The 2030 RTP recommends over a thousand new highway lane miles, including two new freeways. East-west travel in the urbanized area is quickly becoming a problem and is slated for extensive transportation upgrades in the form of new and widened arterial streets, freeways and transit lines.

As the urban area develops, it is expected that public transit will become a major element of transportation facility expansion similar to other larger urban areas across the country. Densely packed transportation corridors, especially area freeways, often suffer from stop and go traffic due to high automobile volume that overwhelms the available capacity. Fixed guideway and especially rail transit are very effective in dealing with these peak hour loads since they typically carry larger volumes of passengers and require less land use changes.

The “Vision” was based on a number of adopted growth principles including:

- Encouraging a balance of jobs and housing in a region to reduce travel distances;
- The development of town centers around transit oriented developments;
- Promoting infill prior to opening new areas to development; and
- Encouraging contiguous growth to reduce infrastructure costs.

These growth principles, along with others, became the foundation of the 2030 RTP. Transportation improvements recommended by the 2030 RTP were then tailored to enhance the “Vision” in order to make it a reality.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The 2030 RTP was adopted only after an in depth public participation process that resulted in a number of revisions from early versions. This process included:

- Public meetings;
- Discussed with city mayors, county officials and state legislators;
- Careful evaluation of hundreds of citizen comments;
- Presentations to chambers of commerce, service clubs and professional associations;
- Early review by environmental groups;
- Outreach efforts to minority and disadvantaged groups; and
- Numerous discussions of the proposed 2030 RTP in area newspapers and on radio call-in shows; and
- A local, state and federal agency stakeholder group convened twice, first to evaluate needs and then to review the proposed 2030 RTP.

GROWTH IS THE CHALLENGE

Growth in population and travel demand has exceeded our ability to complete new and expanded highways and transit capacity. The current population of the Wasatch Front Region is approximately 1.5 million. That number will climb to 2.1 million by 2030, a 40% increase. In addition, travel demand is increasing even faster than population. Therefore, the 2030 RTP is an attempt to maximize the value of the transportation funding we do have through the implementation of a balanced approach which offers alternative transportation choices to the traveling public including programmed improvements for mass transit, highways, bicycles and pedestrians.

BALANCE OF HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT NEEDED

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2030 RTP PART OF A STATEWIDE PLAN

The 2030 RTP is now part of an integrated statewide unified long range transportation plan. It has been carefully coordinated with the other area metropolitan planning organizations, the Utah Transit Authority and the Utah Department of Transportation. Involvement of these entities and others at the earliest stages of the 2030 RTP ensured coordination among the various agencies and common assumptions in financial and growth estimates. Cooperation included the use of a single region wide computer model to forecast future travel demand and areas of likely congestion.

TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS

Public transit is an integral part of the 2030 RTP. Major transit improvements include:

- Continued growth in regular bus and paratransit service;
- 96 miles of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service (BRT is bus service running, partially at least, in dedicated bus lanes);
- 34 miles of light rail transit extensions to Draper, Midvale, West Jordan and South Jordan, to West Valley City, to the International Airport, to Sugar House, and to a downtown Salt Lake City loop; and
- Construction of a 44 mile long commuter rail line from Salt Lake City to Provo.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Highway improvements in the 2030 RTP include:

- Construction of approximately 1,070 highway lane miles;
- 2 new freeways–Mountain View Corridor and conversion of the southern (east/west) portion of the Bangerter Highway into a freeway;
- Widening of I-15 in Davis County and I-80 in Salt Lake County;
- The completion of the northern portion of the Legacy Highway in Davis and Weber Counties;
- Heavy emphasis on west-east improvements; and
- Purchasing corridors for transportation facilities to be constructed at some future date.

INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

The 2030 RTP proposes to continue the investment in modern technologies to improve the efficiency and safety of travel.

- The WFRIC, UDOT, and UTA have invested heavily in the use of cameras, fiber optics, traffic sensors, traffic signal coordination and variable message signs. This has made Highway and transit information available to the traveling public through traffic cameras on the Commuter Link website, the 511 telephone traffic information service and next train arrival times. Such investments will continue.

NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

Bicycle and pedestrian pathways and other non-motorized transportation facilities are receiving greater emphasis in transportation planning. The 2030 RTP recommends that hundreds of miles of new bicycle and pedestrian lanes be constructed. Recommendations include:

- Supporting the Regional Bicycle Plan for Salt Lake, Davis and Weber Counties; and
- Ensuring that when roads are improved, appropriate bicycle and pedestrian lanes are constructed as well.

The Regional Council, in partnership with the Mountainland Association of Governments and Envision Utah, engaged in a visioning process for growth and development along the Wasatch Front urban area. After an elaborate public involvement process, several growth scenarios were prepared and evaluated for cost effectiveness, environmental impacts and other factors. Based on recommendations from community leaders and the public and after careful review of the benefits and costs of each alternative, the Wasatch Choices 2040 “Vision” was adopted.

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The Regional Council is aware that new, more stringent air quality standards are in the process of being adopted. The new regulations will emphasize the measurement of PM-2.5 in addition to PM-10 and lower levels of ozone. Based on the results of the EPA model, Mobile 6.2, it is anticipated that the Wasatch Front Region will continue to meet all federal air quality standards. The new ozone standard has yet to be established, therefore, no graph is available. The Regional Council is committed to working with the Utah Division of Air Quality to ensure that the Region will continue to meet all federal air quality standards.

The 2030 RTP will have to be reduced resulting in a corresponding increase in future funding available for capital construction. Unfortunately, even with these massive investments in transportation development by the Utah State Legislature and the taxpayers, additional revenue will be needed to make the 2030 RTP a reality. Estimating future funding available for capital construction is a critical element of the 2030 RTP inasmuch as the total cost of planned projects may not exceed reasonably anticipated revenues. Financial assumptions for the 2030 RTP include a ¼ cent increase in the local sales tax or equivalent for the construction and operation of transit and highway facilities beginning in 2007 in Davis and Weber counties along with additional sales tax increases in future years; a 5 cents per gallon increase in the Utah State fuel tax in 2016 and a similar increase in 2026. Without these increases, the projects within the 2030 RTP will have to be reduced resulting in a corresponding increase in congestion. Total projected construction costs for highways over the life of the 2030 RTP are $14.4 billion. Transit construction costs are expected to be $4.5 billion.

Regional Transportation Plan now available at wfrc.org