

Chapter 1

Setting the Stage

1.1. A vision for the future

The Rochester-Olmsted region is continuing to grow and evolve. New residents are moving to the area, new development is occurring, and the transportation system that connects our communities is serving a broader range of needs. The 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP 2050) seeks to address these evolving needs by establishing a comprehensive framework for transportation investments over the next 25 years.

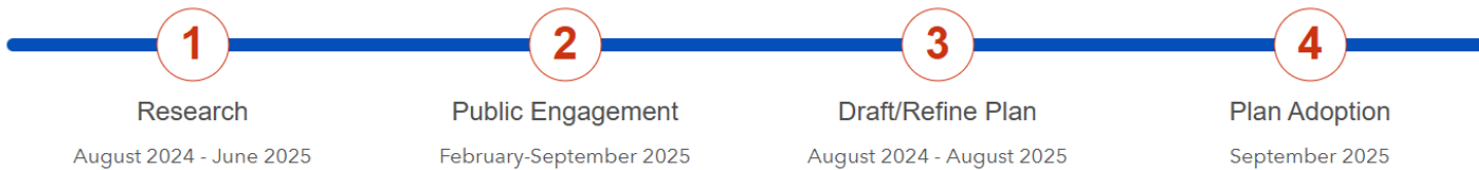
The MTP 2050 builds on the Rochester-Olmsted Council of Governments' (ROCOG) previous plan, the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (adopted in August 2020), and updates the region's vision for a multimodal transportation system that supports livability, economic vitality, and environmental sustainability. The plan identifies infrastructure priorities that are both fiscally realistic and focused on inclusive access, long-term

resilience, and system performance.

In keeping with federal requirements, the MTP maintains at least a 20-year planning horizon and is updated every five years using community input and data-driven analysis.

Shaped by both public engagement and technical research, the MTP 2050 reflects the voices and values of people across the region. Whether it's addressing safety concerns along high-speed roads or expanding transit options, the plan responds to current challenges while preparing for future needs.

MTP development timeline



1.2. About ROCOG

1.2.1 History

The Rochester-Olmsted Council of Governments (ROCOG), established in 1972, serves as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region. ROCOG's planning area includes all of Olmsted County, the cities of Byron, Dover, Eyota, Oronoco, Rochester, and Stewartville, and Chatfield and Pine Island in neighboring counties (see Figure 1). As an MPO fully contained within Minnesota, ROCOG benefits from streamlined coordination with state agencies.

1.2.2 Role in the MTP

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are regional transportation policy bodies comprised of local government officials. They are responsible for ensuring that federal transportation investments adhere to the "3-Cs" of planning: a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive approach. This transportation plan presents realistic objectives based on available public funding. However, it also articulates a broader vision for the region's future transportation needs, recognizing that complete funding for all initiatives requires additional effort.

A core focus of transportation planning in the ROCOG area is prioritizing the maintenance of existing infrastructure while providing consistent travel times and ensuring multiple travel options, or routes, to reach the desired destinations, now and in the future.

1.2.3 Plan guidance

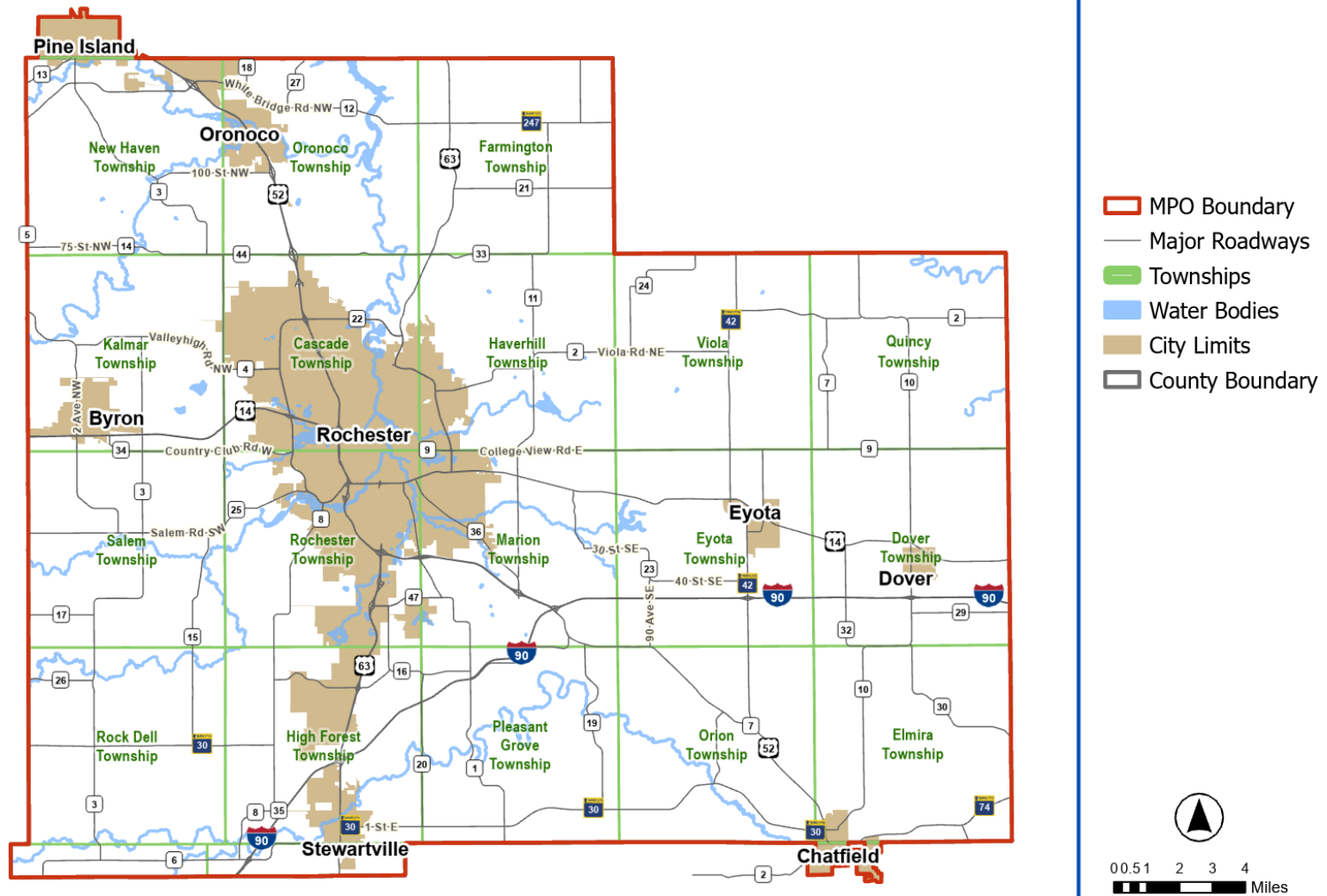
MTP 2050 is guided by two standing ROCOG committees.

Policy Board: The ROCOG Policy Board is comprised of fifteen individuals representing the local units of government within Olmsted County and two citizen members. The Policy Board is comprised of elected leaders from the city of Rochester, Olmsted County, Greater Olmsted cities, townships, school districts, and citizen representation. The Policy Board reviews, evaluates, comments on, makes recommendations, and ultimately approves plans and programs to maintain state and federal funding eligibility for the metropolitan area.

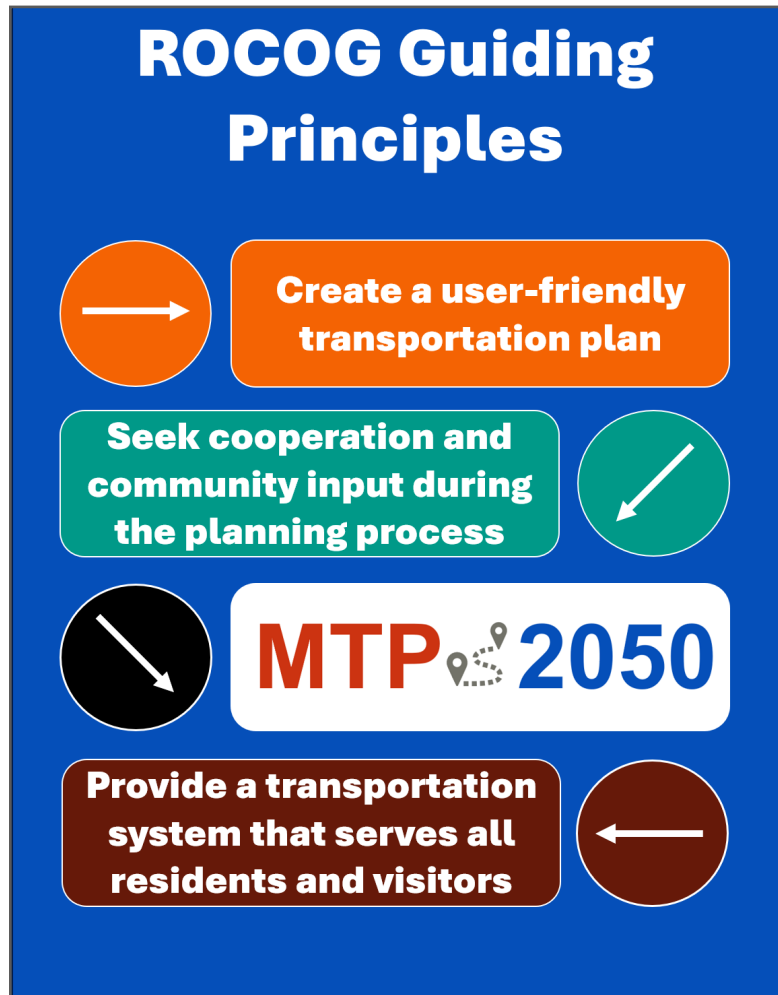
Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC): ROCOG has a technical advisory committee which consists of fifteen members representing each of the major jurisdictions that have dedicated transportation staff. TTAC reviews transportation issues that have been identified in the ROCOG

Figure 1: ROCOG Planning Area

Source: Olmsted County Planning



planning area and makes recommendations to the Policy Board.



1.3. Key contributing strategic plans

The MTP 2050 was developed in collaboration with ROCOC member jurisdictions and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). The plan is aligned with state and local planning efforts and incorporates guidance from multiple related plans, including, but not limited to:

- Olmsted County General Land Use Plan
- Rochester Active Transportation Plan
- Municipalities' comprehensive plans
- Mayo Clinic 5-year (construction and development) plan
- MnDOT's Minnesota GO plans
- Additional local and regional plans related to economic development, housing, and environmental protection

This coordinated planning approach supports consistency between transportation investments and broader community goals.

1.4. Community engagement

Understanding how people use the transportation system and what improvements they value most requires direct input. ROCOC conducted public engagement from February through August 2025 to inform the plan. Engagement included targeted outreach to key stakeholder groups as well as broad public activities.

1.4.1 Targeted stakeholder outreach

ROCOG recognized that different sectors of the community experience transportation in unique ways. Beginning in February 2025, the organization conducted focus groups or individual discussions with the following stakeholder groups:

- Rochester and Greater Olmsted County Business and Economic Development Organizations
- Active transportation advocates and users
- Transit providers
- School district transportation staff
- Township and rural community officials
- Large regional institutions, including Mayo Clinic, Channel One Regional Food Bank, and Rochester International Airport
- Individuals with disabilities, along with their caregivers, advocates, and supporting service organizations
- Members of the Rochester Olmsted Youth Commission

Each group was invited to share perspectives on strengths, challenges, and ideas for improvement related to their area of the transportation system.

1.4.2 Public engagement activities

ROCOG used a variety of approaches to reach the broader community and gather input on the transportation system. A public webinar held in March 2025 introduced the planning

process and invited participation in future engagement activities. A regional survey housed on the project website gathered input from 151 residents on travel behavior, system challenges, and priorities for improvement. The website also served as a central hub throughout the planning process, offering updates and opportunities for ongoing input.

To connect with people where they already gather, ROCOG hosted pop-up events at Oxbow Park, the Rochester Farmers Market, and the Stewartville Farmers Market. These events used interactive activities and informal conversations to engage a diverse mix of residents.

1.4.3 Key themes from community input

Community engagement surfaced several key themes that are reflected throughout MTP 2050. Safety was raised in relation to conditions along high-speed corridors and the heightened risks experienced by people walking or biking. Funding challenges were also identified, including concerns about maintaining aging infrastructure while expanding services to meet future demand. Many participants emphasized the value of improving walking and biking conditions, as well as enhancing trail and transit connections between communities.

Perhaps most importantly, residents underscored the need for transportation options that serve everyone who drives, those who cannot drive, and those who choose not to drive. All of the key takeaways from community input are summarized in Chapter 8, but these priorities have also been woven throughout the MTP 2050 to reflect the information heard from the public.

1.5. Plan framework and process

MTP 2050 is organized into eight chapters. Each part builds on the information in the previous part.



1. Setting the Stage

Current chapter



2. Charting the Course

Federal planning factors and requirements, objectives and goals



3. Transportation System Influences

Demographics, economic activity, travel patterns, natural environment & land use connection



4. The ROCOG Network

Walking/rolling, transit, road network, road jurisdiction, freight and goods movement



5. System Performance

Capacity analysis and congestions, safety and security system connectivity



6. Moving Forward

Moving forward on the active transportation, transit and roadway networks, advancing and adapting the future network, and the role of transportation

systems management and operations (TSMO)



7. Implementation

Financial assessment, project priorities, project lists



8. Key Takeaways

Highlights and impacts

Each chapter of the MTP 2050 builds upon the previous one, creating a comprehensive analysis that moves from understanding current conditions to discussion of implementing future solutions. Together, they present a data-driven yet community-centered approach to transportation planning that will guide investment decisions and policy priorities through 2050.