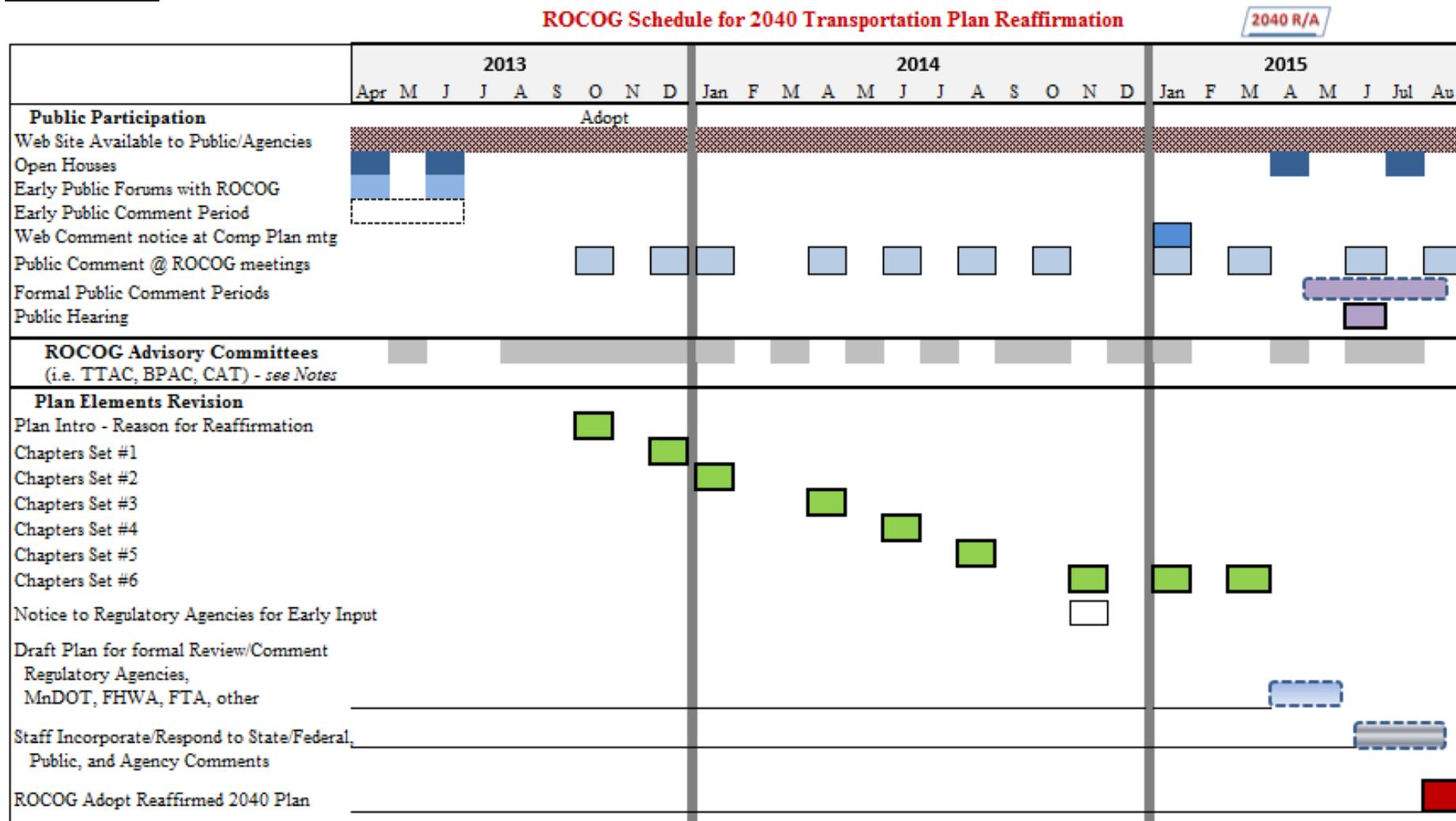
Federal planning guidelines encourage the use of a proactive public involvement process to develop and adopt the long range transportation plan. ROCOG's 2013 Public Involvement Policy (PIP) includes these key elements:

- To involve the community in all planning, project development, or development of transportation services for the citizens of this community;
- To provide multiple methods for citizens to become involved in transportation planning efforts that are convenient for the citizenry and tailored to the level of interest exhibited by citizens;
- To make information available to the citizens of the community on both broad and specific planning issues including citizen involvement opportunities that are available. ROCOG will seek to provide this information in a manner that can be easily accessed and understood.
- To seek broad-based community consensus on transportation plans by involving and listening to the views of citizen representatives and other divergent interests and reflecting those interests in adopted plans.

During this Plan Reaffirmation planning process, efforts were made to make information available through a number of avenues, including the Rochester-Olmsted Planning Department; the Rochester Library system, the web pages of ROCOG, the City of Rochester, and Olmsted County, and upon request by individuals. ROCOG also utilizes local media such as the Rochester Post Bulletin to advertise availability of information and meetings. Further, ROCOG staff interacts regularly with the Rochester Neighborhood Associations, the Diversity Council, the United Way of Olmsted County, Olmsted County Public Health educators, and the Olmsted County Community Action Program. Interpreter services are provided on request for individuals who request such accommodations.

The timeline illustration (Figure 1-6) shows the Plan Development Process used to prepare the Reaffirmation of the 2040 ROCOG Plan. Significant emphasis was placed on both public and agency involvement as well as coordination with other major planning processes occurring in the community (see Figure 1-1 on a previous page).

Figure 1-6



Notes: ROCOG = Rochester Olmsted Council of Governments, TTAC = Transportation Technical Advisory Committee
 BPAC = Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee, CAT = Citizen Advisory on Transit

ROCOG uses a multi-faceted strategy of public involvement. The major elements of the public involvement plan for this planning work included:

1. Public Forums. Two evening forums were held at the start of the process to provide an opportunity to discuss all of the transportation modes as well as related issues/topics. Invitations were sent to all elected officials and planning commission members from each jurisdiction in the county, with postings of meeting notices at all city & township halls for the general public. Newspapers and the local TV stations also notified the public of the meetings and notices were sent to neighborhood groups and other civic groups. The focus areas during each public forum were:

First Public Forum (April, 2013):

- a. Streets & Highways
- b. Bridges & Freight movement

Second Public Forum (June, 2013):

- c. Non-Motorized Travel
- d. Public Transit & Destination Medical Center legislation considerations

A summary of the notices, etc. of public input opportunities is provided in Appendix B. Appendix C contains the discussion of specific public questions and public input in general.

2. Public Open Houses. Three Open Houses were held throughout this planning process to give the public the opportunity to view draft multi-modal maps and view presentation materials of the data gathered as of that point in the reaffirmation process. Comments were solicited both verbally from participants and on comment cards. The local media were also invited along with ROCOG Board members and other related ROCOG committee's members. The first two open houses were held immediately prior to the Public Forums as mentioned above. The third open house was held on April 22, 2015.
3. Related Survey research:
Because the Rochester Comprehensive Plan is being updated concurrently with the ROCOG Reaffirmation work, transportation research questions were included in the survey research done for the Comprehensive Plan. This survey research was mainly in the form of web site public input and community meetings run by the consultants and planning department staff. ROCOG staff contact information was also readily available on the web site for further input or question/answer opportunities during the entire reaffirmation planning process.

4. ROCOG Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) worked with staff on development of Chapter 7 having to do with non-motorized systems planning. This is the 2nd Plan development process where BPAC has provided input to the development of the Long Range Plan. BPAC is also proactive in reaching out through community forums and workshops to provide a venue for community discussion on issues of importance related to non-motorized travel in the community.
5. ROCOG Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) worked with staff in the development of the Plan's chapters having to do with roadway network development, safety, system management and operations, and financing of the long range plan recommendations.
6. ROCOG Policy Board. As part of an initial agreement, the Board met on their regular schedule throughout the long range plan reaffirmation process. They commented on summaries of the draft plan chapters as they were developed, and provided input and direction when needed.
7. Rochester Citizens Advisory on Transit Committee (CAT). Staff met with this group prior to the early public forums and three more times throughout the planning process. In addition to these specific activities, the City of Rochester's Transit Manager and members of CAT are proactive in working with social service agencies and at the neighborhood level to investigate the transportation needs of environmental justice populations. The Rochester transit service attempts to provide services that meet the transportation needs of the disabled and low-income through fixed route public transit and the ADA paratransit services.
8. Public Comment Period & Public Hearing: A 45 day public comment period occurred beginning April 1, 2015 as part of the review of the final draft plan. Copies of the plan were available at the local public library, the planning offices, and on-line. Resource agencies were also given notice of this comment period for their review. A formal public hearing was held at the conclusion of the Public Comment period to provide interested stakeholders an opportunity to address any issues or concerns with ROCOG and ROCOG staff.
9. Reaffirmation of the 2040 Plan: Formal action to reaffirm the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan occurred on August 19 of 2015. Following that action, the full plan was posted on-line and print copies of the plan will be made available upon request.

Resource Agency Consultation

ROCOG works with resource agencies on plans and projects to ensure that the most up-to-date resource inventory and program information is considered during the development of areawide land use plans and transportation system plans.

Consideration of environmental resources plays a key role in development of the land use plans, including designation of urban growth areas and resource protection areas that undergird the system planning for transportation that ROCOG conducts. ROCOG is involved in this land use planning effort and through those efforts seeks to gather meaningful input relevant to the transportation planning process that leads to the development of this long range transportation plan.

Appendix D summarizes the various consultation and coordination efforts that were

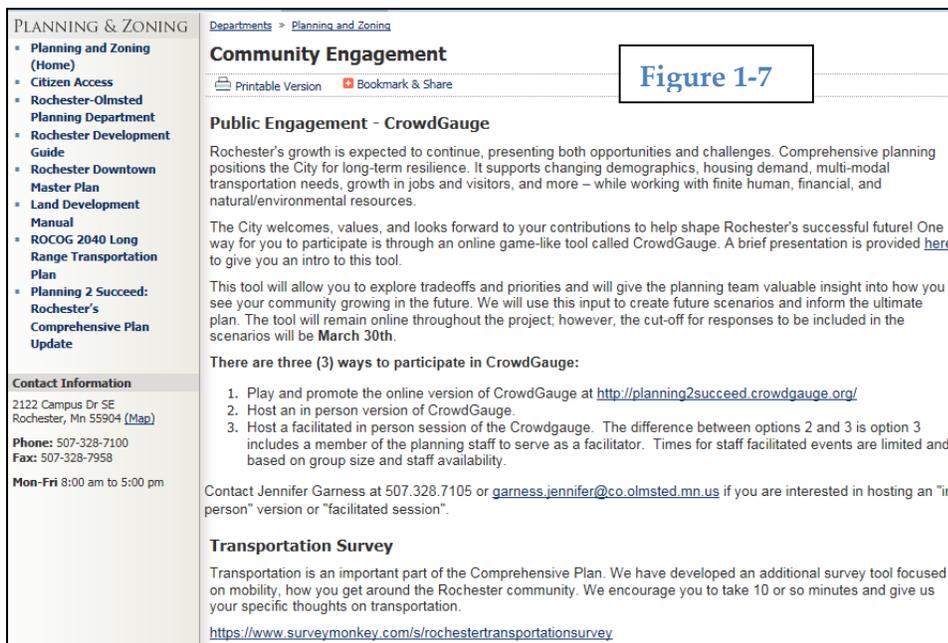


Figure 1-7

conducted during development of the Plan reaffirmation. As mentioned earlier, some public input for the ROCOG planning effort was included with other planning efforts, such as shown in Figures 1-7 & 1-8.

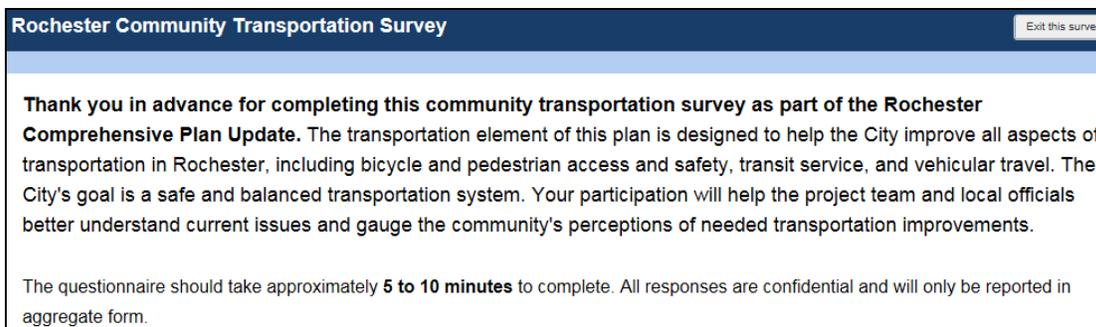


Figure 1-8