



# Metropolitan Transportation Plan Priority Recommendations

**Prepared for: BACTS Policy Committee**

**Final Report  
June 8th, 2021**

## Executive Summary

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Over the past two months, BACTS staff has been meeting with individual municipalities to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of our transportation network in the greater Bangor region. The purpose of this exercise is to gather information to determine the priorities for the upcoming Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update, which will be completed in the next Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Although the primary focus of this report is to set priorities for the upcoming MTP, the findings will also be useful in the development of future work plans. The following is a summary of the common regional transportation themes and topics discussed at each of the member meetings.

### *Strengths*

Members identified several strengths of the transportation network in the BACTS region. Strengths varied from regional cooperation, to access to critical transportation infrastructure such as Interstate 95 and the Bangor International Airport. BACTS has a continued focus on the development of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, although the region should continue working to improve connectivity of those facilities. BACTS will continue to give attention to maintaining and excelling at the strengths identified by the members.

### *Weaknesses*

Understanding the weaknesses in our transportation network enables BACTS to prioritize our planning and capital investments. BACTS members engaged in thoughtful discussions which identified weaknesses within our transportation system. The most common weakness identified was the overall lack of funding for all modes of transportation in our region. Other weaknesses discussed included; mode connectivity, the overall condition of infrastructure, and the limited availability of public transportation or transportation options.

### *Opportunities*

Opportunities to improve the transportation network in the BACTS region are often outside of the jurisdiction of BACTS, however it is important for BACTS to be prepared to be a partner in improving the transportation network whenever possible. There were opportunities identified which BACTS does have the ability to prioritize funding to maximize on opportunities including the following; improving bicycle and pedestrian connections (including trail connectivity), developing a 5-10 year BACTS region project list (identifying unmet needs), and regional future growth area mapping. External opportunities discussed included; expansion of passenger rail to Bangor, the role of autonomous vehicles, and preparing for smart city infrastructure. BACTS should be prepared to assess both internal and external opportunities and work toward them, utilizing whatever resources or partnerships are available.

### *Threats*

There are a variety of threats that were identified to the transportation network in the BACTS region. Similar to opportunities, threats are often external to BACTS or out of the BACTS jurisdiction; however, it is important for BACTS to plan to mitigate these threats to the best of our ability. Threats identified by the members included climate change and/or extreme weather events, limited funding, labor shortages, and aging infrastructure. BACTS will continue to be a partner with the members in addressing these issues and seek opportunities to overcome them.

## BACTS Planning Process

### Transportation Planning Process

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) serve an overall coordination and consensus-building role in the planning and programming of funds for transportation projects and operations. MPOs do not own or operate the systems they serve and are not involved in implementing the transportation project priorities established. Local transportation providers participation in the transportation planning process is critical.

Figure 1. The Transportation Planning Process

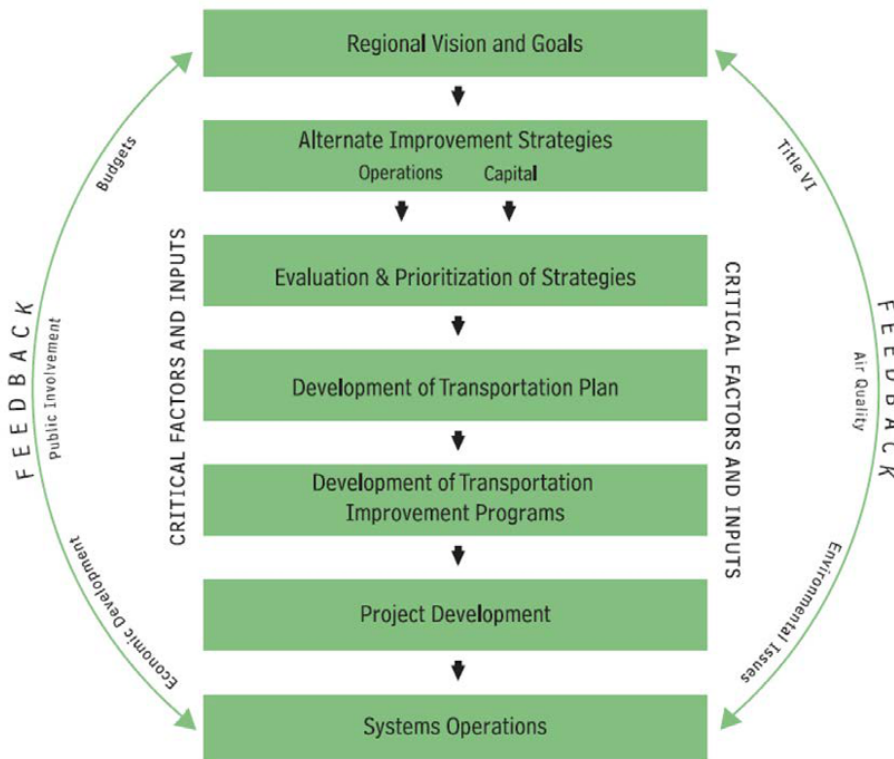


Image Source: Transportation Planning Capacity Building (TPCB)  
The Transportation Planning Process Briefing Book FHWA-HEP-18-015

### Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

The MTP is the long-range transportation plan for the metropolitan area detailing both long- and short-range regional strategies and actions to implement goals and policies which provide for the development of an integrated transportation system to facilitate the efficient movement of people and goods. The MTP addresses current and future transportation demand and identifies the region's goals and investment priorities, as well as anticipated available funding for the transportation system. MTPs cover a planning horizon of at least 20 years and are prepared through active engagement with the public and stakeholders.

## BACTS Priorities

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The MTP is a long range planning tool for the MPO, as such, the MTP must have tangible, achievable goals within the 20-year planning horizon. These goals will be achieved through proper prioritization of funding in the UPWP and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which identifies activities that align with the region's priorities. The BACTS Policy Committee should consider the following as priorities for the MTP; funding, connectivity, planning for the future, and system management.

### *Funding*

BACTS receives federal and state funding for transportation planning in the BACTS region. BACTS also receives funding from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for capital projects. The BACTS region also receives funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for operations and capital projects for the regional transit system.

By all accounts, current transportation funding, as noted above, is inadequate to meet the current and future needs of the transportation network. Insufficient funding for all modes of transportation is the greatest existing threat to our transportation network. Over the next 20 years, BACTS needs to continue to research opportunities to increase formal funding for transportation in the region. BACTS also needs to be prepared to continually seek opportunities for applying for discretionary funding, whenever possible.

### *Connectivity*

One of the greatest benefits to approaching transportation planning and transportation investments on a regional level is the opportunity for increased connectivity within the region, across all modes. While BACTS has invested in transportation projects that enhance regional connectivity, members have identified several opportunities to improve connectivity in the region. Connections for commuters, connection between modes, and new infrastructure connections result in improved mobility into and around the region.

Improving existing critical connections along with identifying and prioritizing new regional connections will help to strengthen the regional transportation network. To meet this goal BACTS should focus on the following:

**Infrastructure Connections** - BACTS shall continue to fund infrastructure projects that enhance regional connectivity. This can be accomplished by BACTS developing a regional trail map to identify the gaps in the existing trail network and prioritize projects to address these gaps. Commuter connectivity is a high priority for the region, as such, BACTS should evaluate the need for additional infrastructure over the Penobscot River to improve both commercial and commuter traffic as well as access to the interstate system. Commuter sheds leading in and out of the urban areas shall be monitored regularly for performance and condition. Lastly, BACTS should continually monitor the various modes of transportation and strive to identify ways to improve connectivity among these modes, including passenger rail.

**Transit** - The regional transit system is a critical component of the region's transportation network. BACTS will continue to partner with the Community Connector to improve connectivity of our transit system and work towards implementing the recommendations from the 2019 Transit Study. BACTS will assist with prioritizing FTA planning funding to regular route evaluations to ensure that current routes and schedules are optimal for maximizing ridership and user experience. BACTS should continue to act as a convenor to connect the transit agency with BACTS members to discuss, plan, and prioritize transit funding for the BACTS region.

**Communication, Collaboration, and Coordination** - BACTS has a positive relationship with our transportation partners. BACTS will continue to communicate, collaborate, and coordinate with federal and state partners on transportation investments.

### *Plan for the Future*

Preparing and planning for the future of transportation is a cornerstone role and responsibility of BACTS. There are rapidly evolving technologies that have a significant impact on how transportation will take shape in the BACTS region. Changes to our climate will require new approaches in investing in our transportation network. As the MPO, BACTS will need to continue to communicate, collaborate, and coordinate with transportation partners and stakeholders to plan and prepare for the future of transportation in our region by:

**Technology and Transportation** - BACTS will continue to stay informed on the latest technologies related to transportation and mobility, such as autonomous vehicles, smart cities, and transit technologies. BACTS should look for opportunities to integrate the technologies into plans or capital projects whenever possible.

**Sustainability** - The impact of the changes in weather and climate could have short- and long-term impacts to our transportation infrastructure. BACTS should develop a plan to prepare the region for the impacts of climate change to the transportation network, including a vulnerable infrastructure analysis, a monitoring database, and including climate modeling when prioritizing investments.

**Mapping and Data** - Having an understanding of future growth opportunities on a regional level will allow BACTS members to better plan for a variety of future investments, including transportation investments. BACTS can help plan for the future through mapping and data collection in the following ways; develop mapping for the entire region (identifying future growth opportunities, land uses, and natural resources), continue collecting data on transportation corridors (including vehicle miles traveled, average annual daily traffic, and safety information), and collect, monitor, and maintain a database which will be used to make informed investment decisions.

### *System Management*

With limited funding for transportation infrastructure, BACTS has continued to prioritize investment in maintenance of existing infrastructure over expansion, or construction, of new facilities. In order to ensure that BACTS is maximizing the limited transportation funds on maintaining the system, BACTS needs to have a strong understanding of the existing system. BACTS can focus on system management by focusing on:

**Planning with a Purpose** - BACTS planning efforts result in tangible recommendations, which are fiscally constrained and sustainable.

**Infrastructure Preservation** - BACTS will continue to prioritize investments that aim to preserve the current system. BACTS should develop a 5- and 10-year project investment plan focused on preservation of our roads and signals, focusing on identifying all unmet needs. The plan will be reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis.

**Transit** - BACTS will continue to convene with the transit provider and transit partners in meaningful discussions regarding transit operations, budgeting, and transit planning.

## Conclusion

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BACTS will continue to focus on regional communication, collaboration, and coordination to continuously improve the transportation system in the greater Bangor region. While BACTS will continue to monitor and look for opportunities to improve on areas where external forces and factors are at play, the MTP will focus mainly on areas which BACTS can be the lead in addressing. BACTS 20-year planning horizon should focus on the following priorities: funding, connectivity, plan for the future, and system management.