

1 Introduction

1.1 About this Plan

This document is the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the urbanized area of York County, South Carolina. It has been prepared by the Rock Hill - Fort Mill Area Transportation Study (RFATS), which is the local organization 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 2035, 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.

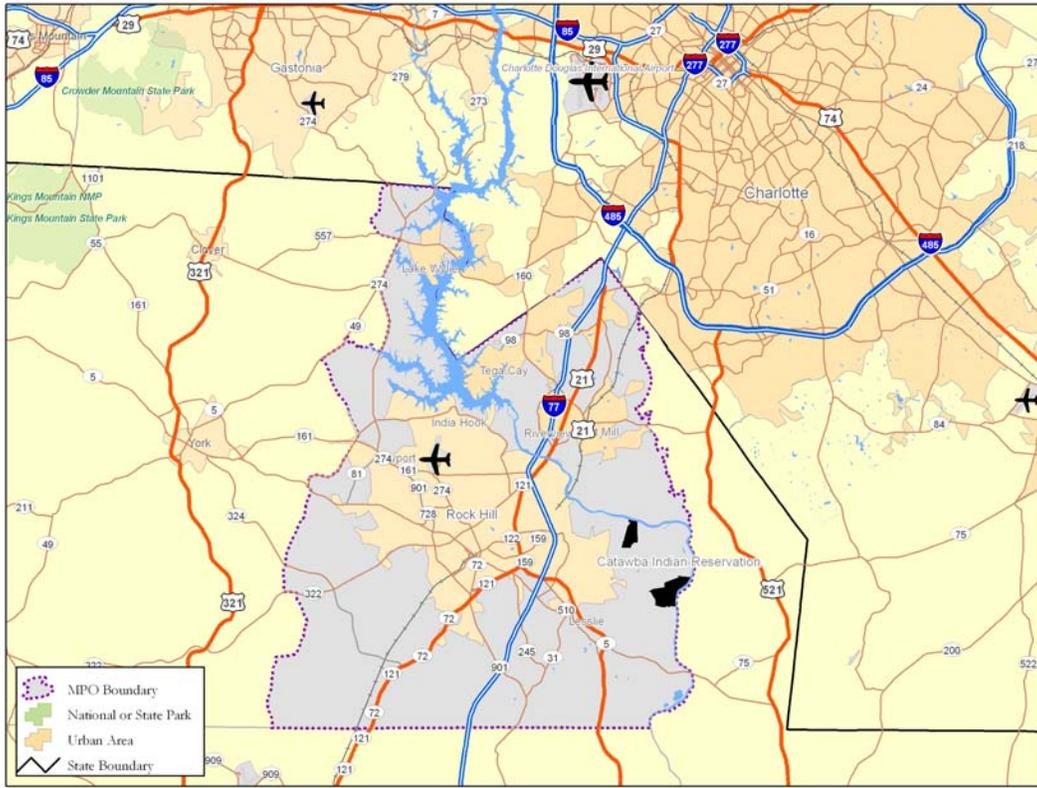
1.2 About the RFATS Metropolitan Planning Organization

RFATS is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). MPOs are local agencies that are responsible for regional transportation planning. In order to be part of the Federal transportation planning process and to receive Federal transportation funds, an urban area must have an MPO. Each MPO has a range of duties including the production of the LRTP for its area. The overall aim of these Federal requirements is to ensure continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning for urban areas, and MPOs are central to that process.



Figure 1.1 shows the RFATS Study Area within the greater Charlotte region. The member communities of RFATS include the cities of Rock Hill and Tega Cay, the Town of Fort Mill, the unincorporated urban areas of York County, and the Catawba Indian Nation.

Figure 1.1 The RFATS Study Area



1.3 About the RFATS Study Area

The RFATS Study Area is situated on the I-77 corridor. Its largest city, Rock Hill, is 20 miles south of Charlotte, North Carolina and approximately 65 miles north of Columbia, South Carolina, the state’s capital. The Census Bureau estimates that Rock Hill is now the fourth-largest City in South Carolina. Nearby, I-85 connects the area to Greenville, South Carolina and Atlanta, Georgia to the west. A major international airport is available to the community via the Charlotte/Douglas International Airport, as is one of the east coast’s major ports at Charleston via interstate highway links of 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 described above, the RFATS Study Area includes the cities of Rock Hill and Tega Cay, the Town of Fort Mill, and the Catawba Indian Nation. It also includes the unincorporated communities of Bethel, Lake Wylie, India Hook, Newport, Leslie and Catawba.

The regional transportation planning process in the RFATS Study Area began in the early 1960s, covering the eastern urban area of York County (at that time, essentially meaning Rock Hill). The RFATS Study Area has subsequently grown in size and population to encompass Tega Cay and Fort Mill, and in 2000 included over 119,000 people. This population growth has led to increasing pressure on parts of the transportation system, and the growth is expected to continue.



1.4 Required Planning Elements

Federal law specifies the elements and processes that must feed into each Long Range Transportation Plan. The law changes periodically. The most recent law is the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users ('SAFETEA-LU', pronounced 'Safety-Loo').

SAFETEA-LU requires each LRTP to:

- Cover a minimum 20-year period,
- Be updated at certain intervals (in the case of an air quality non-attainment area such as the RFATS Study Area, every four years),
- Be 'fiscally constrained' – that is, plan on the basis of likely funding levels rather than unlimited funding levels,
- Use up-to-date planning assumptions, and
- Identify major facilities that should function as an integrated regional system.

SAFETEA-LU also specifies the planning factors that must be addressed in the planning process.

1.5 SAFETEA-LU Planning Factors

(A) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity and efficiency.

This planning factor is achieved by identifying existing and future transportation needs and prioritizing those needs. The results of this process are shown in this LRTP. In addition, the potential for economic development and the impact on congestion are two of the statewide project ranking factors. RFATS is also coordinating transportation planning across the state line with Charlotte, a major metropolitan market with which it is economically integrated.

(B) Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

Safety is one of the criteria behind the selection of the statewide strategic corridors. More generally, although safety is not one of the statewide project ranking factors for highway projects, a number of the highly-ranked projects include safety elements.

As described in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Element, York County and the municipalities have adopted plans and policies that will increase the availability of supportive facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Indeed, considerable planning efforts have been made to develop these plans and policies, and the growth of the bicycle and sidewalk networks in recent years confirms a degree of success.

(C) Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

RFATS continues to work as part of the emergency management and homeland security framework for York County. This is described in more detail in the Security element.

(D) Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight.

This planning factor is achieved by identifying existing and future transportation needs and prioritizing those needs. The results of this process are shown in this plan. In addition, the impact on congestion is one of the statewide project ranking factors.

The planning process has recognized that increasing mobility and accessibility does not necessarily mean by highway alone. This is shown in the continuing attention to transit planning, as described in the Public Transportation element, as well as the funding of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and the encouragement of pedestrian and transit-oriented development patterns by member governments.

(E) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.

The SCDOT Environmental Screening process ensures that potential social and environmental conflicts are identified very early in a project's development. This assists in the selection of the most appropriate alignment, is beneficial to the public's quality of life, and helps to preserve the natural environment. RFATS' continuing transit planning efforts, as described in the Public Transportation element, confirm attention to potential measures that will conserve energy and improve the quality of life.

There are strong linkages between transportation plans and municipal comprehensive plans in the RFATS area. In all three municipalities, the comprehensive plans give transportation full consideration. There is considerable commonality of goals with the LRTP – for example, in acknowledging the need to improve facilities and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists.

(F) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.

RFATS has supported continuous planning efforts to achieve an efficient multi-modal LRTP. The existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities will be greatly improved and extended through past and current planning efforts. Transit planning work also takes account of the need for connectivity. For example, the recent Rock Hill-York County Alternatives Analysis resulted in a proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) line that links with feeder buses, Charlotte’s light rail system and park-and-ride facilities.

(G) Promote efficient system management and operation.

The LRTP incorporates a congestion management process that identifies potential system management and operational improvements. RFATS has the responsibility of pursuing cost-effective practices that will not only maintain the current transportation system, but will enhance its efficiency and operation through state-of-the-art measures. This task includes securing State and local funding for the support of such programs.

(H) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

This planning factor is achieved by establishing control measures that will protect existing transportation facilities and future corridors. An example of this measure is through the preservation of right-of-way for future corridors with the use of local land use and overlay ordinances. These key corridors and the associated rights-of-way are being protected from development, so that they can be added to the transportation system when the need arises.

1.6 The Transportation Planning Process and the LRTP

Figure 1.2 summarizes the transportation planning process in general terms.

This LRTP has been prepared in accordance with SAFETEA-LU requirements. It is an update of the previous plan (the 2030 LRTP) which was adopted in 2005.

Figure 1.2 The Transportation Planning Process

