

REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS IN THE LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Regionally significant projects (also considered expansion projects) have a specific definition in the long-range transportation plan (Plan) for the air quality conformity determination. It specifies that only regionally significant projects are required to be included in the Plan and therefore the travel-demand modeling efforts. The final federal conformity regulations define regionally significant as follows:

A transportation project (other than an exempt project) that is on a facility which serves regional transportation needs (such as access to and from the area outside of the region, major activity centers in the region, major planned developments such as new retail malls, sport complexes, etc., or transportation terminals as well as most terminals themselves) and would be included in the modeling of a metropolitan area's transportation network, including at a minimum all principal arterial highways and all fixed guideway transit facilities that offer an alternative to regional highway travel.

Therefore, a regionally significant/expansion project is any project that adds capacity to the existing system through the addition of a travel lane, the construction of a new interchange, the construction of a new commuter rail or rapid transit line or the extension of an existing commuter rail or rapid transit line, new commuter rail stations or terminals, new park and ride facilities, or the procurement of additional (not replacement) public transportation vehicles.

Specific projects have been exempt from regional modeling emissions analysis unless the MPO determines that a project has potential regional impacts for any reasons. Otherwise these types of projects generally have either a neutral or positive impact on air quality. The categories of exempt projects include:

- Intersection channelization projects
- Intersection signalization projects at individual intersections
- Interchange reconfiguration projects
- Changes in vertical and horizontal alignment
- Truck size and weight inspection stations
- Bus terminals and transfer points

In addition, the Plan is required to list all major infrastructure projects, which are defined as any project that costs over \$10 million. While these projects are listed in the Plan, they are not considered regionally significant.

All of the transit projects that are included in the current Plan – JOURNEY to 2030 meet the definition of a regionally significant/ expansion project, by either expanding a current transit service, or adding new stations, terminals, or additional parking. There are 30 highway projects included in the current Plan, ten of which are major investment projects only and not regionally significant/expansion projects (and do not have to be included in

the travel demand model), seven are expansion projects that cost under \$10 million, and 13 are expansion projects that cost over \$10 million.

The ten major investment projects that do not add capacity are considered as enhancements or maintenance to the existing system. They include roadway reconstruction projects, pavement resurfacing projects, rail trail projects, and projects included in the exempt categories listed above including intersection channelization and interchange reconfiguration projects.

The seven expansion projects that cost under \$10 million are located on arterial highways and include additional lanes ranging in length from a quarter of a mile to nine-tenths of a mile. Most are included to reduce bottlenecks in their specific locations.

Four of the remaining 13 major investment/expansion projects are improvements to interchanges on express highways, which would normally be exempt projects (interchange reconfiguration projects), however they also include construction of additional lanes in close proximity to the interchange. Six projects are associated with regional economic development projects. Three projects are listed in the Plan but are being fully funded with non-MPO dollars.