

# 1. BACKGROUND – The MPO & The LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

## The MPO & The Long-Range Transportation Plan

### What is an MPO

In 1974, the U.S. Congress amended the Federal Aid Highway Act, which mandated that all urbanized areas having a population of 50,000 or more designate a single agency to administer federal transportation funds. The agencies that were established were called Metropolitan Planning Organizations. These organizations were to provide a transportation planning process for local, state and federal officials. Today, there are more than 300 MPOs across the country, including the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council (ITCTC), the MPO for the Ithaca-Tompkins County area. The ITCTC was created in 1992 after the Ithaca Urbanized area reached 50,000 population in the 1990 census.

### What is the Long-Range Transportation Plan

The regulations that guide the operation of all MPOs indicate that the transportation planning process must include the development of a transportation plan covering a 20-year planning horizon – the **Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)**. The ITCTC Long-Range Transportation Plan needs to be updated every five years. The first ITCTC LRTP was developed in 1995. The 2030 LRTP is the third update since the original.

Federal guidelines state the following basic direction for long-range transportation plans:

*“The transportation plan shall include both long-range and short-range strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand.”*

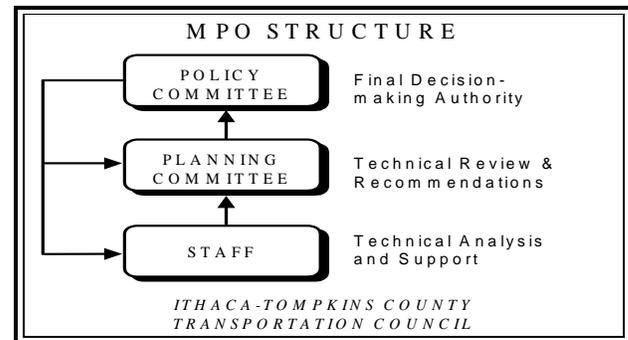
### ITCTC Organizational Structure

As the designated MPO for the Ithaca metropolitan area, the *ITCTC* is responsible for conducting a transportation planning process that is *“continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive”*. In order to achieve this objective, the *ITCTC* is structured at three levels.

The **Transportation Policy Committee** is the final MPO decision-making authority and is composed of the primary elected official from each member government. Cornell University, the New York State Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration and Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) and the other local government in Tompkins County are also represented on the Policy Committee.

The **Transportation Planning Committee** is responsible for coordinating and managing the area's transportation planning activities and providing technical advice to the Policy Committee. The Planning Committee is composed primarily of lead technical staff members from the member entities and local transit operators.

The **Central Staff** is responsible for performing the administrative and technical services necessary to operate the MPO. The efforts of the Central Staff are supplemented by the "in-kind services" of various participants in the MPO process.



The MPO holds a series of meetings during each calendar year that are open to the public and where the public may opine on issues taken up by the Committees. The Policy and the Planning Committees meet alternately during the year, holding two joint committee meetings in June and December where both are present.

The core functions that the MPO must carry out include developing and maintaining both a long Range Transportation Plan and a Transportation Improvement Program of transportation planning and capital projects. During the process of developing these planning documents the MPO informs the public of the activities and encourages their participation

The operations and procedures of the ITCTC are guided by the Unified Operations Plan, originally adopted by formal resolution in August, 1992 and updated in May 2000. This document specifies that the Transportation

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Planning Committee is responsible for development of the Comprehensive Long-Range Transportation Plan.

### **Public Involvement**

In this 2030 update of the Long Range Transportation Plan, the Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation Council will describe the vision for the transportation systems in Tompkins County taking into account the expressed views of residents, transit users, bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists concern for the environment and the quality of life in their communities.

In the broadest sense, transportation in its many forms affects our common future and what that our community will be like as it evolves. The LRTP looks at a developmental path that makes strategic choices, which have a positive impact on the overall quality of life. The LRTP assumes the position of reducing the negative impacts of transportation on the immediate environment and seeks to involve the public in participating in making choices that contribute towards improving the quality of life in Tompkins County.

Through a series of public meetings, printed materials, media outreach and public presentations, the Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation County engaged the public and solicited comments and reactions on key components of the LRTP update. The intent was to gather comments on the public's thinking on a transportation system that:

1. Includes all modes.
2. Will be safe, convenient, and efficient.
3. Serve and enhance existing land use and planned growth.
4. Sustain the quality of the environment and enhance our communities.
5. Be financially feasible.
6. Provide access and connectivity with diverse land uses and modes.
7. Be maintained through local officials and citizens participating in transportation decision-making.