

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Transportation Planning History

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 created the requirement for urban transportation planning, largely in response to the construction of the Interstate Highway System and the planning of routes through and around urban areas. This was the first legislative mandate requiring planning as a condition to receiving federal transportation funds. The Act required that transportation projects in urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population be based on a continuing, comprehensive transportation planning process undertaken cooperatively by the states and local governments also known as the “3C” (continuing, comprehensive and cooperative) planning process.

Two features of the act were significant with respect to the development of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). First, it called for a planning process in urban areas on a regional rather than a city level, and second it called for the process to be carried out cooperatively by the states and local communities. At the time, qualified planning agencies were lacking in many urban areas. Therefore, the Bureau of Public Roads (predecessor to the Federal Highway Administration) required the creation of entities that would be capable of carrying out the required transportation planning process. Hence MPOs quickly came into being due to the rapid growth of the highway system and the federal financing of the planning process.

Later transportation legislation, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), and its successor, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21), strengthened the role of the MPOs, required stakeholder involvement, encouraged a multi-modal approach to transportation planning and identified specific “planning factors”. In 2005, the President signed into law the Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) with guaranteed funding for highways, highway safety and public transportation representing the largest surface transportation investment in the Nation’s history at the time. SAFETEA-LU featured a strong fundamental core formula program with emphasis on targeted investment. In 2012, the President signed a new transportation bill replacing SAFETEA-LU with Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, or MAP-21. A new requirement of MAP-21 was that it mandated MPO’s and state transportation departments to create performance measures in its planning programs. MAP-21 also impacted the funding category of Transportation Enhancement converting it to Transportation Alternative dollars.

In 2015, President Obama replaced MAP-21 with Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). Under this act, performance measures are still followed as in MAP-21 but includes two new provisions including penalties for state’s freight performance measures as well as providing shorten timeframes for States and MPOs to make progress towards meeting performance measure targets. Shortened project delivery is emphasized under the act.

In 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) into law. IIJA makes a once-in-a-generation investment in infrastructure and transportation, and includes \$550 Billion in federal infrastructure investment. The provisions include new formula and discretionary highway programs, the largest federal investment in public transit, and largest federal investment in passenger rail since the creation of Amtrak.

All MPOs are required to produce three documents: 1.) A fiscally constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan to address projects, programs and policies for at least a twenty-year timeframe, 2.) A four-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to identify highway, transit and non-motorized improvements (bike, pedestrian etc.) which receive federal funding and 3.) An annual comprehensive Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) that determines the MPO's transportation planning activities annually.

## **1.2 What is a Long-Range Transportation Plan?**

The LRTP was developed cooperatively by the Erie Regional Planning Commission (ERPC) along with local, state, federal and private stakeholders to identify short-, mid-, and long-range transportation goals (see Chapter Nine) for the planning area. Some of the identified projects have been designated for federal funding, some are illustrative and have no cost or designated funding associated with them and some simply list the type of funding they (the municipality) plans to pursue to complete a desired project. The financial capacity analysis (see Chapter Ten) is a tool used to illustrate jurisdictional ability to finance and comply with the federal LRTP mandate of fiscal constraint. Planning efforts are guided by federal requirements of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the 1964 Title VI Civil Rights Act, and the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA).

The ERPC Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) also provides tools and strategies for the area's jurisdictions to work cooperatively enabling them to provide a well-maintained, integrated and accessible transportation system that efficiently moves people and goods (freight). It covers a 25-year timeframe and addresses all modes of transportation including air, bicycle, pedestrian, rail, road, transit and waterborne. The goal of the plan is to offer fiscally constrained planning initiatives and policy directives to preserve the infrastructure and improve the effectiveness of the area's metropolitan transportation system through the year 2050.

Running concurrent with the development of the ERPC long-range plan update, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) has been updating of their statewide long-range multi-modal transportation plan, Access Ohio 2050 (AO 2050). Similar to ERPC's long-range plan, the purpose of the document is to guide, inform, and support transportation policies and investments. While ERPC's long-range plan identifies the most critical transportation investments that expand and improve its regional transportation system, AO 2050 does the same but for the entire statewide transportation system. Even though regional needs could vary some from statewide needs (due to differing regional profiles and constituent needs) there are many transportation priorities shared by both the state and ERPC. Aligned priorities identified as the same between AO 2050 and ERPC's long-range plan include improving safety, efficiency and reliability, improving modal linking, and preservation of the existing system. These aligned priorities demonstrate the compatibility between the statewide long-range plan and ERPC long-range plan and are utilized in the development of this plan's goals and objectives (see Chapter 2).

## **1.3 Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Functions**

The Erie Regional Planning Commission is the designated MPO for the Sandusky-Port Clinton urbanized area (see Figure 1-3.2) which is comprised of all of Erie County, the eastern half of Ottawa County beginning at Bay and Erie Township, and the incorporated areas of the City of Vermilion in Lorain County. The MPO's primary role is to provide guidance and leadership on transportation and land use planning issues in the Sandusky-Port Clinton metropolitan area. A key goal is to focus the area's limited

transportation funding on projects that yield the greatest benefit and integrate with the existing transportation system. In addition, emphasis is placed on a regional approach to ensure that all government entities in the planning area have equal access to federal surface transportation funding. The MPO also conducts studies, develops plans/programs and submits projects for funding in the metropolitan area.

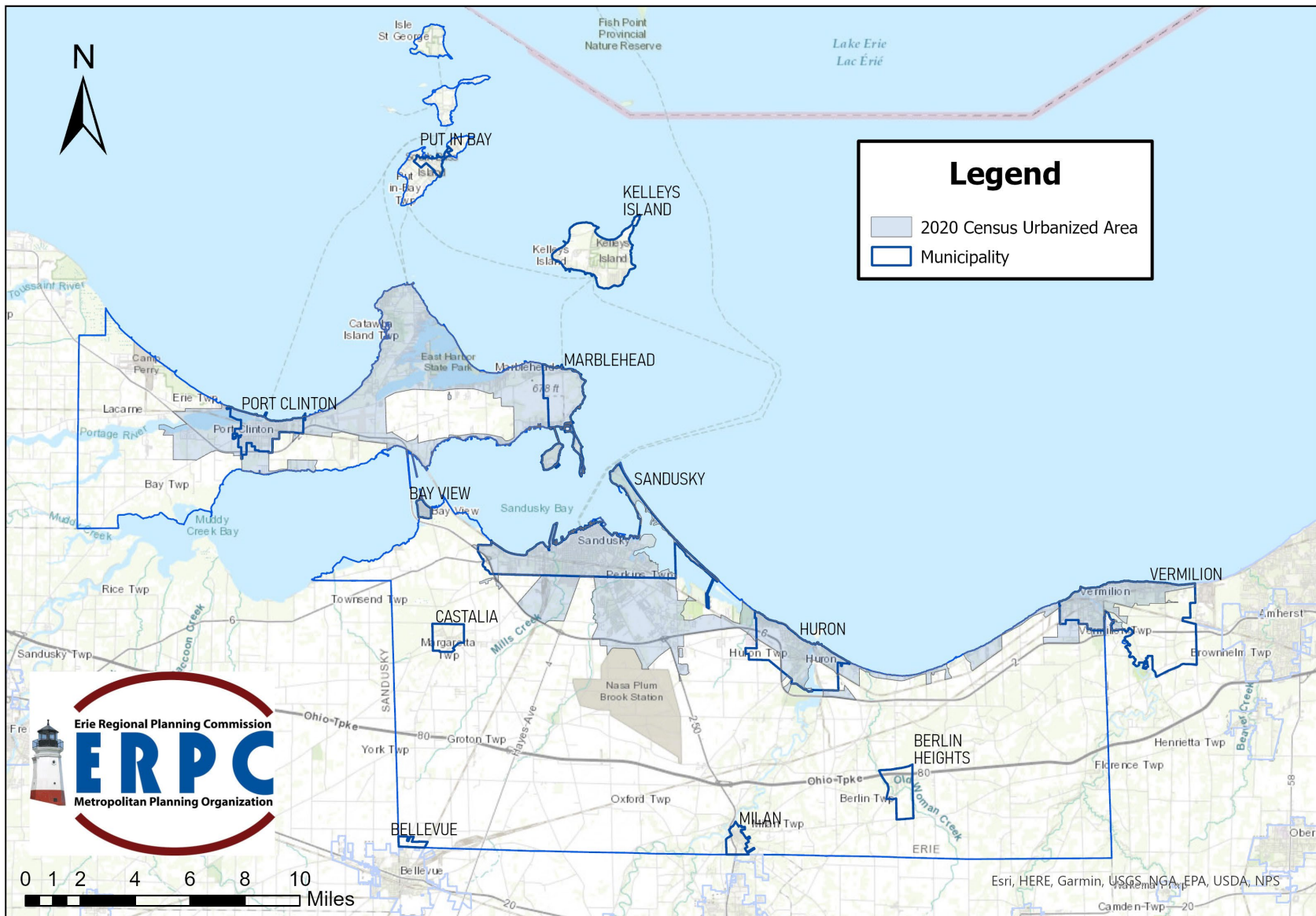
**Role and Structure:** In 2003, ODOT sent the required correspondence to formally establish the MPO in Erie County. The letter stated that the MPO would handle all federal transportation funds flowing through the MPO's planning area. A Policy Committee (more on this below) was established and designated to serve as the MPO while ERPC was designated to serve as administrative agents. In other words, ERPC would provide staff for the daily MPO operation and conduct the area's urban transportation planning process with the direction and guidance of the Policy Committee. During the 2010 Census, the MPO area was revealed to have a population of just under 50,000 people in the Sandusky urbanized area. Due to the support on the local, state and federal levels ERPC still maintains its designation as a MPO. Following the 2020 Census, the Sandusky urbanized area was expanded to include the City of Port Clinton in Ottawa County, and became the Sandusky-Port Clinton urbanized area. The MPO worked with Ottawa County officials to expand the metropolitan planning area, and in 2024 adopted an updated Prospectus detailing the new planning area and Policy Committee of the ERPC MPO.

The ERPC MPO Policy Committee is made up of local officials, operators of major modes of transportation and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). The committee was strengthened by the formation of a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to aid in the project review and the selection process. The TAC consists of members who work locally within the transportation system (such as engineers and planners) and can provide technical guidance to the Policy Committee members upon request.

To ensure greater public outreach and comments as a component of MPO projects a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was created in addition to a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). Additional subcommittees help engage and inform the TAC through public stakeholders, including the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Freight Advisory Committee. More on public involvement is discussed in Chapter Three.



**Figure 1-3.1: MPO Committees**



**Figure 1-3.2: ERPC MPO Planning Area**  
ERPC MPO 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan

## 1.4 Review of Planning Literature

While updating the LRTP, projects from the entire planning area were reviewed and considered. To obtain this information staff reviewed numerous planning studies when feasible to complement public outreach efforts. Below is a comprehensive list of documents that were reviewed. Synopses of these studies are provided in Appendix G. The plans have been summarized in regard to their relationship to transportation. It should be noted that although some of the studies go back a number of years, the recommendations are still relevant and have been incorporated into the LRTP 2050 five-year update.

**Table 1:4.1 Review of Previous Studies**

Title and Year	Type	Prepared By
Erie County Comprehensive Development Plan, 1995	Land Use Plan	ERPC
Erie County Thoroughfare Plan Update, 1995	Transportation Plan	Poggemeyer Design Group, Inc.
City of Vermilion Comprehensive Plan, 2000	Land Use Plan	ERPC
A Transportation and Land Use Analysis of the SR 250 Corridor, 2005	Corridor Study	Mannik and Smith Group, Inc. and Stilson Consulting Group
City of Huron Comprehensive Plan 2020, 2012	Land Use Plan	City Architecture
Perkins Township Comprehensive Plan, 2020	Land Use Plan	ERPC
Vermilion Township Comprehensive Plan, 2007	Land Use Plan	ERPC
Comprehensive Economic Development Study, 2008	Economic Development	ERPC
Sidewalk Inventory Study, 2013	Non-motorized Transportation	ERPC
Erie County Freight Plan, 2023, 2013	Transportation Study	ERPC/TranSystems/GDP Group
SR 60 Corridor Study, 2012	Corridor Study	Poggemeyer Design and the EDGE Group
Safe Routes to School Sandusky, 2023	School Travel Plan	Sandusky, ECHD, ODOT
Ohio Statewide Freight Plan, 2022	Statewide Transportation Plan	ODOT
Access Ohio 2045, Access Ohio 2050 (Draft)	Statewide Transportation Plan	ODOT
Walk.Bike.Ohio, 2021	Statewide Transportation Plan	ODOT
Ohio Maritime Plan (Draft, 2024)	Statewide Transportation Plan	ODOT
Erie County Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2014	Safety Plan	Erie County Emergency Management, URS
The Economic Impact of Tourism in Erie County, Ohio 2017	Economic Plan	Tourism Economics
Safe Routes to School Huron, 2015	School Travel Plan	ERPC

Safe Routes to School Perkins Township, 2015	School Travel Plan	ERPC
Long-Range Transportation Plan 2045	Long-Range Transportation Plan	ERPC
US 4 Safety Plan, 2015	Corridor Study	Poggemeyer Design Group
Strategic Plan City of Sandusky, 2016	Strategic Plan	City Architecture
Safe Routes to School Edison Schools, 2015	School Travel Plan	ERPC
Safe Routes to School Vermilion, 2016	School Travel Plan	ERPC
SR 4 Safety Study, 2017	Corridor Study	ODOT
Sandusky Bay Pathway, 2018	Pathway Plan	Environmental Design Group
US 6 Corridor Plan, 2019	Corridor Study	ODOT, TranSystems
Regional Road Safety Plan, 2020	Safety Study	ODOT, WSP Consultants
Erie County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2020	Non-motorized Transportation	ERPC
NEVI Infrastructure Deployment Plan	Statewide Transportation Plan	DriveOhio, ODOT
Sandusky 2018 Bicentennial Vision	Land Use Plan	City Architecture
Downtown Sandusky Master Plan	Land Use Plan	MKSK
Ottawa County Active Transportation Plan	Non-motorized Transportation	Poggemeyer Design Group