

Congestion Management Process – 2013 Update

OVERVIEW OF THE DALLAS-FORT WORTH CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Traffic Congestion In The Dallas-Fort Worth Region

With the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) urban area as its center, the North Central Texas region plays an important role in the State of Texas, as well as the entire southwestern United States. The region provides critical air and ground transportation hubs for the movement of people and goods throughout the United States and internationally. Locally, these transportation systems support many high technology manufacturers and telecommunications firms, large retail and wholesale distribution centers, and a growing convention and tourism industry.

In 2010, the 12-county Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) had a population of approximately 6.5 million.¹ By the year 2035, these same 12 counties are forecasted to grow to 9.8 million residents. This growth represents a 45 percent increase in the population of North Central Texas over the next 22 years. Using population forecasts for 2013 and 2035, the total population of the MPA is projected to increase from 6,778,201 in 2013 to 9,833,378 in 2035. The rate of growth projected through 2035 is at a magnitude never before experienced in the DFW Metropolitan Area.

Urban activity in this area is supported by various ground transportation systems, including:

- 831 centerline miles of freeways
- 99 centerline miles of toll roads
- 75 miles of high occupancy vehicle lanes
- 2,395 miles of regional arterials
- 72 miles of light rail transit
- 56 miles of commuter rail transit

These systems will help alleviate a growing traffic congestion problem in the Metroplex. The rapid growth of the Dallas-Fort Worth region in the past decade has led to increasing transportation problems. A favorable business environment, tax advantages, and the availability of developable land continue to attract many businesses to the region. While growth has many benefits, the recent rate of growth has so overloaded the transportation system that available financial resources to improve transportation have not kept pace. The effects are now evident in increased traffic congestion and delay, and substandard air quality.

Congestion Management Process: A Management Solution

The Congestion Management Process (CMP) seeks a “management” solution to a growing traffic problem by targeting resources to operational management and travel demand reduction strategies. Although major capital investments are needed to meet the growing travel demand, the CMP also develops lower cost strategies that complement major capital recommendations. The result is a more efficient and effective transportation system, increased mobility, and safer travel.

Integrating a management approach into the provision of transportation services and infrastructure is a challenge. Traditional modeling and decision-making systems are biased to

¹ 2010 Census, www.census.gov

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the evaluation and implementation of capacity improvements. Tempering these systems with a congestion management approach offers opportunities for stretching transportation resources

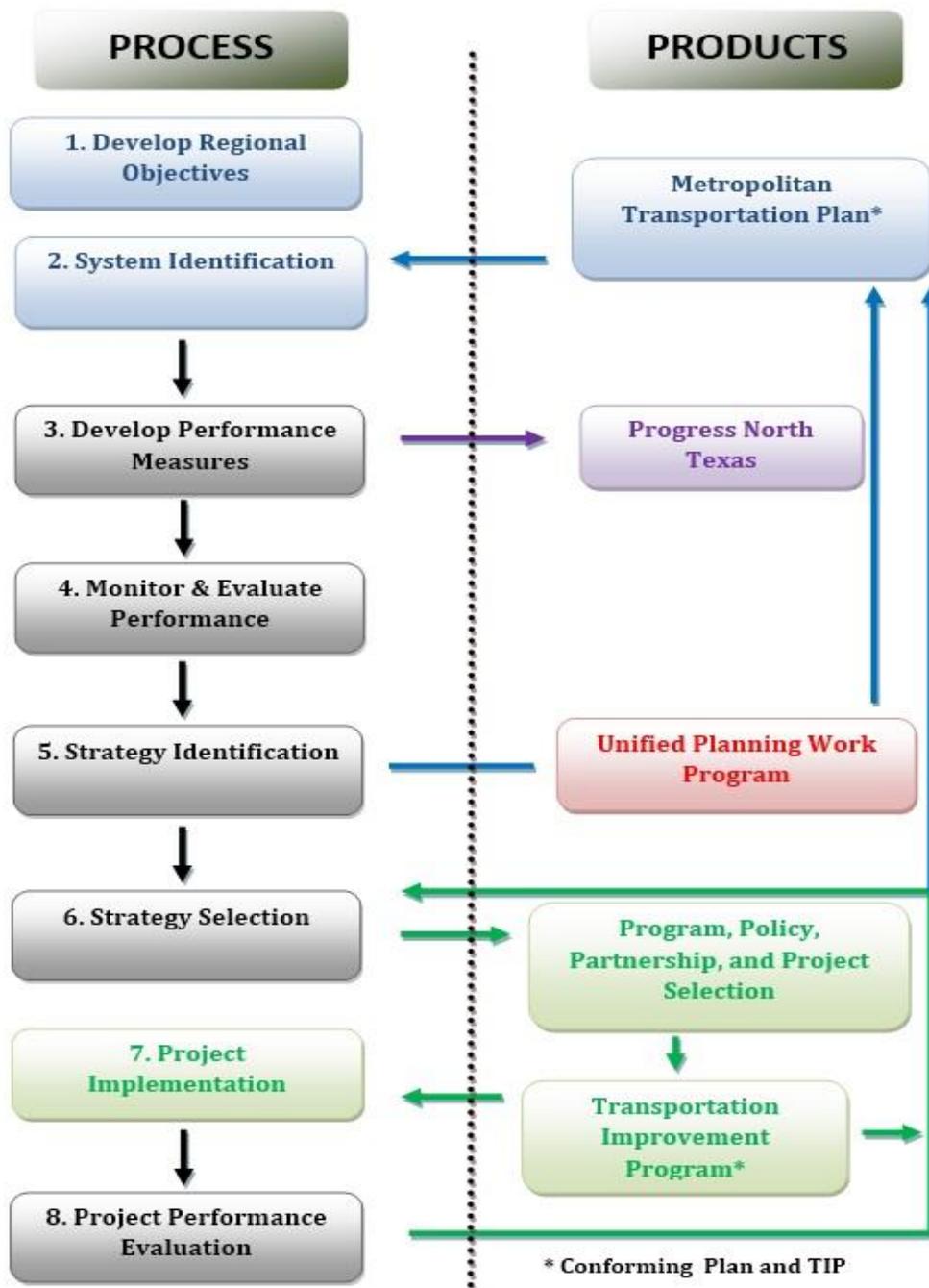
and is a component of Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) metropolitan planning legislation.

As shown in Exhibit I-1, the CMP is fully integrated into the region's transportation planning and programming processes. The diagram below illustrates the eight components to the CMP and the role of the conforming Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and Progress North Texas in this process.

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Exhibit I-1

Congestion Management Process And Products



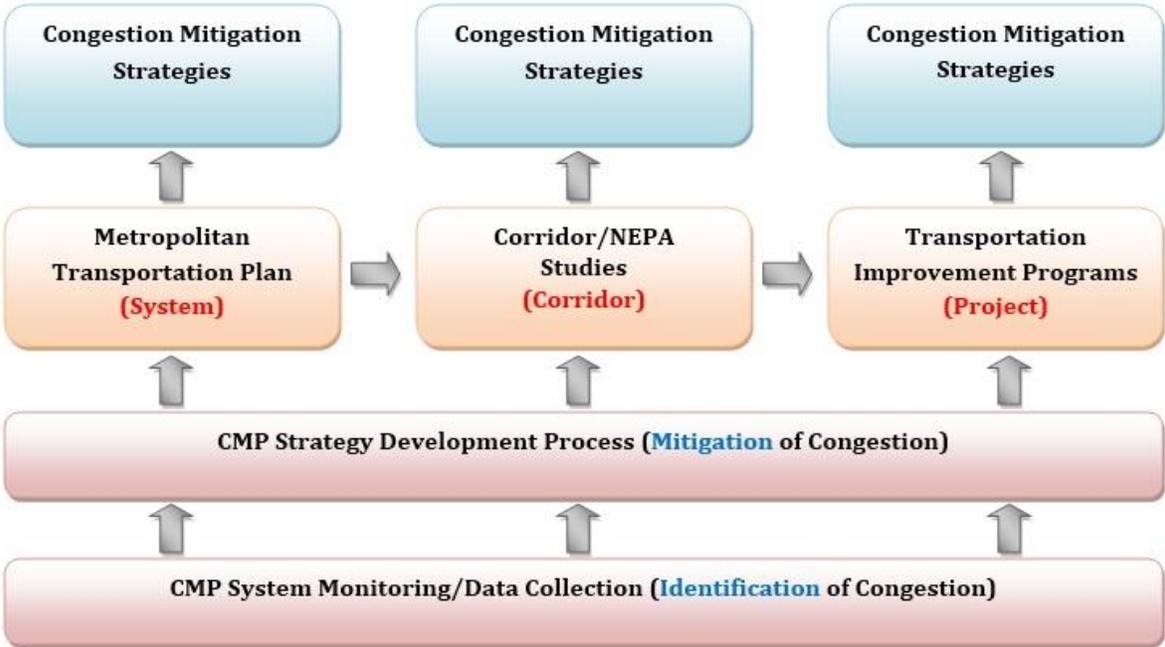
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To complement Exhibit I-1, Exhibit I-2 identifies how the CMP is integrated into various planning functions. With the identification and mitigation of current and future traffic congestion as the foundation of planning and programming decision making, strategies for congestion mitigation are developed on the system level (in the MTP), on the corridor level (in corridor/National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) studies), and on the project level (in the TIP).

Exhibit I-2

Congestion Management Process

Foundation for Transportation Planning and Programming



The need to operate the current transportation system as efficiently as possible is a top priority, because of the air quality and financial challenges faced by the DFW Metropolitan Area. The CMP comprises two types of management approaches proven to be cost-effective tools in addressing these challenges. Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSM&O) and Travel Demand Management (TDM) are very cost-effective, quick-implementation projects, policies, and programs that encourage the use of alternate travel modes and improve the efficiency of the transportation system.

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Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSM&O) seeks to identify and implement cost-effective congestion mitigation strategies to improve traffic flow, safety, system reliability and capacity. Compared to major capacity and infrastructure improvements, management and operations projects are usually low-cost improvements that can be implemented or constructed quickly and with minimal impacts to the transportation network. TSM&O strategies include intersection improvements, traffic signal improvements, bottleneck removals, and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS).

TDM strategies address the demand side of travel behavior by reducing the number of vehicles that travel on roadways through the promotion of alternatives to driving alone. TDM strategies include employer trip reduction programs, rideshare programs (vanpool and carpool), park-and-ride facility development, and the operation of transportation management associations. Appendix A highlights the Dallas-Fort Worth TDM and TSM&O strategies.

Congestion Management Process Goals And Objectives

The CMP goals and objectives are aligned with the overall Mobility 2035: The Metropolitan Transportation Plan for North Central Texas – 2013 Update (Mobility 2035 – 2013 Update) goal themes. Mobility 2035 – 2013 Update goals support and advance the development of a transportation system that contributes to the region’s mobility, quality of life, system sustainability, and continued project implementation. The three CMP goals are:

- **Goal One:** Identify quick-to-implement low-cost strategies and solutions to better operate the transportation system.
- **Goal Two:** More evenly distribute congestion across the entire transportation corridor.
- **Goal Three:** Ensure corridors have options and available alternate routes/modes to relieve daily congestion and during incidents and accidents.

Exhibit I-3 illustrates the integration of Mobility 2035 – 2013 Update goals with CMP Goals, Objectives and Performance.

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Exhibit I-3

Integration of Mobility 2035 - 2013 Update Goals with CMP Goals, Objectives and Performance

Mobility 2035 - 2013 Update Goals	CMP Goals and Action	Objectives	Performance Measures	
<p>Mobility: Support travel efficiency measures and system enhancements targeted at congestion reduction and management.</p> <p>Implementation: Develop cost-effective projects and programs aimed at reducing the costs associated with constructing, operating, and maintaining the regional transportation system.</p>	<p>Goal: Identify quick-to-implement low cost strategies and solutions to better operate the transportation system.</p> <p>Action: Implement quick-to-implement low cost strategies and solutions to better operate the transportation system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce SOV trips through travel demand management strategies. • Increase usage of park-and-ride lots. • Provide all users with travel alerts and alternate routes in the case of incidents, special events, weather, construction, and severe congestion at choke points. • Increase the number of intersections that are equipped and operating with traffic signals that enable real-time monitoring and management of traffic flows. • Reduce mean roadway clearance time per incident (Defined as the time between awareness of an incident and restoration of lanes to full operational status.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of users in the region participating on Try Parking It. • Utilization rate of park-and-ride lots in the region. • Percent of routes where traveler alerts and alternate route information is provided in the case of incidents, special events, weather, construction, and severe congestion choking points. • Percent of intersections in the region equipped and operating with traffic signals that enable real-time monitoring and management of traffic flows. • Average roadway clearance times. 	
<p>Mobility: Improve the availability of transportation options for people and goods.</p>	<p>Goal: More evenly distribute congestion across the entire transportation corridor.</p> <p>Action: Conduct inventory of corridor system to identify availability of existing options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the percentage of facility miles (highway, arterial, rail, etc.) experiencing recurring congestion during the peak period. • Maintain the rate of growth in facility miles experiencing recurring congestion as less than the population growth rate (or employment growth rate.) • Increase the number of HOV/Managed lanes in the region. • Increase alternative (non-SOV) mode share for all trips. • Increase active (bike/ped) mode share. • Increase mode share in transit. • Increase access to transit (within two miles) to specified percentage of the population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent of lane-miles operating at LOS F or V/C > 1.0. • Population growth rate. • Total number of HOV/Managed lanes in the region. • Share of employees walking, biking, telecommuting, carpooling/vanpooling, riding transit, driving. Track through Try Parking It website. • Share of trips by each mode of travel. • Percent of trips that take transit as a mode of travel. • Percent of population within two miles of a transit station. 	
<p>Mobility: Assure all communities are provided access to the regional transportation system and planning process.</p>				<p>Quality of Life: Preserve and enhance the natural environment, improve air quality, and promote active lifestyles.</p>
<p>System Sustainability: Ensure adequate maintenance and enhance the safety and reliability of the existing transportation system.</p>				<p>Goal: Ensure corridors have options and available alternate routes/modes to relieve daily congestion and during incidents and accidents.</p> <p>Action: Prioritize corridors based on available options and alternate/modes routes.</p>

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As indicated in the Exhibit I-3, each CMP goal has an associated action, objectives, and performance measures. The section below discusses each CMP goal and the specified action.

Goal One: Identify quick-to-implement low-cost strategies and solutions to better operate the transportation system.

To achieve CMP Goal One, the CMP offers an action of applying quick-to-implement low cost strategies and solutions to better operate the transportation system. These quick-to-implement strategies are incorporated into two types of management approaches, Travel Demand Management and Transportation Systems Management and Operations. Examples of quick to implement strategies and projects are included in Appendix A.

Goal Two: More evenly distribute congestion across the entire transportation corridor.

To achieve CMP Goal Two, the CMP recommends an action of conducting an inventory of the corridor characteristics to identify availability of existing options. To achieve this action, a corridor inventory of 25 regional limited access facilities was conducted. As part of this evaluation, each corridor was inventoried to determine the various options that exist along that corridor to help alleviate congestion from the main roadway facility. The inventory looked at four categories of options that may influence congestion levels: alternative roadway infrastructure (services), modal options (services), system demand (recurring), and system reliability (nonrecurring). More information on this inventory and analysis is included in the Corridor Analysis Section of this document.

Goal Three: Ensure corridors have options and available alternate routes/modes to relieve daily congestion and during incidents and accidents.

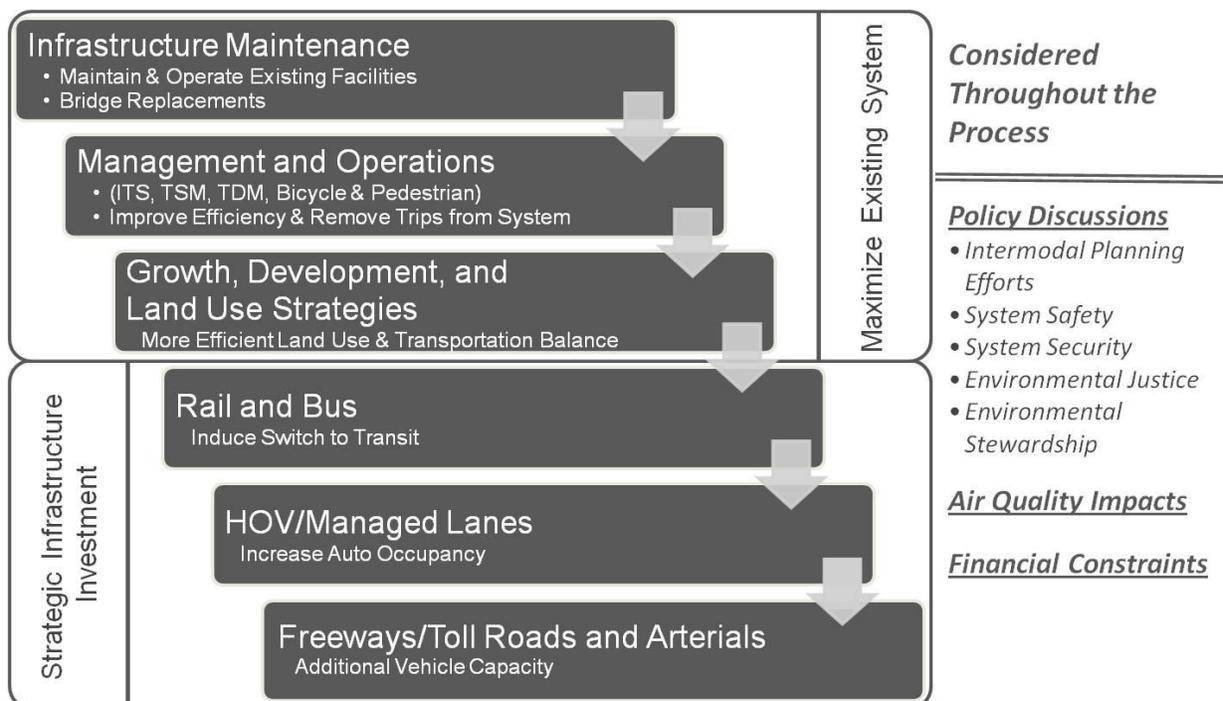
To satisfy Goal Three, the CMP recommends an action of prioritizing corridors based on available options and alternate routes and modes. To satisfy this action, the information collected through the corridor inventory was used in the CMP Corridor Scoring Criteria. This allowed the 25 inventoried limited access facilities to be scored, ranked and determine the current corridor system deficiencies. More information on this CMP Corridor Scoring Criteria and identification of corridor areas of deficiency are included in the Corridor Analysis Section.

Integrating the CMP Into the Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Mobility 2035 – 2013 Update was developed amidst growing concern for increased congestion, reduced air quality, and the lack of financial resources to fund many desired transportation projects and programs. To maximize available funds, a prioritization process was followed to maximize the existing transportation system, then invest strategically in infrastructure improvements. The principles used to allocate financial resources include: maintain and operate existing facilities; improve efficiency of existing facilities; reduce single-occupancy trips; improve land use/transportation connections; increase transit trips, and; increase auto occupancy. A diagram outlining the MTP development process is shown in Exhibit I-4.

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Exhibit I-4 MTP Development Process



The process began by assuming that the current infrastructure and other transportation strategies were in place. Funding necessary to maintain and operate the current transportation system was then allocated. Next, an assessment of the 2035 travel demand was done to identify future congested locations and to identify transportation system deficiencies. The first priority was to squeeze as much efficiency out of the current transportation system as possible and to eliminate as many trips as possible from peak travel times. Congestion mitigation strategies were developed to increase transportation system efficiency through transportation systems management and to reduce drive-alone travel through travel demand management, including bicycle and pedestrian strategies. With these strategies assumed, alternative rail systems were developed in an effort to reduce automobile travel. If trips could not be eliminated altogether, a mode change to transit was modeled. Following the identification of a recommended rail system, HOV and managed lane facilities were evaluated as a strategy to increase auto occupancy of the remaining trips. Finally, to accommodate the remaining demand, single-occupant vehicle capacity was evaluated in congested corridors. Throughout the development of each of these components, air quality and financial impacts were evaluated to ensure that financial feasibility and air quality conformity requirements could be met. In addition, each component was also reviewed for sustainable development and intermodal opportunities so that the recommendations minimized community impacts and accommodated freight movement.

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Surface transportation projects, programs, and policies were developed that aggressively target traffic congestion and improve air quality for the DFW Metropolitan Area in a cost-effective manner. The recommendations reflect a balanced transportation system, both in terms of providing multimodal options and financial constraint. Exhibit I-5 shows the cost of each plan component, demonstrating a continued investment in traditional capital improvements, while prioritizing funds in more non-traditional modes, as well as a system-oriented approach to management and operations.

Exhibit I-5
Mobility 2035 – 2013 Update Expenditure Summary

Mobility 2035 – 2013 Update Expenditures	
Infrastructure Maintenance	\$28.9
Management and Operations Strategies	\$4.8
Growth, Development, and Land-use Strategies	\$3.9
Public Transportation	\$15.6
Freeway, Tollway, Express/HOV, Tolloed Managed Lanes, and Arterial System	\$45.5
Total (Actual \$, Billions)	\$98.7
<i>Values may not sum due to independent rounding</i>	

Congestion mitigation is an integral element of the MTP. It serves as a guide for implementing both near-term and long-range regional transportation improvements. The CMP identifies where congestion occurs or is expected, evaluates strategies to mitigate congestion, and develops plans for implementation of the most cost-effective strategies. While CMP strategies will be implemented across the entire area, the congested area has been targeted for more intensive data collection and monitoring efforts as part of the ongoing congestion management process.

The performance of the current and future transportation system was measured in conjunction with the plan development process. A variety of quantifiable system performance measures were used to identify the extent and duration of traffic congestion. Candidate strategies were assessed for their effectiveness and feasibility of implementation in the region. A number of regional congestion mitigation strategies were recommended for implementation. These were relatively low-cost measures designed to manage the transportation system and reduce travel demand.

This program includes operational management and travel demand reduction strategies anticipated to be the most cost-effective for this region. Total program cost for the congestion mitigation element of the plan is approximately \$4.8 billion. This is in addition to the high occupancy vehicle and managed lanes system, public transportation, infrastructure maintenance, and sustainable development strategies which together total \$93.9 billion.

The adopted congestion mitigation strategies include traffic signal and intersection improvements aimed at reducing delay on arterial streets. Freeway bottleneck removals combined with

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deployment of incident detection and response systems, including motorist assistance and accident clearance, are proposed to maintain traffic flow on the controlled-access highway system. TDM strategies such as employer trip reduction programs, park-and-ride facilities, and rideshare programs are also included.

Integrating the CMP into the Corridor Study and NEPA Process

Federal law prohibits single-occupant vehicle (SOV) capacity from being added in transportation management areas (urbanized areas with a population greater than 200,000) which are also nonattainment areas for ozone, unless the recommendation is part of the regional CMP. The CMP focuses on balancing additional capacity with congestion mitigation strategies to complement each other in a corridor analysis. The result may be that a given corridor may not include all of the capacity that would be required to eliminate all congestion at all times of day, but may provide enough physical capacity to eliminate much of the congestion in the off-peak periods and shoulders of the peak period, but will rely on identified congestion mitigation strategies to improve traffic flow in the peak periods. This approach allows for a series of scaled-back projects that may be proposed across the region rather than concentrating resources in a few heavily congested areas and providing no improvements in other areas.

Since these recommendations are the result of the system planning process which is aimed at maximizing system-level performance and financial issues, the result in each corridor must be refined to reflect the specific issues associated with the corridor. This refinement of the MTP and CMP is the result of corridor studies and NEPA. The corridor study refines the recommendations identified in the MTP while the NEPA process evaluates the environmental and social impacts of the proposed corridor recommendations. Often the corridor study and NEPA evaluation are performed concurrently. If the recommendations of the corridor/NEPA studies are different than those of the MTP or CMP, including the financial placeholder assumption, the MTP and CMP must be updated to reflect the recommendations. Since the MTP, including the TSM&O and TDM strategies, is financially constrained, any change in the financial assumption for the corridor will have impacts for the entire MTP and should be thoroughly evaluated.

Relationship of the CMP with Corridor/NEPA Studies

As the Dallas-Fort Worth region seeks to integrate a management philosophy into all aspects of transportation planning and programming, it is intended that congestion mitigation strategies be developed as part of all corridor studies and subsequently included as part of the NEPA evaluation. NCTCOG staff provides guidance and support to all corridor study lead agencies, as they seek to incorporate operational management and travel demand reduction strategies on proposed facilities. The evaluation of all reasonable congestion mitigation strategies is viewed as essential to progressive transportation planning in this region.

The CMP will have a role in all corridor studies conducted in the region. The CMP will conduct an analysis of expected benefits and costs for all TDM and TSM&O strategies to be considered in these corridors. This analysis will be done on an as-needed basis and will become part of the corridor study and subsequent NEPA documentation. In this way, the regional strategies identified in the MTP will be applied on a corridor level. Any additional congestion mitigation

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strategies identified will then be evaluated for their application on the corridor or sub-area level and, pending results of the corridor analyses, will be considered for inclusion in the regional Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

As portrayed in Exhibit I-6, the development of CMP strategies in corridor studies is conducted by first evaluating the effects of the adopted regional congestion mitigation strategies in the corridor. This is done by:

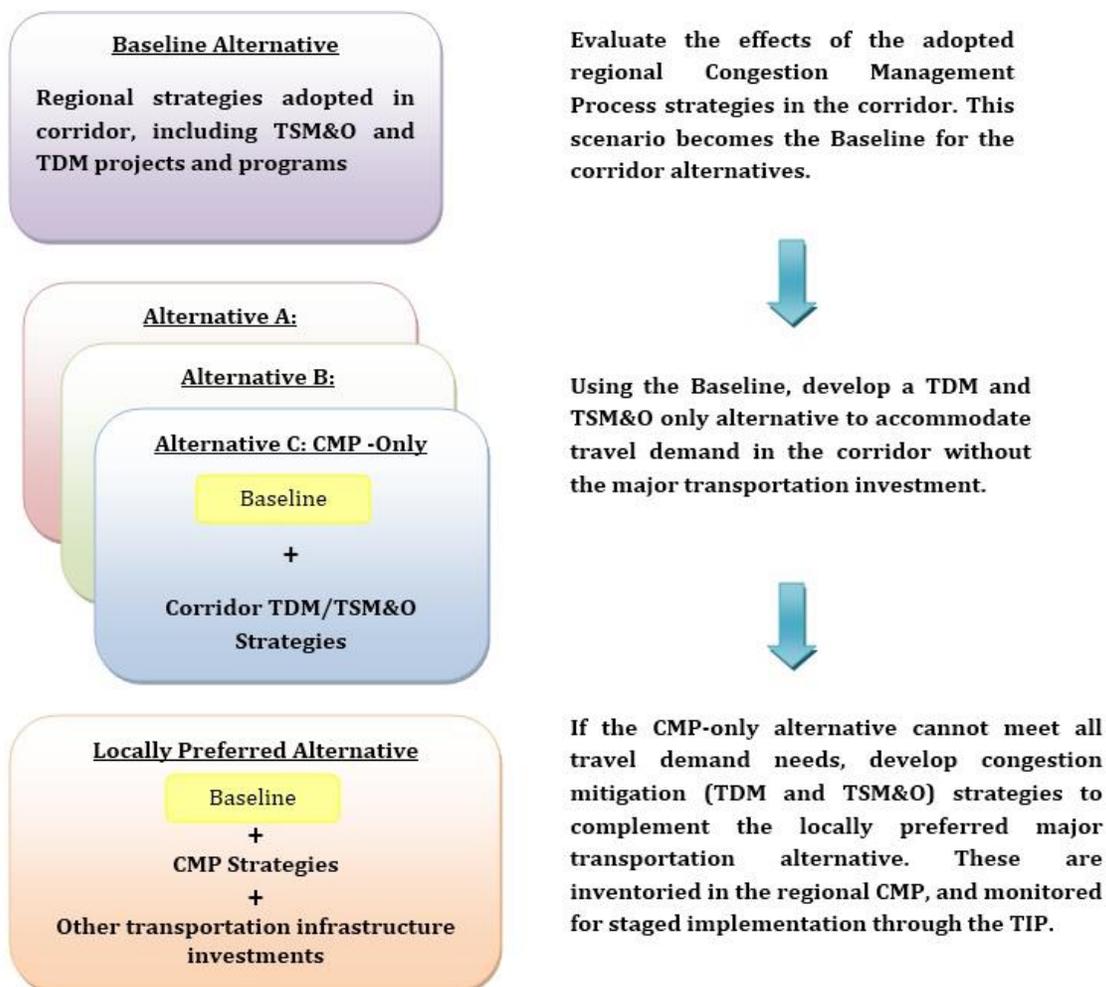
1. Identifying the committed TDM and TSM&O strategies from the TIP, the MTP, and local government bond programs; and
2. Quantifying the effects of the committed TDM strategies with regional travel model trip table adjustments; and
3. Quantifying the effects of the committed TSM&O strategies with regional travel model network speed and capacity adjustments. This CMP scenario becomes the baseline for all the corridor alternatives.

Next, using this CMP baseline, a TSM&O/TDM-Only Alternative is developed which attempts to accommodate travel demand in the corridor without the major transportation investment. This is done using the following steps:

1. Conduct an inventory of the corridor's transportation systems and facilities;
2. Assess current and future corridor conditions;
3. Identify transportation deficiencies and problems in the corridor;
4. Identify strategies which can be implemented directly by individual agencies without needing evaluation;
5. Identify corridor-level TDM and TSM&O strategies which address the problems and deficiencies in the sub-area, and the specific actions which support those strategies; and
6. Conduct an evaluation of the actions to assess their impacts in the corridor, documenting the extent to which these actions can alleviate travel demand in the corridor.

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Exhibit I-6 CMP Strategy Development In Corridor Studies



If the CMP-only alternative cannot satisfactorily address the congestion issues, additional capacity alternatives are evaluated along with appropriate CMP strategies which complement the capital investment. This is done through the following tasks:

1. Identify problems and deficiencies in the corridor that are unique to the locally preferred alternative;
2. Review strategies for their compatibility with the locally preferred alternative and identify opportunities for staged implementation;
3. Identify TDM and TSM&O actions which address the problems and deficiencies in the corridor and enhance the operation of the facility;

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4. Conduct an evaluation of the locally preferred alternative (which includes the CMP complement);
5. Recommend a program of TDM and TSM&O strategies that can be incorporated into the facility and in the corridor. Identify implementation responsibilities and outline an implementation schedule;
6. Incorporate recommended CMP strategies into the NEPA evaluation and commit to them as part of the corridor development planning.

Using the strategies described above, the following questions are addressed:

- What are the effects of TSM&O and TDM strategies in the corridor?
- How much travel demand can be accommodated by TSM&O and TDM strategies?
- Is the major transportation investment really needed? Can it be scaled down?
- What is the most appropriate mix of transportation infrastructure and management strategies for this corridor?

Corridor/NEPA Study Recommendations

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the DFW region, NCTCOG is involved in several ongoing corridor/NEPA studies. These studies represent very different transportation challenges in the region and are varying in scope. Once the lead agency has completed a draft corridor/NEPA study, the recommendations must be endorsed by the lead agency. Following the lead agency endorsement, NCTCOG's Regional Transportation Council (RTC) must endorse the recommendations, including the CMP strategies. The recommendations of the corridor/NEPA study must be the same as the recommendations in the MTP and CMP for the subject corridor. If differences exist and the RTC endorses the results of the study, the MTP and CMP are modified to reflect the results.

The operational management and travel demand reduction strategies identified in a corridor/NEPA study are seen as commitments being made by the DFW region at two levels: project-level and program-level implementation. In February 1998, the RTC passed Resolution Number R98-01 (Appendix B), which requires that all major investment studies (MIS) (now referred to as corridor/NEPA studies) include an evaluation of operational management and travel demand reduction solutions to congestion and air quality concerns. The resolution also required that an inventory of all commitments made in environmental documents be created and used to monitor the timely implementation of these commitments. In July 2013, the RTC adopted a policy directive that requires the review and application of congestion mitigation strategies to correct corridor deficiencies identified in the CMP when performing corridor and environmental studies and report findings back to NCTCOG. Program-level commitments are inventoried in the financially constrained MTP and future resources are earmarked for their implementation. At the project implementation level, these projects are monitored so they can be added to the regional TIP at the appropriate time with respect to the single-occupancy vehicle facility implementation.

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CMP strategy development is critical to the successful integration of congestion mitigation into the Corridor Study process. However, traditional evaluation tools and decision-making systems, geared to supporting major capital investment decisions, are perhaps relied upon too heavily to make decisions on the appropriate level of operational management and travel demand reduction strategies. Additionally, the need for developing management strategies as part of a corridor/NEPA study is not clearly understood by some individuals who may serve on technical and policy groups. For these reasons, it is imperative that the MPO play an active role in educating strategy development committees on the need for an open debate of all reasonable congestion mitigation strategies.

Integrating the CMP into the Transportation Improvement Program Process

The MTP is both a strategic planning document and a detailed, long-range plan for future investment in the DFW region. It identifies and prioritizes projects and programs designed to enhance the roadway network, transit services, and goods movement through the year 2035. The long-range plan is constrained by available revenues to fund the maintenance, operation, and construction of the transportation system and by vehicle emissions budgets established to attain clean air standards. Candidate MTP projects have been identified from city, county, state, and transit agency submittals. Additional projects have been added to the list based upon needs identified by the MPO.

In order to make sound programming decisions and to ensure that selected projects conform to air quality and financial planning mandates, it is necessary to evaluate programs and projects proposed for inclusion in the TIP. This evaluation process is described in the following paragraphs.

Regionally and Non-Regionally Significant Added Capacity Projects

Regionally significant arterials are identified and included in the Mobility 2035 – 2013 Update based on their role to complement and enhance the major roadway and transit systems by providing the necessary transportation support and access to and from local land uses. This system of arterials is forecast to carry approximately 20 percent of all vehicular traffic in the region. This network is comprised of several key components including facilities which serve regional transportation needs, provide service to regional activity centers, aid in intra-community connectivity, and maintain access to and from areas outside of the region.

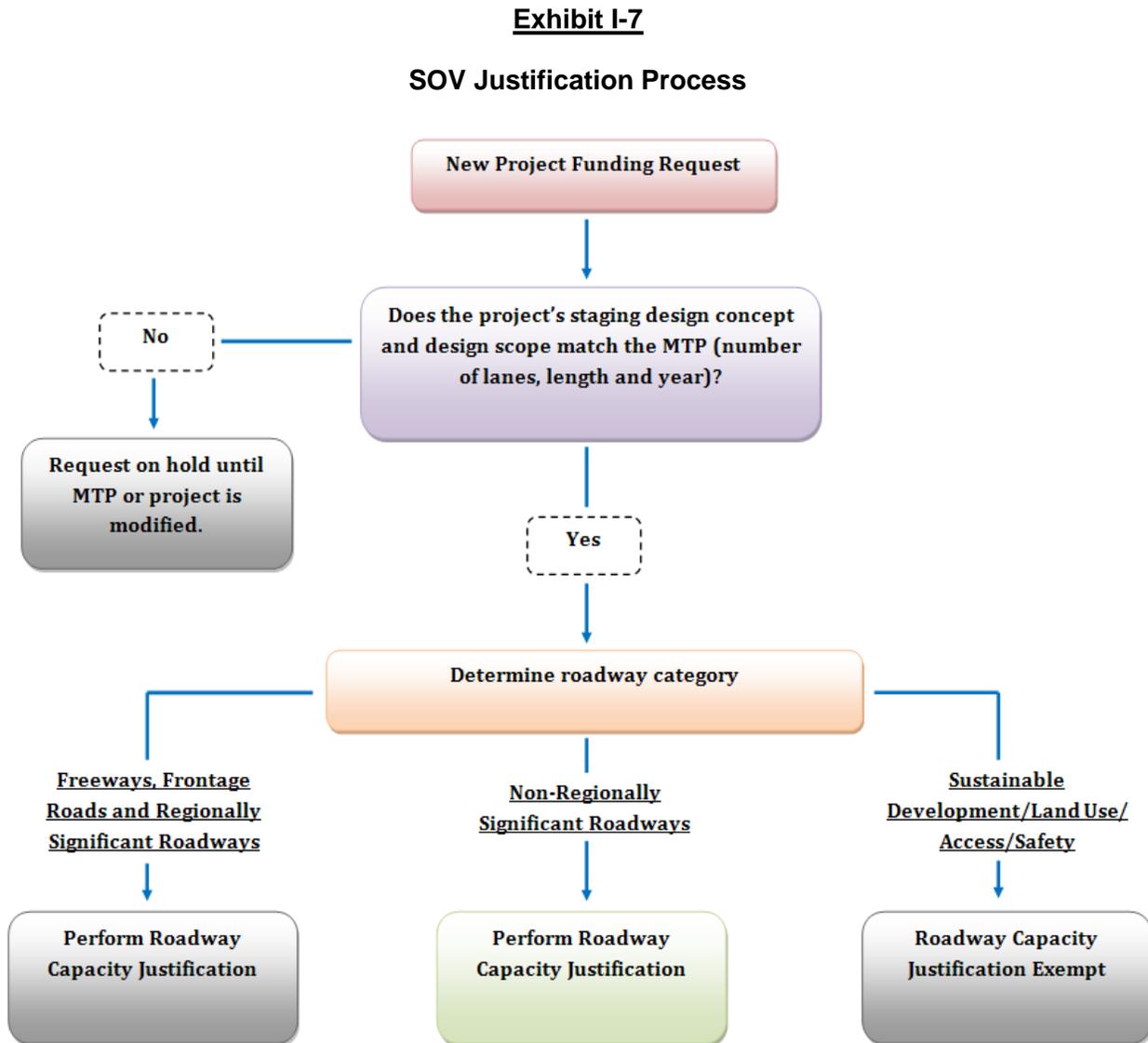
In addition to regionally significant arterials, the Mobility 2035 – 2013 Update includes a program of improvements for non-regionally significant arterials which is also reflected in the financial component of the plan. The timing and identification of specific funding sources for each facility are reviewed on a quarterly basis in conjunction with development and/or modification of the TIP project programming process. These projects go through a public involvement and an administrative approval process as part of the TIP amendment.

“SOV Analysis” Exempt Projects

Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) analyses are performed on all federal and state-assisted added-capacity projects on regionally and non-regionally significant roadways. However there are projects in Mobility 2035 – 2013 Update that are exempt from congestion mitigation analysis.

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Projects that are being proposed to solve a safety problem, such as grade-separations, are exempt. Candidate projects that solve a bottleneck problem by widening or adding lanes are also classified as exempt projects. Other project types include sustainable development, land use, and access related projects. These projects do not require an SOV analysis. The SOV Justification Process is outlined in Exhibit I-7.



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Summary

The CMP is a systematic process for determining acceptable congestion levels in a region, measuring the congestion performance of the transportation system, and prioritizing strategies for managing that congestion. Federal requirements define the required elements of a CMP and specify that areas with populations over 200,000 must implement and maintain a CMP.

The CMP for the DFW region is fully implemented into the planning and programming process performed as an MPO. The process is integrated in the development of the MTP, the TIP, the UPWP, and Progress North Texas, as well as corridor studies.

Three goals have been established for the CMP that align with the overall Mobility 2035 – 2013 Update. These goals include the identification of quick-to-implement low cost strategies and solutions to better operate the transportation system; more evenly distribute congestion across the entire transportation corridor; and ensure corridors have options and available alternate routes/modes to relieve congestion daily and during incident and accidents.

Based on the demographics highlighted at the beginning of this section, the DFW region is expected to continue to grow at a magnitude never before experienced. As the region continues to grow, traffic congestion is expected to increase. The CMP will continue to be a critical component of the planning process, and operational management and travel demand reduction strategies will be necessary to keep the region desirable for future residents and employers.