



TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS

A Publication of Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission



Winter
2006

The New Federal Surface Transportation Bill

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)

Surface Transportation Act

The federal surface transportation act (for highways, highway safety and transit) is important to central Ohio because federal funds help to pay for a large portion of the highway, transit and bicycling-related projects in the region. The multi-year transportation act and annual appropriations from Congress set overall funding levels for different programs, and establish other policies and priority areas.

Transportation acts can be very controversial, which may result in long delays before they are approved. This happened with the current transportation act, SAFETEA-LU, which was enacted on August 10, 2005, almost two years after TEA-21, the previous act, expired on September 30, 2003.



Available Funding

Most of the programs included in the transportation act are funded by the federal Highway Trust Fund (established in 1956), which receives revenue from the federal gasoline and diesel taxes (last increased in 1993). The federal government receives the funds and then redistributes them to the states through major federal funding programs and for special projects called earmarks. As part of this, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration set overall guidelines for and oversee the use of the funds.

SAFETEA-LU includes a significant increase in funding over the previous transportation act. Due to various factors, however, these funds may not be fully available and Ohio and other states may not receive the amount of funding anticipated. The full implementation of SAFETEA-LU may not be possible before the September 2009 expiration.

New Programs

SAFETEA-LU continues many existing programs, often with some modifications, and also establishes new priority areas and programs. Of the changes that may be locally important are:

- A new emphasis on highway safety planning includes a new highway safety improvement program. States are required to develop and implement a highway safety plan.
- A new Safe Routes to School program includes funding for infrastructure, informational and enforcement activities.
- Expanded requirements to consider environmental issues within the planning process, and a streamlining of the environmental process for transportation projects.
- Expanded consultation requirements within planning to include a broader range of agencies. Also, public participation requirements are expanded.
- A new requirement to develop a plan to better coordinate transit with human services transportation.

Earmarks

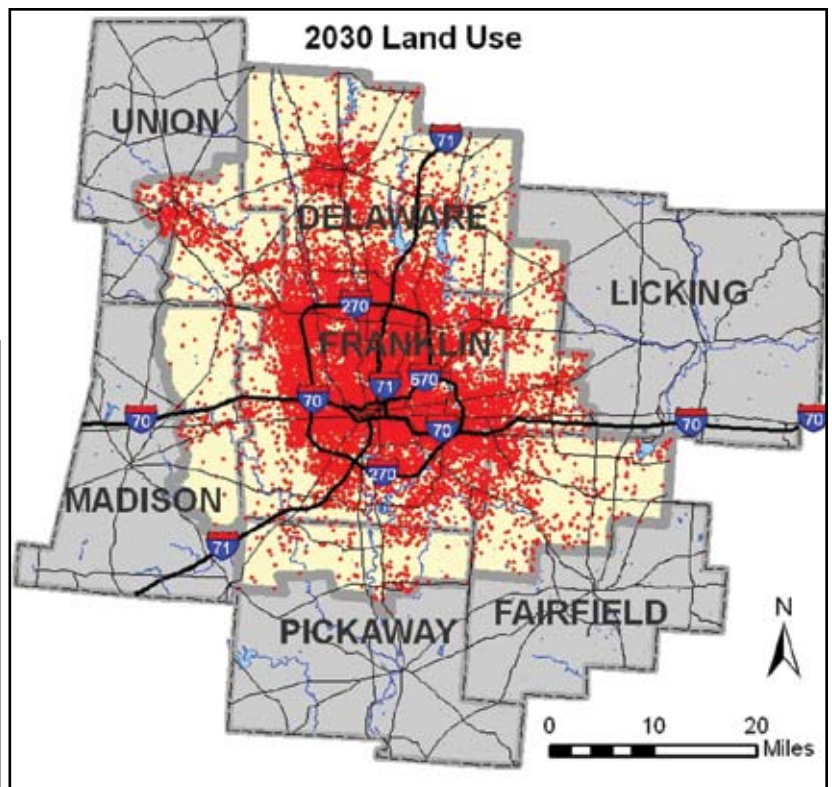
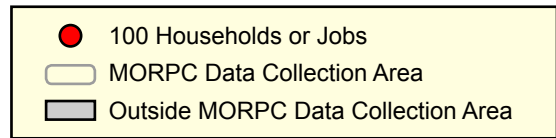
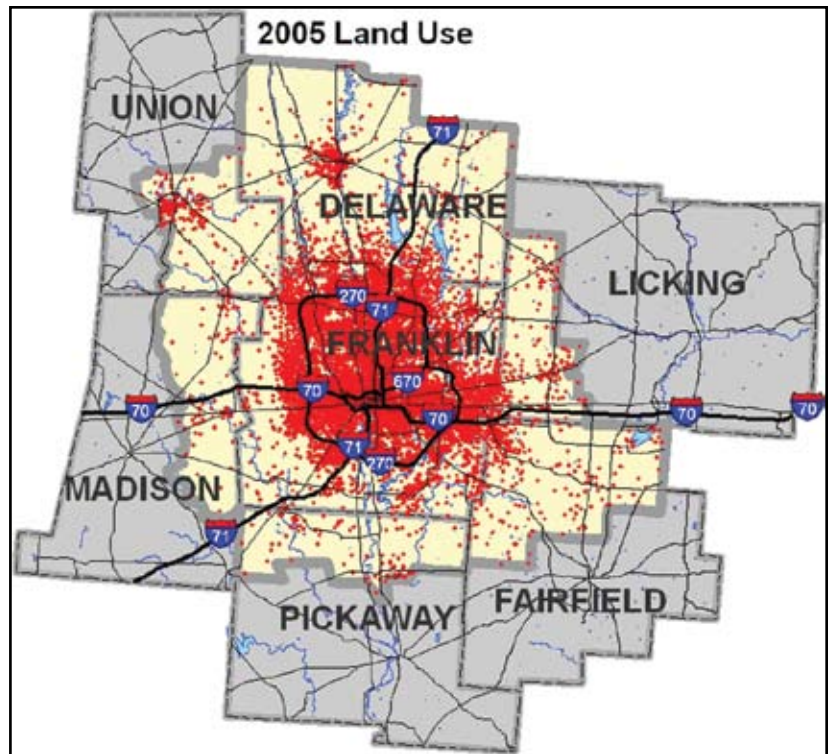
SAFETEA-LU also includes over 6,000 projects specifically identified for funding, or “earmarks,” by members of Congress. Of these, 33 are in the central Ohio area (see esource.morpc.org November 2005 issue for listing).

Long-Range Land Use Forecasting

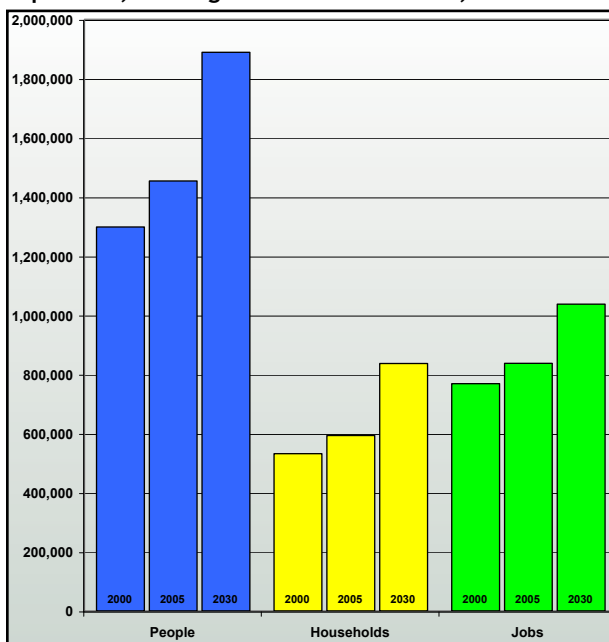
An integral part of creating the Transportation Plan is the Long-Range Land Use Forecast. Forecasts are made for Franklin and Delaware counties, and parts of the adjacent counties. This is the area for which MORPC prepares future traffic estimates. Population and employment data were updated from 2000 to 2005 based on new residential construction and employer information files, and projections were made for the planning horizon year 2030. The area added 155,000 people and 68,000 jobs from 2000 to 2005. An additional 435,000 people and 200,000 jobs are expected by 2030.

Projecting how the region will look more than two decades from now is a complex process. MORPC uses county population forecasts developed by the state of Ohio to determine future population and employment, and uses a land use model to allocate the projected population, households, and jobs across the central Ohio region. MORPC works with local communities to understand future development goals and objectives, gathers current development information, and collects local land use plans so that the regional land use forecasts are reflective of local land use planning activities. The forecasts are shared with local planners for input and comments.

Environmental issues, economic development activities, and access to infrastructure are all considered in the projections. Some plans, such as the Darby Creek Accord, currently in



Population, Housing and Job Growth 2000, 2005 & 2030



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development include protecting environmentally sensitive areas. There are cooperative development agreements between communities in the US 33 southeast corridor, southern Delaware and northern Pickaway counties. The planned Rickenbacker Intermodal yard in northern Pickaway County and the SR 161 freeway extension to Granville will impact future development patterns.

The majority of new development is primarily expected for the area outside the I-270 outerbelt. However, downtown Columbus is projected to continue to add new employment, especially in the Arena District where a new baseball park is proposed, and at the south end where a new county courthouse is planned. New growth along the US 23, US 33 and SR 161 corridors will continue to bridge the gaps between Columbus and the communities in adjacent counties.

Maps and an explanation of the method used in developing the forecasts are on the MORPC website at transportation.morpc.org. Contact Nancy Reger at nreger@morpc.org or Matt LaMantia at mlamantia@morpc.org for more information.



Information on MORPC studies or programs can be presented to your organization or group. Call Bernice Cage at 614-233-4157 or email bcage@morpc.org to schedule a presentation. Draft and final transportation documents are available at MORPC, 285 East Main Street, public libraries and on line at <http://transportation.morpc.org>.

Update on Major Transportation Studies

I-70/I-71 South Innerbelt Study - In February ODOT narrowed the alternatives to one on the east leg. On the south leg, ODOT has narrowed the alternatives down to two but is still in discussions with Columbus on the possible Grand Boulevard (a third option). These will undergo further analysis in 2006. Go to www.dot.state.oh.us/7071study for more information.

North Central Outerbelt Study - ODOT is continuing the detailed design of the improvements of the I-270 interchanges at SR 315 and US 23, and on US 23 north of I-270. A public meeting on environmental issues was held March 16, 2006. Improvements at the I-71 interchange will begin this spring. Go to www.dot.state.oh.us/i-270 for more information.

I-270/US 33 Northwest Freeway Study - The study team is developing and analyzing new interchange configurations along the corridor. The concepts and the draft strategic plan will be available in May. An Open House is scheduled for May 9, 2006. Go to <http://I270-US33.morpc.org> for more information.

North Corridor Transit Project - COTA continues the development of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). It is anticipated that a Locally Preferred Alternative will be selected by late summer 2006. See back cover for a more complete update. Go to www.cotanctp.com for more information.

Far East Freeway Study - ODOT is finalizing the documentation of the concepts examined and the strategic plan. It will hold an open house this spring. It is also beginning the development of more detailed configurations for the I-270, Brice Road and SR 256 interchanges. Go to www.i-70.org for more information.

I-71 South/Grove City Major Investment Study - The study team is continuing its examination and recommendations for the I-71 corridor from I-270 to the Franklin/Pickaway County line. For more information contact Grove City at 614-277-1100.

I-270 South Major Investment Study - ODOT is studying improvements to the last four-lane stretch of I-270 between US 23 and I-71 in southern Franklin County including the two interchanges. Initial concepts are expected to be available in early 2006. For more information contact ODOT District 6 at 800-372-7714.



614-645-PAVE
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road construction information.

North Corridor Transit Project

COTA continues the development of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the North Corridor Transit Project (NCTP). The DEIS will outline the potential benefits and impacts of the proposed project including mode alternatives, alignment options, station locations, vehicle maintenance facility sites, and other elements.

In the build options, three modal alternatives will be evaluated: Bus Rapid Transit, Light-Rail Transit and Streetcar. Each mode will be compared against a no-build alternative. In addition, the project will identify three alignment alternatives in the mid-corridor that would transition the service from the railroad corridor at 18th Avenue to High Street north of I-670 as well as potential extensions north into Delaware County and south into the Brewery District. Station locations will be identified for each alignment and will be presented in the DEIS.

After the analysis has been completed on all the alternatives, COTA will present the findings, including a potential Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), to the public for comments and suggestions before a recommended LPA is selected. It is anticipated that an LPA will be selected by late summer 2006.

COTA continues its efforts to visit community and neighborhood groups to provide an update on the status of the NCTP and solicit comments. The public is encouraged to contact the project team via info@cotanctp.com, toll-free 866-724-5268 or by mail, 1600 McKinley Avenue, Columbus, OH 43222.

Dates to Remember

Date	Time	Meeting	Location
April 3	5:30 p.m.	CAC Meeting	MORPC
April 5	9:00 a.m.	TAC Meeting	MORPC
April 27	10:00 a.m.	Policy Meeting	*
May 8	5:30 p.m.	CAC Meeting	MORPC
May 10	9:00 a.m.	TAC Meeting	MORPC
May 18	1:30 p.m.	Policy Meeting	MORPC
May 30	5:30 p.m.	CAC Meeting	MORPC
May 31	9:00 a.m.	TAC Meeting	MORPC
June 8	1:30 p.m.	Policy Meeting	MORPC

*The Columbus Convention Center
Visit <http://calendar.morpc.org> to see a complete listing of meetings and agendas.

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