

Introduction

About this Plan

This document is the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the urbanized areas of York and Lancaster counties, South Carolina. It has been prepared by the Rock Hill - Fort Mill Area Transportation Study (RFATS), which is the agency responsible for regional transportation planning in this area. Federal law requires the preparation of this plan, and also specifies issues which the plan must consider.

The plan is multi-modal, covering highways, public transportation, freight, bicycle and pedestrian travel, as well as aviation. It includes a financial plan for transportation expenditures to 2045, as well as a congestion management process. The plan also takes social and environmental considerations into account, along with public involvement during the course of its preparation.

About RFATS

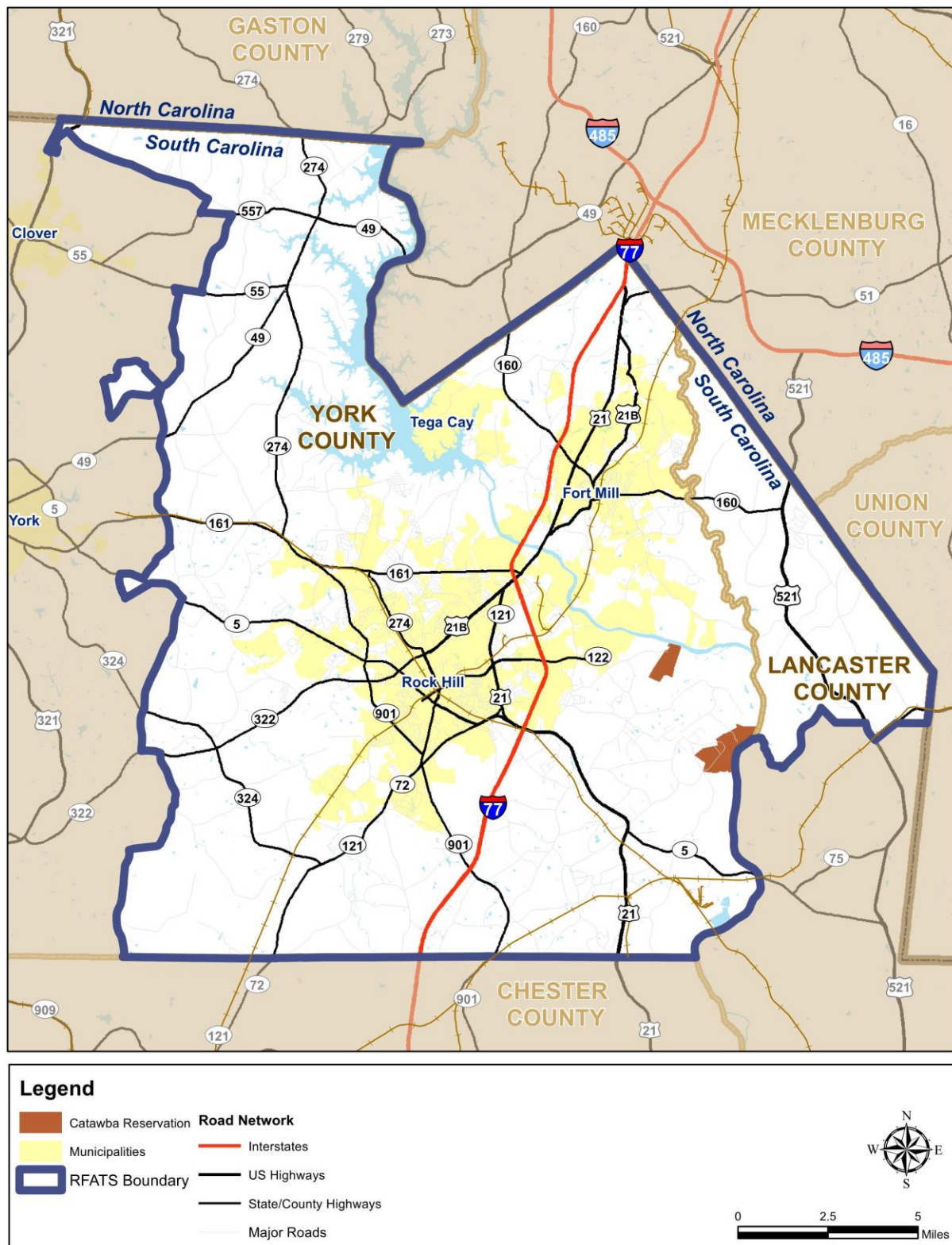
What is an MPO?

RFATS is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), one of more than 400 such agencies across the country that are responsible for regional transportation planning. In order to remain eligible for federal transportation funds, urbanized areas with a population of 50,000 or greater must maintain a formal metropolitan transportation planning process. The overall aim of these requirements is to ensure continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning for urban areas, and MPOs are central to that process. Each MPO is responsible for short- and long-range transportation planning for its region, as well as the programming of all federal transportation funds spent within the area.

Figure 1.1 shows the boundary of the area for which RFATS is responsible. Member communities of RFATS include the cities of Rock Hill and Tega Cay, the Town of Fort Mill, the unincorporated urban areas of York and Lancaster counties, and the Catawba Indian Nation.



Figure 1.1: RFATS Planning Area



The RFATS Planning Area

As shown in **Figure 1.1**, the Interstate 77 corridor runs through the heart of the RFATS planning area. The largest city in the region, Rock Hill, is 20 miles south of Charlotte and approximately 65 miles north of Columbia. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Rock Hill is now the fifth-largest city in South Carolina.

Nearby, I-85 connects the area to Greenville (to the west) and Atlanta (to the southwest). A major international airport (Charlotte Douglas) and intermodal freight yard are located just north of the planning area on the western edge of Charlotte, NC. To the south, one of the east coast's major ports in Charleston can be accessed via highway links along I-77 and I-26. Freight rail facilities broadly parallel I-77 regionally and run through downtown Rock Hill. One of the state's major river systems, the Catawba, flows through the area as well.

As described above, the RFATS planning area includes the cities of Rock Hill and Tega Cay, the Town of Fort Mill, the Catawba Indian Nation, the eastern urbanized portion of York County as well as the panhandle of Lancaster County – which essentially runs from the state line along US 521 down to Hwy 75 (Waxhaw Hwy). The planning area also includes the communities of Lake Wylie, Newport, Bethel, Lesslie and Catawba.

Formal regional transportation planning in the RFATS area began in the early 1960s. At that time, the planning process principally focused only on the eastern urbanized portion of York County – which was essentially Rock Hill. Since this time, RFATS has grown in size and population – as of 2015, the planning area included a population well over 200,000. This growth has led to increasing pressure on many parts of the transportation system, and further growth is projected to continue for the duration of the LRTP through 2045 – though the next ten years are expected to be among the strongest.

RFATS Organizational Structure

The planning process is guided by the RFATS Policy Committee, comprised of 12 voting members who represent each of the region's local governments, the Catawba Indian Nation, the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) Commission, as well as legislative representatives from the South Carolina House and Senate. The committee chair is selected annually on a rotating basis among local government members. The vice-chair also serves a one-year term and is selected by vote of the Policy Committee members.



Figure 1.2: RFATS Organizational Structure



The Technical Team includes staff from each of the municipalities, York and Lancaster counties, as well as SCDOT, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the Catawba Regional Council of Governments, and the Catawba Indian Nation. The RFATS Administrator serves as chair of the Technical Team.

RFATS also maintains a standing Citizens Advisory Committee which reviews and provides input on the development of programs and projects within the region. Members include representatives from the six RFATS communities and at-large members who represent persons traditionally underserved by the transportation system.

The Transportation Planning Process and the LRTP

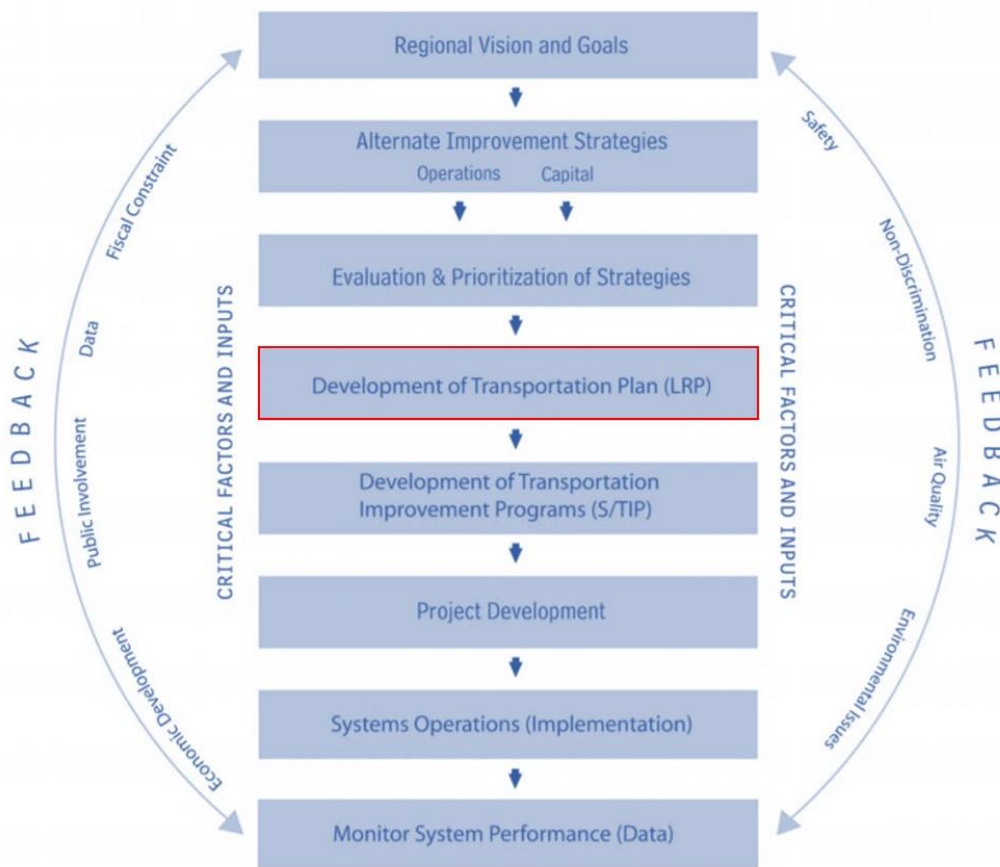
Figure 1.3 presents an overview of the major elements in the transportation planning process, including the development of the LRTP. As shown, the plan summarizes the priority “strategies” that have been identified to help meet regional transportation goals. These strategies include both capital projects and operations (such as roadway maintenance and public transit service). Once the long-range plan has been adopted, the near-term strategies receive funding for implementation by being included in the region’s Transportation Improvement Program, or TIP.

After a project has been included in the adopted TIP, the responsible agency may begin formal project development. This typically starts with confirming the purpose and need of the project, securing the necessary environmental agency approvals, and completing the design. If needed, right-of-way is then purchased and then construction begins. This process generally takes several years from planning to construction, particularly in the case of larger projects.

As the region implements strategies from the LRTP, RFATS will continue to monitor the performance of the area’s transportation system, as well as track the nature of transportation needs and demands.

The plan must be updated every four to five years. Any necessary changes in regional strategy can be made either through amending the current LRTP, or as part of the next plan update.

Figure 1.3 The Transportation Planning Process



From USDOT's *The Transportation Planning Process: Key Issues*