

ABSTRACT

Many metropolitan areas are focusing on creating more livable neighborhoods, as well as implementing smart growth, transit-oriented and generally more sustainable communities. A review of the decision-making criteria used by many local governments, however, shows goal setting and project selection criteria largely reflective of measures that favor highway-oriented benefits, such as increasing travel speeds. This research examines transportation decision-making in selected regions to determine whether goals, objectives and criteria are broad enough to include balanced transportation outcomes, allowing pedestrian and transit options to be competitive with auto-oriented transportation projects.

METHODOLOGY

Conducted literature review relative to goals, objectives, and decision-making criteria

Identified areas thought to be pace setters in developing livable communities and some with reputations as auto-dominated communities

Reviewed the metropolitan transportation plans and transportation improvement programs developed by the MPOs for these communities

Reviewed goals, objectives and project selection criteria used by MPO's for project identification and selection in these communities

HIGHLIGHTS OF LITERATURE REVIEW AND BACKGROUND RESEARCH

- There is a relationship between more compact, livable community styled development and decreased auto use
- Traditionally transportation decisions were based, in large measure, on cost-benefit analysis, which does not include a number of benefits that accrue to transit

METROPOLITAN AREAS IDENTIFIED FOR STUDY

- Atlanta—Atlanta Regional Council of Governments, 10 counties with 3.4 million residents in 2000. Key document: 2025 RTP
- Dallas/Fort Worth—North Central Texas Council of Government, 16 counties with 3.5 million residents in 2000. Key document: 2025 Mobility Plan
- Denver—Denver Regional Council of Governments, 8 counties with 1.9 million people in 2000. Key document: Metro Vision 2020
- Houston-Galveston—Houston-Galveston Area Council, 8 counties in South Texas with 4.6 million people in 2000. Key document: 2022 Metropolitan Transportation Plan
- Portland—Metro, 3 counties and 24 cities with 1.3 million residents in 2000. Key document: 2000 Regional Transportation Plan
- San Francisco Bay Area—Metropolitan Transportation Commission, 9 counties with 6.8 million residents in 2000. Key document: 2001 Regional Transportation Plan

Table 1 Transportation Goals and Objectives by Metropolitan Area

Goals and Objectives	Dallas/Ft. Worth	Houston/Galveston	Denver	Atlanta	San Francisco	Portland
Reduce/Reverse Congestion	✓		✓			✓
Multimodal, including non-motorized	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Accommodate Growth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Travel Efficiency	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Economic Viability or Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Accessibility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Environment/Community Quality of Life	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Stable, Long Term Revenues	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Reduce System Costs	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Maintain/Improve Current System		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Citizen Involvement/Public Participation		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Goods Movement		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
High Capacity and Transit Focus		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Suburb to Suburb Movement		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FFY			✓			
Land Use	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Public Involvement		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Connectivity			✓	✓	✓	
Safety or Security		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Affordability			✓	✓	✓	

Note: Each metropolitan transportation plan is presented somewhat differently. The goals and objectives shown in this table may not be exclusive for each MPO. Rather, the list shows the most prominently highlighted goals and objectives. It is likely that each of the MPOs implicitly pursues each goal or objective listed or reflects it in another section of their documents.

EXAMINATION OF PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA LEADING TO SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION DECISION MAKING

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Table 2 Number of Observed Criteria Directly Related to Transit, Non-Motorized Transportation or Sustainability

Metropolitan Area	Exhibits at least 15-20 transit-oriented criteria	Exhibits at least 10-14 transit-oriented, sustainable criteria	Exhibits at least 5-9 transit-oriented, sustainable criteria
Atlanta		13	
Denver			5
Dallas/Fort Worth Houston-Galveston	18		2
Portland			3
San Francisco Bay		14	

Note: This research identified explicitly stated criteria used by MPOs directly focused on non-highway and/or non-motorized projects. The methodologies by which the criteria are applied differ for each locale.

Summary Findings

- The Metropolitan Transportation Plans reflect similar goals and objectives.
- A greater focus on criteria that would support sustainable, transit-oriented projects exists in some metropolitan area Transportation Improvement Programs.
- In specific, key metropolitan areas known to be aggressive in pursuing sustainable, transit-oriented development exhibit more criteria that support non-motorized, non-highway projects.