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**S T R A T E G I C   H I G H W A Y   R E S E A R C H   P R O G R A M**



**SHRP 2 REPORT S2-C08-RR-1**

# Linking Community Visioning and Highway Capacity Planning

CAMBRIDGE SYSTEMATICS, INC.

with

CENTER FOR TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT, NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

PLANNING COMMUNITIES, INC.

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## FOREWORD

David Plazak, *SHRP 2 Senior Program Officer, Capacity*

This report is intended to help transportation agency practitioners assess the possibilities of community visioning efforts, identify practical steps and activities when engaging in visioning, and establish links between vision outcomes and transportation planning and project development processes. To these ends, this research presents a model—the Vision Guide—for the preparation, creation, and implementation of a visioning process. The Vision Guide was developed using interviews, case studies, literature reviews, background research, and practical experience. It serves as the organizing framework for research on the topics of assessing community context, undertaking strategies for involving stakeholders, developing organizational structures and partnerships, and measuring progress and performance of visions and plans. A companion web tool was also developed. The web tool is intended to be a permanent and dynamic resource and will be updated and linked to additional SHRP 2 research as it is completed.

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Community visioning processes are significant sources of input for transportation planning processes, which now range beyond topics of connectivity or design to consider community livability and a host of interrelated issues. Visions may help guide appropriate infrastructure decisions that enhance economic competitiveness, environmental stewardship, and community resources while improving transportation project outcomes.

Vision processes, however, tend to produce high-level, policy-oriented outcomes that prove challenging to integrate within focused, project-specific planning efforts. As a result, visioning in support of transportation planning has not been uniformly embraced by practitioners and remains an undefined, though increasingly popular, practice across the nation.

This research report developed a Vision Guide as a supporting framework that identifies the basic process and core elements of a vision and establishes possible linkages to transportation planning efforts. This structured, simplified process will better enable practitioners to engage in visioning in support of transportation planning.

The chapters in this report present four critical topic areas relevant to visioning and transportation planning: considering communities, reaching stakeholders, forming partnerships, and tracking commitments.

- *Considering communities* provides an organizing framework to help practitioners assess community context and quality of life within a visioning process through the use of tools, techniques, and indicators.
- *Reaching stakeholders* provides guidance to practitioners for selecting public involvement strategies, tools, and techniques best used within a visioning process.
- *Forming partnerships* highlights key considerations and structures for practitioners when identifying, building, and maintaining working partnerships to lead or support a visioning process.
- *Tracking commitments* helps practitioners leverage performance measurement and tracking systems to create a process that will provide ongoing checks on the status of implementation efforts and effectiveness of a visioning process.

For transportation agency practitioners interested in the linkages between visioning and planning, this research, in combination with SHRP 2's Transportation for Communities project on collaborative decision making, highlights the connections between strategic vision outcomes and transportation decision processes. The Vision Guide is connected to the transportation planning and project development processes identified in related SHRP 2 Capacity research and presented in the Decision Guide structure on the website Transportation for Communities—Advancing Projects through Partnership (TCAPP), found at [transportationforcommunities.com](http://transportationforcommunities.com). Whether an agency is undergoing a long-range transportation plan, corridor planning, or environmental review process, the information in the phases, activities, and decisions included in the Vision Guide can be applied to the collaborative decision-making process to bring the right people and the right ideas together at the right time.



## C O N T E N T S

1	<b>Executive Summary</b>
1	Visioning and Transportation Planning
3	Organization of the Vision Guide
4	Vision Guide Components
5	Visioning in Support of the Collaborative Decision-Making Framework
7	<b>CHAPTER 1 Project Background</b>
7	Purpose of the Project
7	Research Approach
10	<b>CHAPTER 2 The Visioning Process</b>
10	Introduction
10	The Evolution of Visioning
12	Visioning in Practice
14	Lessons Learned and Success Factors
16	<b>CHAPTER 3 Transportation Agency Involvement in Visioning</b>
16	Introduction
16	Transportation Perspectives and Considerations
17	Decision Factors for Agency Involvement
23	<b>CHAPTER 4 Vision Guide</b>
23	Introduction
23	Roles within the Visioning Process
24	Overview of the Vision Guide
25	Description of Vision Guide Elements
31	Decision Points within the Vision Guide
32	Component Areas of the Vision Guide
36	<b>CHAPTER 5 Considering Communities</b>
36	Introduction
36	Assessing Community Quality of Life
39	Application within the Vision Guide
42	<b>CHAPTER 6 Reaching Stakeholders</b>
42	Introduction
42	Summary of Current Practices
42	Involving Stakeholders in Visioning
43	Outreach Techniques and Tools
49	Application within the Vision Guide

<b>53</b>	<b>CHAPTER 7 Forming Partnerships</b>
53	Introduction
53	What Is Partnering?
53	Purposes of Partnerships
54	Structuring Partnerships
56	Key Factors in Successful Partnerships
57	Application within the Vision Guide
<b>59</b>	<b>CHAPTER 8 Tracking Commitments</b>
59	Introduction
60	Review of Existing Tracking Practices
62	Model Commitment Tracking Process
63	Application within the Vision Guide
<b>66</b>	<b>CHAPTER 9 Conclusion</b>
66	Visioning in Support of the Collaborative Decision-Making Framework
66	The Collaborative Decision-Making Framework
73	Visioning in Support of Collaborative Transportation Decision Making
<b>75</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>77</b>	<b>Appendices</b>

Appendices and color versions of the figures in this report are available online:  
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# Executive Summary

The second Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP 2) Capacity area is working toward designing a transportation planning and project development decision-making framework that better integrates transportation decisions with social, economic, and environmental considerations. In the context of transportation planning, the practice of visioning has been employed by some agencies to enable decisions that are more integrated with related issues, more coordinated with partner agencies, and more closely connected to the values of a community. Visioning holds great potential to facilitate collaborative decision-making processes, and the SHRP 2 program has developed practical guidance for practitioners on the role of visioning and links to transportation planning.

The cornerstone of current Capacity area research is the web-based product Transportation for Communities—Advancing Projects through Partnerships (TCAPP) ([transportationforcommunities.com](http://transportationforcommunities.com)). This effort produced an interactive Decision Guide to help practitioners through balanced, inclusive, and collaborative decision-making processes within the four initial phases of transportation planning: long-range transportation planning, corridor planning, programming, and environmental review and permitting.

The objective of this project is to develop a supporting framework for visioning that enables broad, strategic outcomes of visioning to transfer readily to specific, focused planning and project processes included in the Decision Guide. This research is intended to advance the state of the practice of visioning in support of transportation planning.

To that end, this technical report presents a model—the Vision Guide—that is a blueprint for preparing, creating, and implementing a visioning process. This structured, simplified process will better enable practitioners to engage in visioning in support of transportation planning. The Vision Guide also serves as the organizing framework for the research tasks incorporated within this project.

A companion resource is the web-based, interactive version of the Vision Guide, which can be found on the project website, Transportation–Visioning for Communities (T-VIZ) (Cambridge Systematics, Inc. 2011). This practical website is designed for practitioners and is the best portal for accessing the information within the Vision Guide.

## Visioning and Transportation Planning

Visions are planning and policy exercises that engage community stakeholders in building long-term, consensus frameworks for future decision making. The purpose of visioning is to create a shared base of understanding and generate policy direction for the future of a community. These

processes commonly extend beyond conventional transportation planning horizons and are intended to address the confluence of social, economic, educational, environmental, development, and transportation issues. Visioning processes enable participants to reach a series of consensus decisions on a community's present conditions and future trends, to agree on a desired future, and to develop a clear strategy for how to reach that desired future. The distinguishing characteristics of this approach are:

- Collaborative approaches to interdisciplinary topics;
- Proactive, innovative, and interactive outreach techniques;
- Focus on community context, livability, and values;
- Emphasis on technical scenario development and analysis; and
- Expansion of ownership in a process and implementation responsibility.

Visions are significant sources of input for transportation planning processes, which now range well beyond topics of access and design to consider community goals and values and a host of interrelated issues. Visioning processes may help guide appropriate transportation decisions to enhance economic competitiveness, environmental stewardship, and community resources, while improving transportation outcomes.

Visioning has been used in support of transportation decision making throughout the United States and is increasingly common in a variety of projects, plans, and processes. The process is recommended by federal agencies as a means of proactive and inclusive public involvement and has been embraced in statewide policy by several state departments of transportation for better connection of transportation and land use decisions. Visioning is practiced by many metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) within ongoing planning efforts to facilitate regional coordination of local decisions. Visioning is increasingly employed by civic organizations and regional councils to establish broad regional policies which, in turn, inform the plans of transportation partners.

Vision processes tend to produce high-level, policy-oriented outcomes that prove challenging to integrate within focused, project-specific transportation planning and development efforts. For example, the range of outcomes produced through visioning processes may include broad language on a community's values and goals; specific objectives or principles to guide decision making; or detailed maps depicting anticipated land use patterns, critical resource areas, or future transportation corridors.

These outcomes can be linked to the transportation planning and project development processes captured in the Decision Guide, including long-range transportation plans, corridor planning, project programming, environmental review, or permitting processes. For example, vision statements may help shape the goals of a long-range transportation plan; maps of desired future conservation areas may provide input into the range of solutions considered in corridor planning; or decision-making principles for future transportation systems may provide direct input into developing consensus on a draft transportation improvement plan. Applications of visioning in support of transportation planning have included all modes, from envisioning integrated air logistics centers, to seaport master plans, to conceptual designs for high-speed rail corridors. Visioning may suit any scale of planning effort, from broad, regional, long-range transportation plans, to urban transit corridor plans, to the design of local streetscapes. Visions may support a single project or provide a lasting foundation for subsequent plans, including the strategic plans of transportation agencies themselves.

However, visioning in support of transportation planning has not been uniformly embraced by practitioners and remains an underutilized practice. This research seeks to identify core elements of a visioning process and to establish relationships with transportation planning for use in future efforts.

## Organization of the Vision Guide

All visioning processes are unique and reflect the community context in which they occur. However, there are common questions that provide meaning and structure to any visioning process:

- Where are we now?
- Where are we going?
- Where do we want to be?
- How will we get there?

These themes form the basis of the Vision Guide, which presents a structured, simplified blueprint to enable practitioners to engage in visioning in support of transportation planning. The Vision Guide includes three phases, 14 activity areas, 35 critical activities, and a wide variety of potential products, resources, and tools for the practitioner within an interactive format.

The Vision Guide (illustrated in Figure ES.1) is designed to be interactive and to enable a practitioner to navigate these process steps to access information readily. The guide is organized into three phases, with activity areas that describe the practitioner's roles and responsibilities within critical activities. Also included are components covering four key topics, which provide



**Figure ES.1. The Vision Guide.**

a means for a practitioner to access information on these elements that run through all the phases and many activity areas. The following are the elements of the Vision Guide:

- *Phases* help organize any process. The first phase (Preparing the Vision) includes initial organizational and management activities. The second phase (Creating the Vision) focuses on the role of technical activities and stakeholder involvement in creating vision outcome. The third phase (Implementing the Vision) provides the framework for achieving and measuring progress toward the vision.
- *Activity areas* summarize the critical activities, organize key components, and communicate actions that occur within each phase. Activities are illustrated with high-level, strategic guidance and provide a number of example products and processes from prior visioning processes.
- *Components* are key elements of a successful vision process, providing a framework for structuring the project's major research tasks. Each component is linked directly to a set of relevant Activity Areas, highlighting relevant steps within the vision process. Each component is described in more detail in the following chapter.
- *Key decisions* are transition points within any visioning process, representing critical milestones or junctures. Decisions are often opportunities to reach consensus on a vision outcome and may provide important linkages to other processes, plans, or procedures. These decisions provide a bridge to the key decision points outlined in the TCAPP Decision Guide.

## Vision Guide Components

The components of the Vision Guide cover the primary focus areas of this research project and are intended to help practitioners apply these research findings within a visioning process. The four component areas are considering communities, reaching stakeholders, forming partnerships, and tracking commitments. Within the T-VIZ project website, these components provide a filter through which to view the process and assess the activity areas relevant to each component topic. The practitioner may then drill down to access additional information, processes, tools, resources, and web links within these focal areas.

### Considering Communities

Visioning offers communities the opportunity to express a desired future quality of life. Transportation is just one of many factors and variables that shape quality of life and community livability. The relationship between transportation decisions and community context is complex, and discussion is often limited to the impacts, costs, or benefits of improvements. In contrast, visioning offers the opportunity to understand better how transportation systems may shape the preferred future of a community, whether through urban form, livability, or economic competitiveness. Understanding, measuring, and communicating these concepts of quality of life is an important aspect of a visioning process, which often employs innovative tools and techniques to measure existing community conditions, forecast likely conditions, and track progress toward a desired future based on shared goals and values. Research within the considering communities component provides an organization framework to help the practitioner begin considering communities within a visioning process through the use of tools, techniques, and indicators that describe community context and quality of life.

### Reaching Stakeholders

The reaching stakeholders component provides guidance to practitioners for selecting involvement tools and techniques to use in a visioning process. This research will assist practitioners in reviewing emerging best practices and in selecting appropriate outreach tools to develop a vision, reach nontraditional stakeholders, and leverage new technologies and resources. Visioning

processes rely on innovative techniques to build public awareness and ownership in a process, help stakeholders make informed choices among alternative futures, and engage a wide variety of partners in vision development and implementation efforts. For this reason, public engagement is a hallmark of many visioning processes. As visions are used more widely in transportation planning, agencies and practitioners have access to an array of new tools and techniques to engage participants. New online technologies, scenario support tools, and creative and collaborative methods are emerging to supplement tried-and-true techniques such as public workshops and review periods. The online component guide provides details on managing outreach efforts in key activity areas, as well as a comprehensive listing of effective tools and techniques for stakeholder engagement from prior visioning processes.

### **Forming Partnerships**

The forming partnerships component highlights key considerations in identifying, building, using and maintaining partnerships within relation to the relevant activity areas of the Vision Guide. The broad scope of a visioning effort often involves agencies and organizations representing concerns well beyond the traditional roles of transportation planning and project authorities. This feature of visioning necessitates the formation of partnerships among public, private, and civic organizations, as well as partnerships among transportation and resource agencies, and within a transportation agency itself. Partnerships generally are developed to facilitate a visioning process, which involves creating new organizations, leveraging partnerships among existing organizations, or expanding the responsibilities of an existing entity to serve as the convener of a vision. Partnerships may be formed for the purposes of developing decision-making authority; strategically involving stakeholders; guaranteeing financial or in-kind resources; providing a forum for stakeholders to cooperate; and establishing a structure for implementation efforts. A partnership brings together diverse groups to achieve a common goal—in this case, to develop a shared vision. Most often, these relationships are informal, and partners are bound by a shared commitment and common interest in a visioning process. Other times, these relationships may be formalized and bind partners through funding agreements or implementation responsibilities.

### **Tracking Commitments**

The information in the tracking commitments component can help agencies leverage existing performance measurement and tracking systems to create a process that will provide periodic data on the status of a vision's implementation and effectiveness. Implementation of a visioning process is as important as the development of the vision itself. A source of frustration for many communities is that stakeholders or the public often feel that, after exhaustive efforts to develop a shared vision, the implementing agencies proceed with a business-as-usual approach that trivializes the shared vision. There are a wide variety of reasons why a transportation agency may fail, either in appearance or in actuality, to honor community commitments. However, many agencies have existing systems that can be leveraged or expanded to create a commitment tracking process that will support the vision goals of implementation. The Vision Guide provides a model commitment tracking process that is integrated within the phases and activity areas.

### **Visioning in Support of the Collaborative Decision-Making Framework**

Visioning processes provide a framework for the identification, analysis, integration, and implementation of community concerns, the needs of a transportation system, or the alternatives of a highway capacity project. The Vision Guide, developed using case studies, literature reviews, and other background research, supports a range of applications and provides outputs that

transfer readily into related SHRP 2 Capacity research as presented in the TCAPP Decision Guide structure. Whether an agency is undertaking a long-range transportation plan, a corridor plan, or an environmental review process, the key decisions included in the Vision Guide can be applied to the collaborative decision-making processes.

The TCAPP Decision Guide identifies key decisions in four phases of transportation decision making: long-range transportation planning, corridor planning, programming, and environmental review and permitting. This structure of key decisions common to all transportation agencies contains data to support an understanding of collaboration: why it is necessary, what is needed to support it, and how to make the changes necessary for a truly collaborative process. Each key decision provides information on how to implement collaboration fully.

Visioning is a relevant and useful tool that lends itself easily to an agency's collaborative decision-making process. A visioning process can establish necessary partnerships and stakeholder involvement, which can then translate into the processes defined in TCAPP. The Vision Guide process developed under this project exists outside of the TCAPP framework, and can be used independently. However, the two processes are readily integrated.

Through further work with TCAPP's interactive website and leveraging the application "Visioning and Transportation," the integration of these two processes to provide specific data transfer and collaboration points could provide an invaluable tool to practitioners. It also may encourage those interested in visioning to adapt the TCAPP model for use in other transportation processes, and illustrate the value of visioning to transportation practitioners pursuing a collaborative decision-making model. Tools and resources such as those developed through SHRP 2 will serve a critical role as transportation agencies, regional planning councils, civic groups, and others are tasked increasingly with coordinating around and planning within the complex interplay of social, economic, and environmental issues.



## CHAPTER 1

# Project Background

### Purpose of the Project

SHRP 2 developed a planning and project decision-making framework to integrate transportation considerations with community, socioeconomic, and environmental issues, through collaborative decision making. This research has led to development of a Decision Guide as a tool for practitioners to reach balanced, consensus-driven decisions for enhancing transportation capacity.

This project supports these research efforts by developing a blueprint for visioning linked closely to the Decision Guide. The objective of this project is to determine the role of visioning processes and the means to link visioning outputs within the Decision Guide's transportation planning processes. Visioning in support of transportation planning offers the opportunity to match public expectations to project outcomes, to enhance consensus decision making, and to better integrate transportation, community, socioeconomic, and environmental considerations.

A secondary but important product of this project is a supporting website, Transportation–Visioning for Communities (T-VIZ), which interactively presents the Vision Guide blueprint process and fully integrates the research findings of this project (Cambridge Systematics, Inc. 2011).

### Research Approach

Research for this project was conducted through the 10 tasks described below.

#### Task 1: Compile Background Information on Visioning Processes

The objective of Task 1 was to document lessons learned, key aspects, and relevant background information on prior visioning processes conducted since the early 1990s. The work was conducted through the following steps:

- *Conduct a literature review* to complete an introduction on the state of the art of visioning after the 1991 passing of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). Using reviews of existing academic literature and state and federal policy guidance on successful visioning, the purposes, evolution, and adaptation of visioning were documented.
- *Compile case studies and complete practitioner interviews* to document the key lessons learned from visioning processes. Twenty case studies were selected to represent a diversity of geographic scale, community context, topical scope, and level of effort. The case studies were assembled based on telephone interviews with practitioners and additional background research.
- *Complete a working paper and case study compendium* to produce an introduction to visioning and evolution of the visioning process. Findings from this foundational research and case study documentation were used to inform the research and presentation of subsequent tasks.

#### Task 2: Describe Transportation Infrastructure Impacts on Communities

The objective of Task 2 was to describe how to incorporate quality of life and community context concerns into a visioning process by establishing appropriate indicators and measures. The work was completed through the following steps:

- *Conduct a literature review* to compile available research on quality of life and the impact of transportation on communities at the local, regional, and state levels. Research was synthesized, and a database was compiled of relevant community context screening tools. These tools are presented interactively on the project website, including links to relevant examples.
- *Review related SHRP 2 Capacity research* to include work products and materials from Capacity Project C02 (Performance Measurement Framework for Highway Capacity

Decision Making), Capacity Project C03 (Interactions Between Transportation Capacity, Economic Systems, and Land Use), and case studies from Task 1 of this project to identify community impact analysis practices, measures, and results.

- *Prepare a working paper on considering communities* that would become Chapter 5 of this report.

### **Task 3: Identify a Stakeholder Outreach Program**

The objective of Task 3 was to identify common outreach tools and techniques that support effective stakeholder engagement processes for visioning and that enable practitioners to build lasting public support. The work was completed through the following steps:

- *Complete a literature review* to compile public involvement tools and techniques for engaging stakeholders in transportation planning processes. The review focused on relevant guidance, publications, noteworthy practices, and case studies on effective outreach programs of visioning processes in support of transportation planning.
- *Conduct practitioner interviews* to identify emerging best practices in stakeholder outreach methods, tools, and approaches. Interviews were incorporated as part of the Task 1 case study development, and were designed to explore general best practices and how visioning outreach tools support collaboration attributes identified in other SHRP 2 area research.
- *Develop a guide to visioning outreach tools* to help practitioners select from the range of available tools and techniques to focus on those most appropriate to specific activity areas within a visioning process. The tools and techniques within the guide are presented interactively on the project website, including links to relevant examples.
- *Prepare a working paper on reaching stakeholders* that would become Chapter 6 of this report.

### **Task 4: Describe Effective Partnering Strategies**

Task 4's objective was to identify purposes, structures, and common models of internal and external partnerships that help ensure success of a visioning process from inception to implementation. The work was completed through the following steps:

- *Complete a literature review* to compile information on partnership models and functions. The review went beyond the scope of the literature within the transportation industry; the majority of work on this topic has been

completed in organizational management and other areas of study.

- *Document partnership models* to draw on information from case study findings in Task 1. The methods and models used in the case studies were documented and reviewed for best practices and lessons learned.
- *Prepare research results* for inclusion in the report's section on forming partnerships, now Chapter 7.

### **Task 5: Develop a Sound Commitment Tracking Process**

The objective of Task 5 was to describe a performance-based commitment tracking process that ensures that core principles, consensus outcomes, and committed results from the vision are incorporated and embodied in project delivery. The work was completed through the following steps:

- *Complete a practice review* to compile and document data on processes and commitment tracking systems in use by transportation agencies.
- *Develop a prototypical process* to describe a generic commitment tracking process that extends from visioning through planning and project development to maintenance of infrastructure. The process is illustrated through a flow diagram, supplemented with descriptions of each process step.
- *Assess the process* to provide a recommended commitment tracking process, and integrate the process into the implementation phase of the Vision Guide.
- *Prepare a working paper on tracking commitments* that would become Chapter 8 of this report.

### **Task 6: Prepare a Business Case**

The objective of Task 6 was to prepare decision criteria and business case guidance for assessing the benefits and costs of conducting visioning in support of transportation planning. The work was completed through the following steps:

- *Assess benefits and costs*, drawing on information collected through interviews during the case study process and extensive background literature review. This assessment focuses on the qualitative aspects of visioning benefits, including the quality of and public satisfaction with projects, and degrees of public and elected official support.
- *Assess agency risks and trade-offs* to provide a set of decision factors or high-level guidance for agency managers to assess the intangible trade-offs, risks, and rewards of involvement in a visioning process.
- *Prepare a working paper* that would become Chapter 3 of this report.

## Task 7: Develop a Model Vision Process and Practitioner's Guide

The objective of Task 7 was to develop a model vision process relevant to a range of types and contexts, and to produce a draft Practitioner's Guide. This work was completed through the following steps:

- *Design a model vision process* through the review of case studies, expert opinion, Task 1 interviews with practitioners, and reviews of existing literature. The model vision process developed is modular and customizable to serve as a general outline to guide any agency through a vision (see Chapter 2).
- *Document visioning input linkages into the Decision Guide* by including key decision points within the model process. These decision points link directly into the Decision Guide and provide an easy way for a convener agency to apply the outputs of a vision to transportation processes.
- *Produce a Practitioner's Guide* that integrates the results of research to date into an interactive, web-based Practitioner's Guide to help practitioners apply visioning in support of transportation planning.

## Task 8: Vet the Draft Practitioner's Guide

The objective of Task 8 was to determine the utility of the draft Practitioner's Guide for transportation agencies, key partners, and practitioners. The work was conducted through the following steps:

- *Identify potential venues for vetting* to target a range of practitioner audiences. The project team secured presentation time at three well-attended 2010 events: the American Planning Association Conference in New Orleans; the Context-Sensitive Solutions National Dialogue in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota; and the TRB Environmental Meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina. In each case, the Practitioner's Guide was presented to attendants, and feedback was solicited.
- *Create a feedback mechanism* to gather broad input through an online survey and dedicated comment e-mail address, hosted online on the draft Practitioner's Guide website. Feedback from respondents was requested at each of the three vetting venues, and an e-mail was sent to request further feedback.
- *Compile the review comments* to synthesize results, and coordinate with the project panel's comments to incorporate suggested revisions into the final Practitioner's

Guide as part of Task 9. An overview of the vetting plan is included as Appendix B.

## Task 9: Revise Practitioner's Guide and Prepare Technical Report

The objective of Task 9 was to revise the draft Practitioner's Guide based on the results of the Task 8 review and comments from the Technical Expert Task Group, and to develop the project's final report. The task was completed through the following steps:

- *Revise the draft Practitioner's Guide* and respond to input received during the Technical Expert Task Group review and testing results obtained in Task 8.
- *Prepare a draft of the final technical report* to compile and document all research completed for this project, including the background, rationale, and structure of the Practitioner's Guide.
- *Conduct a review and comment period* to allow for feedback from the project panel for input into the completed draft final technical report.
- *Prepare and submit the final technical report and Practitioner's Guide* to incorporate the panel's comments, and prepare the final products of the technical report and Practitioner's Guide, including the project website.

## Task 10: Create Training Products

The objective of Task 10 was to develop, implement, and support an electronic-based training tool that instructs practitioners how to use the model vision process, and how the outcomes of visioning techniques can be integrated into transportation planning and project development decision making. The work was completed through the following steps:

- *Evaluate alternatives* to determine the best electronic media options and specific form to be used, including webinars (which then can be made accessible for subsequent replay).
- *Develop a set of training objectives* to provide an overall training outline, based on research conducted.
- *Create and provide online training products* that will then be hosted on the project website for a viewing audience. Three presentations describing the project background, how to navigate the Vision Guide, and how to implement the Vision Guide were recorded and posted on the Technical Resources page of the T-VIZ website (Cambridge Systematics, Inc. 2011).

## CHAPTER 2

# The Visioning Process

### Introduction

Visioning processes are planning and policy exercises that engage community stakeholders in building long-term, consensus frameworks for future decision making. The purpose of visioning is to create a shared base of understanding and generate policy direction for the future of a community.

These processes commonly extend beyond conventional transportation planning horizons and are intended to address the confluence of social, economic, educational, environmental, development, and transportation issues. The visioning process addresses four central questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where are we going?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?

These questions effectively capture the basic principle of visioning, which is to complete a shared learning process to determine collectively a community's future. Visioning processes are designed to enable participants to reach a series of consensus decisions on a community's current conditions and future trends, to agree upon a desired future or futures, and to develop a clear strategy for how to reach that desired future. The following are distinguishing characteristics of this approach:

- Proactive, innovative, and interactive public outreach techniques and stakeholder engagement;
- Focus on community context, livability, and values;
- Emphasis on technical development of alternative scenarios, both collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches; and
- Expansion of ownership of the process and responsibility for implementation from elected officials, agencies, organizations, and residents.

Planning processes for large-scale projects have grown more involved as community issues increasingly require regional approaches and as the number of governmental entities, private actors, and community groups involved in decision making has grown. As a result, visioning has emerged as a strategic approach to planning that seeks to develop consensus among a broad range of stakeholders on a wide range of issues.

The role and application of visioning may be viewed from several perspectives, especially with regard to the relationship with existing, concurrent, or future transportation planning processes. Some practitioners view visioning as simply an interesting or innovative means to help facilitate public involvement in the development of a particular project or plan. An example is using visualization software or interactive games in long-range transportation plan development efforts. Other interpretations are broader, viewing prior visions as important foundations helping to establish the scope and direction of future transportation planning processes. An example is a regional visioning effort whose final outcomes direct the initial scope and emphasis areas of a long-range transportation plan.

Visioning has been successfully applied in both contexts; however, this project attempts to broaden the definition of visioning beyond imaginative scenario planning and creative public involvement techniques to also capture the critical preparation and implementation processes that help transform a vision from an alternative into a reality.

### The Evolution of Visioning

The idea of anticipating a desired future and building infrastructure and orienting policies to support that vision also has a long history in the United States. Long-term, strategic planning has been practiced as long as community and transportation planning has existed as a discipline. Scenario planning

has well-established roots in business and military strategic processes, whereas intensive public involvement emerged more recently in context-sensitive solutions (CSS) practices.

The large-scale transformation of communities in the United States, beginning in the nineteenth century, was closely tied to abstract visions for what each city could be and what physical form it could take. This was motivated by an aesthetic philosophy emphasizing grand public works projects and a sense of unity to the built environment, which reached its height during the City Beautiful movement. The realization of these vision-based plans would involve dramatic changes to the built environment well beyond the scale of the way many cities had traditionally developed.

Notable early examples of vision-driven planning efforts include the 1909 Daniel Burnham Plan for Chicago (Grossman et al. 2004), the Regional Planning Association of America's conceptual plans for the Appalachian Trail (Seltzer 2000), and the municipal plans developed throughout the United States by John Nolen (Hancock 1994). These efforts were conceived with the objective of urban reform and thus had the public benefit in mind, but they did not incorporate public input in their conceptual development (Schlereth 1994).

Grand city planning fell out of practice by the middle twentieth century, primarily in response to the sudden increase in demand for housing and rapid development of infrastructure to accommodate a growing suburban population. Planning began to emphasize analytical methods and technical expertise, although these were still practiced without public input. In the later decades of the twentieth century, public involvement began to reclaim a place in planning discussions, largely owing to impacts on communities resulting from large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Interstate Highway System. The renewal of public involvement in the planning process originated with a focus on advocacy for traditionally under-represented communities, and eventually evolved into a general articulation of the need for cooperation and consensus building among planners, stakeholders, local officials, and the general public.

In the twenty-first century, regional visioning emerged to address issues such as air pollution, climate change, congestion, development patterns, and economic competitiveness that necessitate collaborative, regional approaches. Regional visions often emerge in areas in which governmental structures are fragmented, localized, or too inflexible to respond to problems of the future. Community visions, too, are increasingly eclipsing traditional planning horizons in favor of long-term, broad views of the future.

The evolution of planning philosophies and practices has led to visioning, which combines best practices from strategic scenario planning with public involvement techniques. These modern efforts began to emerge in the 1980s in the form of community organizations such as Chattanooga Vision,

which set out an ambitious plan for downtown redevelopment with the horizon year of 2000. Other pioneering community visioning efforts appeared in the early 1990s, such as the Oregon Visions Project, which set a long-term vision for the community of Bend. Today's popular form of interactive scenario-based visioning was made so by organizations such as Envision Utah and the involvement of urban design consultants specializing in technical scenario planning. Recently, state-sponsored efforts to use visioning as a catalyst for regional cooperation and developing integrated approaches to transportation and land use, have emerged in Florida and California. Visioning processes are now occurring in urban communities as wide ranging as Baltimore, Portland, and Chicago, and in rural communities such as Taylor County, Florida, and Routt County, Colorado. Comprehensive regional visions have emerged in the diverse areas of Central Texas, Southern California, and Upstate New York to address issues of regional cooperation, environment, land use, and economic development, among other considerations. Although the application of visioning to transportation processes is relatively recent, it is emerging as a best practice for communities and agencies.

## Visioning and Transportation

Visioning in transportation planning and decision making has become increasingly common since the adoption of ISTEA. Federal recommendations to practice visioning as a means of proactive and inclusionary public involvement have been embraced and enhanced by a variety of organizations and research centers, state departments of transportation, metropolitan planning organizations, and regional planning councils. The result has been the increasing application of visioning to a variety of projects, plans, issues, and communities; however, the broader role of visioning in transportation remains underdeveloped.

Vision processes tend to produce high-level, policy-oriented outcomes that prove challenging to integrate with focused, project-specific transportation planning and development efforts. For example, the range of outcomes produced through visioning processes may include broad language on a community's values and goals; specific objectives and principles to guide decision making; or detailed maps depicting anticipated land use patterns, critical resource areas, or future transportation corridors.

These outcomes can be linked throughout the stages of transportation planning and project development processes, including long-range transportation plans, corridor planning, project programming, environmental review, or permitting processes. For example, vision statements may help shape the goals of a long-range transportation plan; maps of desired future conservation areas may provide input into the range

of solutions considered in corridor planning; or decision-making principles for future transportation systems may provide direct input into developing consensus on a draft transportation improvement plan. Applications of visioning in support of transportation planning have included all modes, from the development of integrated centers to seaport master plans to high-speed passenger rail corridors. Visioning also may suit any scale of planning effort, from broad, regional, long-range transportation plans to urban transit corridor plans to the design of local streetscapes. Visions may support a single project or provide a foundation for many subsequent plans, including the strategic plans of transportation agencies themselves.

However, in the United States, visioning in support of transportation planning has not been uniformly embraced by practitioners and remains an underdeveloped concept and underutilized practice. This research seeks to identify core elements of a visioning process and to establish relationships to transportation planning to be used in future efforts.

## Visioning in Practice

To better understand how visioning processes have been applied in transportation planning, this project reviewed selected national examples of visioning processes, studying the scope and scale of the process, partners and public involved, community context considered, commitments made, and implementation activities. Lessons learned and key success factors were developed based on a synthesis of these examples and offer conclusions addressed in this project and questions for further research.

This section outlines the process for screening and selecting 20 case studies for documentation. The case studies illustrate the breadth of practice of visioning processes with transportation as a key element of planning. Some examples focus on specific highway projects, others on regional transportation plans; others represent comprehensive planning efforts encompassing transportation and other planning dimensions. Brief summaries of the 20 case studies appear in Table 2.1, and complete summaries appear in Appendix A (online only).

The subsequent tasks of this project relied on the selection of example visioning processes and the information developed to understand more fully the use of visioning as related to transportation planning. The research effort was initiated with a set of five major typology filters to ensure that the examples selected covered a range of visioning processes:

- *Geographic scale* is a key dimension of any visioning process and informs nearly every other aspect of an effort. Visioning processes may take place at a project, neighborhood, community, regional, or multistate level. The complexity

of the vision's organizational structure may depend on the number of public agencies, institutional partners, and community stakeholders involved. Public involvement tools and techniques, and technical scenario modeling or illustrating approaches also must be scaled to reflect the geographic area.

- *Community context* influences the focus of a vision as well as the challenges and solutions to the issues presented. Addressing an issue such as the future of the transportation system may be common to many visioning processes, although the solutions offered depend on the vision's rural, urban, or suburban context. Expanding transit options is a recurring outcome of many metropolitan visioning processes, as is improving bicycle and pedestrian accessibility in suburban-oriented contexts, but these solutions may not be appropriate in rural areas with a need for increased highway capacity.
- *Topical scope* is important as visioning processes become increasingly expansive and comprehensive in their outlook. Traditionally, many visions focused on the location and patterns of future transportation networks or land development patterns; however, visioning processes are increasingly addressing the full breadth of interrelated systems, including economic development, housing, public health and safety, education, environment, and community resources.
- *Level of effort* involved in developing the vision is a key dimension that varies widely but provides significant lessons learned for future processes. A visioning process is often scoped according to the availability of financial and staff resources. As such, a large range of public involvement techniques and tools have been developed to adapt to any given process, from large-scale, technically complex efforts, to simple but effective visualization and scenario planning games, to innovative public input provided by city planning professionals hosting walking community audits.
- *Ownership* of the process and of related planning efforts refers to the agency or agencies that assume responsibility for coordinating implementation and tracking commitments. Although visioning processes are used to develop guidance for a public project or planning effort, the processes themselves are not always initiated or managed by public agencies. For example, a regional vision effort may be led by a private organization but maintain strong ties to the agencies responsible for transportation planning and program development.

## Selection Methodology

To develop a representative cross section of case studies, the research team sampled a broad list of potential candidates, conducted a systematic review, and selected 20 studies for in-depth research.

**Table 2.1. Examples of Visioning Processes Selected for Further Study**

Visioning Process	Description
Envision Utah and Wasatch Choices 2040	In partnership with public and private partners Envision Utah developed a vision to address quality growth and is commonly considered a model for civic engagement. A related regional effort created a vision with guiding principles that were adopted into long-range transportation plans in the Greater Wasatch Valley, Utah.
Envision Missoula	Convened by the Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization, this visioning process developed alternative land use and transportation priorities for the region to use within a larger update to the long-range transportation plan (LRTP) for Missoula County, Montana.
Bluegrass Tomorrow	Bluegrass Tomorrow, a Central Kentucky civic organization, was formed to advance regional coordination and has sustained visioning efforts addressing quality of life and economic vitality in the region for more than a decade.
Transportation Outlook 2040	The Mid-America Regional Council leveraged a required long-range plan update to convene a broad visioning process that resulted in a vision that addresses the role of transportation in the region's future.
Vision Metcalf	As part of urban revitalization efforts, the City of Overland Park, Kansas, used community visioning with extensive visualization exercises to develop a vision, including transportation alternatives and design concepts, for the Metcalf Avenue urban corridor.
2040 Vision for the I-95 Corridor Coalition	The 2040 Vision initiative was a departure from the organization's historic role of focusing on short-term operational improvements for the I-95 corridor. To address long-term issues and to provide members with a guiding framework for the future, the coalition embarked on a strategic visioning process.
Oregon Transportation Vision Committee	Initiated by the governor to address long-term transportation challenges and to shape near-term transportation legislation, the Vision Committee was an effort to develop consensus among public representatives and private leaders on future transportation priorities and funding approaches.
I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East Project	The Washington Department of Transportation led an innovative public involvement approach to solicit community preferences and develop preferred solutions for improvements within the I-90 corridor. Resulting projects will improve the safety and reliability of the corridor while restoring and preserving delicate ecosystems within the Central Cascades.
Vision for Route 50 Scenic Byway	The Route 50 Corridor Coalition organized community opposition to a proposed capacity project and advanced community interests by developing a vision and preferred alternative for enhancements to a rural byway in Virginia.
Atlanta VISION 2020	Convened by the Atlanta Regional Commission to address the region's rapid growth, the VISION 2020 effort lacked consensus among public-sector actors and did not result in the translation of vision initiatives and policies into regional action.
Community Technical Assistance Program	The New Hampshire Department of Transportation introduced an innovative program to help develop community-based visions with transportation and land use components in response to reconstruction projects along the I-93 corridor.
California Regional Blueprint Planning Program	The California Department of Transportation's Blueprint grant program for MPOs advances regional coordination by enabling the development of consensus growth visions, which provide guidance for long-range transportation plans, land use, housing, and environmental issues.
Vision PDX	Championed by the City of Portland, Oregon, the Vision PDX process applied innovative techniques for public involvement to develop a vision for the built, economic, environmental, and social future for the city over 20 years.
Riverfront Parkway Transportation Plan	Chattanooga Venture was a pioneering organization that led many community-based efforts in the 1980s. The foundation provided by early visioning efforts led to action on several significant downtown development projects in Chattanooga, Tennessee—including the Riverfront Parkway Plan, which transformed a state highway into a pedestrian-friendly, two-lane road reconnecting the city to the river.
Arizona State Road 179	The Arizona Department of Transportation used a community-driven, needs-based implementation planning process for reconstructing an environmentally sensitive corridor. The process evaluated solutions based explicitly on community values and with direct input from citizen advisory design teams.
Transportation 2040 and Vision 2040	Developed by the Puget Sound Regional Council, Transportation 2040 represents the integration of the region's long-range transportation plan with the goals and principles established in the region's Vision 2040 visioning process.
Vision Idaho	Sponsored by the Idaho Department of Transportation, this process articulated a 30-year transportation vision for the state, including highway, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian, water, air, information technology, and rail systems.
How Shall We Grow?	Convened by the civic organization myregion.org, this visioning and public involvement campaign led to the development of a shared regional growth vision for Central Florida. The resulting growth principles continue to be supported by partners and implemented in regional transportation plans and local land use plans.
New Visions 2015–2030	In the 1990s, the Capital District Transportation Committee began a dialogue on emerging regional issues related to transportation and land use. Since then, the New Visions regional planning and visioning effort has been continually updated and provided the framework for regional investments and local implementation efforts.
Metro Vision 2035	An ongoing effort of the Denver Regional Council of Governments since the 1990s, the Metro Vision process has resulted in a broad regional plan for future growth and development that provides direct linkages to the region's long-range transportation plan and urban growth boundary.

A list of more than 150 potential examples was compiled by a review of transportation agency websites, a review of academic literature addressing visioning processes and public involvement techniques, and discussion with national experts who have had experience and involvement in a variety of transportation planning projects. The project team then reviewed and categorized candidate projects based on the five typology filters. The team then compared each on the basis of how closely the visioning process was related to transportation considerations, particularly issues of transportation capacity, and whether the visioning process yielded outcomes that influenced transportation projects or policies.

Approximately 70 candidate case studies emerged from this initial screening and were reviewed more thoroughly. The project team reviewed materials including websites, final reports, presentations, and news articles for each project to assess availability of information and fit with the research objectives of this project. Twenty examples were chosen that best met criteria and provided a representative sample using the five typology filters.

The research team reviewed each of the selected visioning processes in detail and developed a case study summary for each. Research was conducted using online information, academic publications, and peer reviews. Telephone interviews also were conducted with key representatives from the lead organization and related transportation partners in DOTs, MPOs, and other transportation agencies. The case studies were developed consistently by employing a detailed questionnaire and survey form. The summaries were peer reviewed by members of the project team to ensure accuracy and objectivity. Summaries of the individual case studies were then vetted by key contacts within each organization to provide an opportunity for clarifications, comments, and final approval for publication. Full case study summaries are included in Appendix A.

## Lessons Learned and Success Factors

Visioning in practice is never the same as in theory. Every vision process develops uniquely according to the community context, partners involved, issues considered, and challenges encountered. However, there are general lessons learned and key success factors common to many of these efforts that provide guidance for future efforts. Lessons learned were synthesized from case study research and the experiences of practitioners.

- *Articulate purpose.* Visioning is a powerful tool for organizing a community and building consensus. Stating early and often why the visioning process matters and reviewing project

objectives as the process continues, help build a clear link between the vision and the specific plans and projects that it is intended to guide.

- *Engage stakeholders.* Visioning efforts are intended to enable participants to understand the future impacts of today's decisions. This goal is represented through scenario-based planning in which trend patterns are extended or alternative futures created, often with accompanying visualizations to help participants understand the outcomes and trade-offs involved.
- *Leverage existing efforts.* Reviewing prior work of partners and even previous visioning efforts may help establish the support of partners, roles and responsibilities, and how a new vision fits into partner planning efforts. Leveraging existing plans also may help generate support from local elected officials with a stake in the development of those plans.
- *Collaborate with partners.* Regardless of whether a public agency or civic organization leads a visioning effort, partner organizations are a major factor in any effort to reach consensus and in implementation. When the vision advances to policy and action recommendations, a lack of collaboration can impair momentum and weaken links between the principles developed in the visioning process and application to the plans and processes of partners.
- *Demonstrate effective leadership.* Strong and effective leadership is crucial at many levels, from the project convener, to elected officials, partners, and stakeholders, and within the community itself. Leaders and publicly visible champions establish support and maintain commitments to the visioning process and its outcomes.
- *Sustain outcomes.* Visioning efforts are meant to guide planning for a long period of time, and the ability of a vision to influence efforts decades later reflects a strong commitment to the vision. Successful visions demonstrate that partnerships may be sustained and outcomes carried forward into future decisions, and that transportation planning outcomes relate back to the original vision.
- *Communicate transparently.* Visions featuring extensive and continued public involvement are often the most transparent to stakeholders. Successful processes exhibit clear vision statements that have been reached in a manner understood by all participants. For example, highway capacity is a topic usually managed and decided by professionals with extensive technical expertise. However, the reasons for capacity decisions can be understood and influenced by a community, and the links to other facets of community life may be more readily understood through a transparent process.
- *Cultivate leadership.* Visions with strong political, business, and community leadership tend to be implemented more



than those without visible public champions and cultivated leaders in all sectors. Additionally, leadership may help ensure the success of a vision over a long period of time, especially in providing guidance to help the vision evolve and adapt to changes in political reality.

- *Analyze alternatives.* Visioning processes invariably involve a competition of ideas and interests, but a shared learning process helps arrive at consensus. The gradual elimination of future alternatives through discussion, testing,

collaboration, and an understanding of choices and trade-offs is key to successful consensus building. Trade-offs should be clearly communicated through a scientifically based process that determines impacts with easily understood indicators. One of the common ways this is achieved is through the use of scenario-planning tools and techniques, with which participants can interactively judge the results of the choices made and eliminate undesirable alternatives.

## CHAPTER 3

# Transportation Agency Involvement in Visioning

### Introduction

The outcome of a visioning process and how the benefits accrue depend on many factors, including the scope and scale of the project; the transportation agency's level of involvement; the sensitivity of the community to transportation, environmental, and community issues; and the engagement of stakeholders and elected officials. A practitioner must take into account these factors, and others, when assessing the potential positive and negative outcomes of participation in a vision. To help the transportation practitioner determine whether to engage in a visioning process, this chapter presents a set of factors and the basis for assessing those factors, for agency managers to consider.

The factors are designed to help answer the following questions when a transportation agency must decide whether to provide support for, participate in, or lead a visioning process.

- Would participation in a visioning process improve public perception of an agency, or risk public trust in an agency?
- Is a vision likely to improve delivery of a planned or stalled project?
- Is a visioning process likely to resolve or renew conflicts?
- Would a vision increase public ownership in a planning process and the outcome of that process?
- Would a vision enhance future process and project outcomes, or impede efforts?
- Are the outcomes of the vision likely to be unduly influenced by participants?
- What are the possibilities of arriving at suboptimal solutions, from the agency's perspective?
- Is the agency prepared to address related topics within a vision, such as land use, development patterns, or environmental issues?

### Transportation Perspectives and Considerations

The expected benefits of a transportation agency's involvement in a visioning process tend to accrue in the long run and are subject to uncertainty, whereas the direct resource or opportunity costs are often immediate and known. Given these circumstances, it seems unlikely that these processes would be undertaken by transportation agencies at all, and yet visioning in support of transportation decision making is increasingly common across the United States.

A transportation agency will choose to become involved in a visioning process when outcomes are expected to be more efficient and more appropriate than what might otherwise occur. The benefits of visioning are related to those of the collaborative, interdisciplinary CSS approach. Considerable research has documented the benefits and business case of CSS within planning processes. CSS benefits are often counted as direct cost savings resulting from streamlined completion of projects or avoided costs of redesign or litigation. The key characteristics and activities of visioning are similar, including engagement of stakeholders, transparency of discussions, documentation of commitments, creative outreach and involvement, and consensus agreements. These similarities support the use of the existing research on the benefits of CSS practices as a relative (although certainly flawed) proxy for the benefits of visioning.

However, from a transportation agency's perspective, the benefits and business case for visioning are not as clear. CSS approaches tend to identify singular solutions at the project level, and often focus on considerations such as location and design of a transportation project. Visioning processes tend to be geared toward identifying needs and alternatives, and focus on considerations such as community values, long-term development goals, and desired elements and choices of a transportation system. The outcomes of visioning are subject

to greater uncertainty; processes are not as strictly managed or defined, and often do not address specific project or design considerations. Because of this uncertainty, quantifiable benefits to visioning are less likely to be clear to a transportation agency from the outset of a visioning process.

As a result, initial decision-making guidance for involvement is important. The decision factors presented in this chapter include those with clear advantages or potentially positive outcomes and others with obvious disadvantages or possible unintended consequences. However, in each case the actual likelihood of an outcome, positive or negative, must be evaluated by the agency before involvement, considering the unique circumstances of the community, vision scope, and stakeholders. Within this assessment, the agency may identify specific strategies concerning its role and involvement in a visioning process so that the outcome is most likely to be positive, both for the agency and the public.

### Examples of Transportation Agency Support of Visions

In transportation planning, visioning may be undertaken to support a variety of processes, from local area development plans, corridor improvements, and long-range regional transportation plans, to statewide coordination efforts. An agency could choose to become involved in visioning for a variety of reasons and assume a range of leadership roles within a process. Listed here are several examples of an agency's direct involvement with a visioning process at different levels—a project-oriented vision, a community vision, and a comprehensive regional visioning process.

- A state department of transportation may propose a community vision to support a specific project, plan, or process, particularly one that addresses sensitive community or environmental issues. For example, the Arizona DOT initiated the State Route 179 Corridor Project to address necessary safety and mobility improvements to the designated state scenic byway. Agency managers believed public trust in the agency was at risk because previous proposals were not accepted by affected communities and were deemed insensitive to community values. The visioning and planning exercise culminated in a preferred solution for the scenic corridor, developed in close collaboration with stakeholders.
- An MPO may sponsor a visioning exercise to inject new ideas and long-term thinking into a long-range transportation plan (LRTP), corridor, or local area planning processes. For example, the Missoula, Montana, MPO embedded a visioning exercise within an LRTP update that resulted in a change of policy direction and the selection of a different modal mix of projects than previous plans. The MPO had

not previously considered visioning as a source of input but acknowledged that the process improved project outcomes.

- A state DOT, MPO, or local transportation agency may support a comprehensive visioning process in which transportation considerations are not an explicit focus of the process but are addressed in relation to other issues. For example, the Florida DOT and five regional MPOs were funding partners and participants in Central Florida's regional visioning process. The vision outcomes have informed local project selections, have been used in LRTP updates, and provided input to the statewide transportation plan.

In these examples and others, agency roles ranged from the vision convener to partner to stakeholder to observer to implementer. The expected outcomes, advantages, and disadvantages of visioning vary directly with the level of involvement and the role of an agency. In general, the greater the responsibility for the process, the greater the rewards and risks involved.

### Decision Factors for Agency Involvement

Participation in visioning may yield benefits to an agency, including reducing project lead time, managing risk better, enhancing planning outcomes, and improving public perception. The benefits of visioning accrue to the agency but also to stakeholders by furthering environmental or economic goals, enhancing leadership or organizational capacity, and creating lasting value for communities with appropriate transportation solutions. Visioning processes may also result in less than desirable outcomes, including the diffusion of decision-making authority, extended project timetables, risks to public standing, or potential conflicts with standing agency priorities or plans. These unintended consequences tend to affect an agency directly and are not borne by stakeholders or a community as a whole.

These advantages and disadvantages are often not clear from project outset and depend on the primary role and level of involvement of an agency, and on the scope and actual outcomes of the visioning process. Decision support for managers may come down to simply knowing the right questions to ask:

- How might an agency benefit?
- Is the project outcome likely to be better?
- What utility might stakeholders derive?
- What does the agency risk?

These questions may be illuminated by decision factors that help agencies understand and assess the possible outcomes of involvement in any visioning process. The decision factors

discussed here are intended to provide agency managers with the arguments for and cautions against participation in visioning in support of transportation planning. However, the likely outcome of a process depends on many factors, including the scope and scale of a vision; the transportation agency's role and level of involvement; the sensitivity of transportation, environmental, and community issues; the expectations surrounding the process; and the engagement of stakeholders and elected officials. As such, these decision factors do not represent a predetermined business case for involvement in visioning but instead focus on considerations for transportation agency managers.

## Summary of Decision Factors

### *Improving Project Delivery*

Visioning processes may enable agencies to advance planning and development processes on predictable schedules, with greater public acceptance or committed financial support. An agency manager may consider whether to participate in a visioning process if the scope and structure appear to support early consensus-building opportunities that, in turn, may streamline the planning and delivery processes.

The time and resources involved in advancing transportation projects from planning stages to construction phases are significant. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2002), a transportation project may take up to 20 years to complete, though the time required varies with the scale, complexity, public interest, and range of issues involved. Under most state and federal regulations, agency projects and plans must advance through established stakeholder review and approval phases. Delays to planned projects often emerge owing to public controversy, environmental assessments, or interagency review challenges.

The ability of a transportation agency to program and deliver projects reliably within set time limits may be influenced by stakeholder concerns over potential environmental and community impacts. Unaddressed, these concerns may result in organized opposition, political pressure, or litigation that may lead to short delays that extend project design and development, or extended delays that may impact agency project programming. Visioning and other stakeholder involvement processes have the potential to reduce opposition by addressing concerns and better enabling project development to proceed within a predictable time frame.

For example, a corridor visioning process resulting in agreement on project specifications or possible alignments can be used as direct input into later project planning stages. Broader processes, such as regional visions, may develop maps of desired conservation areas that can be used by an agency to anticipate environmental concerns when proposing projects.

Or a visioning process may just bring stakeholders and resource agencies together early enough to identify possible roadblocks that would otherwise be addressed much later in permitting or approval stages.

Visioning processes are not guaranteed to improve project delivery. Any open process risks providing a forum for organized opposition, enlivening stakeholder interest or opposition to planned projects, or extending project timetables, depending on the conclusion of the vision. That risk must be balanced against the likelihood that project completion time frames may be significantly reduced through earlier participation of the public and resource agencies in planning and design phases. With the costs of contracting, construction, and right-of-way acquisition constantly increasing, projects completed on schedule provide long-term benefits by reducing delivery costs and providing mobility benefits sooner.

### *Resolving Conflict*

Visioning processes that enhance public involvement through cooperative processes may reduce community opposition, mitigate risk of litigation, or help resolve conflicts, therefore enabling the efficient completion of projects. An agency manager must consider whether a visioning process is an effective strategy for managing potential conflict among stakeholders, and what the appropriate role of the agency may be within that process.

Transportation planning processes are regulated to provide the public with opportunities to contribute to decisions and to ensure an agency considers the broad impacts of those decisions. Avenues for recourse exist if an agency fails to provide either of those steps in the process. Public participation and open planning processes often result in improved project delivery and project outcomes over the long run but may increase the likelihood of initial short-term conflict or negative consequences beyond the project or plan.

Documentation of project decisions improves protection against this risk. Records of decisions made throughout the project can be used to support choices and prevent misunderstandings. Tracking of commitments, discussed further in Chapter 8, also may reduce the risk of conflict, because all commitments made and associated solutions will be documented and recorded.

Visioning processes also may be an effective technique to engage stakeholders early, actively, and continually in problem solving and conflict resolution during transportation planning and project review phases.

### *Enhancing Process and Project Outcomes*

Visioning processes are often comprehensive and examine transportation within broader environmental, economic, or

societal contexts. Early consideration of issues, partnerships with diverse interests, and improved communication among stakeholders, as well as other aspects of visioning may enhance planning and project outcomes for transportation agencies, as well as provide long-term benefits to communities. An agency manager must consider whether participation in a visioning process may result in improvements to intended outcomes, or if participation risks unintended consequences.

Visioning may result in improved outcomes for regions through long-term environmental, economic, or social benefits; for communities through context-sensitive design of improvements; or, for individual projects through innovative and creative solutions to challenges. For example, achieving consensus on long-term goals for a community or establishing principles for decision making will enable an agency to better identify or communicate purpose and need when sponsoring a project. A project that emerges from a consensus vision may be more likely to create lasting value for a community by helping move toward long-term environmental, economic, or social goals. Additionally, information-sharing partnerships with resource agencies can result in environmentally sensitive project design that, in turn, reduces mitigation costs while improving the local or regional environment.

A review of national visioning examples completed for this project found a commonly cited benefit was the sense that projects sponsored by local governments after participating in a regional visioning process were better suited to communities or more consistent with established goals. As a result, they are more likely to be selected or prioritized within an MPO cost-feasible plan or work program.

### ***Increasing Public Ownership***

Visioning may provide an opportunity to enhance public understanding and ownership in transportation decisions through inclusive and interactive involvement processes. Visioning processes are noted for employing a full range of public and partner involvement strategies to communicate with key stakeholders and with the general public. Agency managers must consider whether participating in a vision may improve the outreach and involvement activities of an agency.

Innovative technology, such as scenario-planning software and visualization tools, may help the public better understand the impacts of decisions, the range of issues involved, or the specific elements of a proposed project. Simply improving communication with stakeholders can provide meaningful benefits in public trust and perception, the ability to provide appropriate feedback, and a sense of ownership or involvement in decisions. Visioning processes that result in public approval of decision-making principles or long-term transportation goals may improve public opinion and trust in the intentions and future actions of an agency. Similarly, achieving consensus

on scope or need of projects may foster a sense of ownership in the process and a desire to see the project through to completion, because input was considered and the project purpose is likely to reflect community values. The transparency of a visioning process, including considering alternatives and decisions in an open forum, and documenting commitments, also can significantly increase trust in an agency and reduce miscommunication about future actions.

Additional advantages of visioning may not benefit the transportation agency directly but also could be considered by agency managers. Visioning may provide a framework for future regional or local action by stakeholders or provide the political messaging needed for elected officials to enact policy changes. In these cases, in which collective action is enabled, the transportation agency may benefit later from participating in the visioning process. Implementation of visioning outcomes may also enhance community character and amenities, further establish conservation or environmental goals, and provide sustainable economic and community development, all of which are increasingly considered by transportation agencies when making long-term policy or project decisions.

### ***Ensuring Open Processes***

A visioning process is often open to participation from any member of the public or stakeholder group, and undue influence from any one interest may slant the process in one direction, with variable effects.

If a process is viewed as biased, very little can be accomplished to alter the perception of stakeholders, the media, and the general public, and any subsequent outcomes of the vision essentially cannot be used. Civic, environmental, business, or other interest groups may organize and affect the outcome of a vision, either by opposing the process or gaming it. An open process increases the risk of the vision evolving into a forum for organized opposition that effectively ends the process, or for enlivening stakeholder interest in, or opposition to, previously planned and programmed projects. A vision may be completed successfully, with significant public participation and consensus agreement, but be so completely biased as to be meaningless for input into later transportation plans and priorities.

Visions are often supported by both public and private resources, and project sponsors should be aware of the appearance of financial contributions from agencies, landowners, or interest groups. Improper influence also may stem from agency involvement, if it is perceived that direct agency funding or support for a process is intended to affect the range of possible solutions, alternatives, or project selections being considered.

However, if an open process results in dialogue that may not otherwise occur, outcomes and solutions may be developed

that are positive and beneficial to the community, process, and agency involved. For example, a citizen group may become involved in a vision as a means to raise opposition to a project but through participation produce an alternative solution that is acceptable and beneficial to all parties. This outcome arguably has positive effects for the community, and positive outcomes for public perception of the agency involved. Open processes also may bring solutions to the table that the agency thought unacceptable, were not previously considered, or were not feasible without financial or political support from partnerships established within the visioning process.

The hallmark openness and intensive public participation in visioning processes may increase the risk of improper influence, but transparency and broad outreach and engagement efforts may mitigate negative consequences and produce positive results. An agency manager must consider the public environment and stakeholders involved in an effort before becoming involved.

### *Arriving at Conflicting Solutions*

A visioning process may arrive at a potential solution or set of preferred alternatives that are optimal from stakeholders' perspectives but are considered suboptimal from a design, engineering, cost, or systems planning perspective.

Visioning processes often look 20 to 50 years in the future and may result in proposed solutions to current transportation challenges that are not fiscally or technically feasible. More likely, visioning processes may propose corridor alignments, design elements, multimodal connections, or street configurations that an agency may not consider the best fit from engineering or cost perspectives. An agency manager must consider how to address these challenges within the visioning framework, including informing participants of critical technical considerations during the visioning process, and working with participants so that trade-offs are fully understood. Agencies can work with vision facilitators to ensure that the solutions arrived at are posed to provide meaningful input or policy direction for the agency. For example, a broad regional vision is unlikely to produce an outcome resulting in recommendations for a specific project but may result in recommendations for future project choices. This type of input can be used by an agency without risking negative public perception.

Agency managers also may find that public priorities arrived at within a vision may not reflect an agency's established priorities. This could result in conflicts between statutory requirements of an agency and the vision's public mandate. If an agency cannot respond to the outcomes of a vision, or if resource allocation to priorities differs, the public may call the agency's decisions and commitments into question.

Arriving at conflicting or compromised solutions is an inherent risk to an agency within a visioning process, but the

ideal solution is to arrive at consensus solutions. Active agency participation in vision development may result in solutions acceptable to both stakeholders and agencies, solutions that reflect the desired outcomes of both parties. An agency manager should consider not just the risk of possible outcomes but potential strategies for arriving at solutions that benefit and advance the agency's mission and goals.

### *Addressing Corollary Issues*

Visioning processes often link transportation with related land use, development, community, or environmental issues. This recognizes the increasingly interrelated aspects of transportation planning and is not a far stretch from many existing processes.

However, transportation agencies must carefully consider their readiness to become involved in a vision that addresses topics not directly within the agency's sphere of influence or authority, such as land use and zoning decisions that are often the domain of local governments or regional planning organizations. If cooperative interagency relationships are well established, a transportation agency may readily become involved in a comprehensive vision that addresses many aspects of community livability. However, if working relationships are fragmented or nonexistent, an agency should carefully consider its readiness to assume a lead role in a broad visioning process. Stakeholder involvement and interagency cooperation are keystones of successful vision efforts, and an agency may consider whether involvement could assist in efforts to establish relationships with key public, private, and civic partners that do not currently exist.

In addition, comprehensive visions addressing multifaceted issues may provide valuable insights and policy direction for an agency. For example, a vision may produce an outcome that helps agencies anticipate which environmentally sensitive areas should be avoided, and which conservation areas need recreational access. These are invaluable outcomes of a visioning process that, although not directly related, are corollary issues with clear implications for transportation planning. Increasingly, federal policies favor increased cooperation between public transportation, environmental, and housing agencies to address issues of community livability. Visioning processes represent opportunities for agency engagement with partners on these issues.

When considering the benefits and risks of addressing a wide range of issues within a vision, many factors must be taken into account, not least the agency's readiness to become involved in other issues of importance. The unique characteristics of a community or the scope and scale of a vision will help determine the case for transportation agency involvement in broad visioning efforts. Table 3.1 presents examples of how these decision factors have come into play in completed visioning efforts.

**Table 3.1. Decision Factors in Practice**

Decision Factor	Example Visioning Process
Improving project delivery	<p>In 2000, Florida DOT evaluated its entire transportation planning process and concluded that projects were often delayed, experienced cost overruns, or became mired in permitting processes. The most significant problem identified was the lack of early partner engagement, particularly with state resource agencies. As a result, the department reengineered its project planning process and instituted a program of efficient transportation decision making (ETDM), which, in part, emphasized early engagement with stakeholders through a variety of alternative involvement techniques.</p> <p>“The ETDM Process has allowed us to be more resourceful by focusing our efforts on the most important issues in project development. By identifying and resolving issues prior to the production phase, we are improving project delivery and realizing cost and time savings” (Florida Department of Transportation 2012).</p>
Resolving conflict	<p>The Collaborative Effort, a committee of interested parties along the I-70 Mountain Corridor in Colorado, was convened to reach consensus on a recommended transportation solution for the I-70 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. The Colorado DOT and FHWA were active participants in this working group, which was established after decades of distrust, misunderstanding, and contention about transportation options, environmental protections, and economic impacts of the highway corridor. The group was convened by the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, which in a summary report noted, “Discussions were inhibited by a lack of a corridor-wide vision for population growth, economic development environmental protection, and the transportation systems which will accommodate this vision” (The Keystone Center n.d.).</p>
Enhancing an open process and project outcomes	<p>The Denver, Colorado, area’s MPO, The Denver Regional Council of Governments, established explicit project prioritization criteria for work program selection, which reflect the outcomes of the region’s ongoing Metro Vision process. Agency staff suggest that this commitment has improved the variety and scope of projects submitted by local governments, in favor of regional vision values and principles. As a result, projects are more likely to support MPO or state goals to reduce congestion, minimize environmental impacts, discourage unsustainable land development, and support a multimodal transportation system.</p>
Arriving at conflicting solutions	<p>In Missoula, Montana, agency officials suggested that the Envision Missoula process was influenced by significant participation from organized bicycle, pedestrian, and smart growth interests. Intense participation from these active and educated stakeholders in scenario development workshops may have influenced vision outcomes in favor of pedestrian and transit alternatives. Significant statistical differences in support of transit alternatives were noted between the results of a random telephone survey of all residents and the preferences of attendees of vision workshops.</p>
Addressing corollary issues	<p>The Montana DOT was a funder and project supporter of the Missoula MPO’s Envision Missoula visioning exercise. This process looked at transportation and land use as interrelated and inseparable issues, and resulted in preferred scenarios and policies that addressed future land use and transportation decisions. The DOT was hesitant to fund the visioning component of Missoula’s LRTP update because of the attention paid to future land use decisions when developing alternative scenarios, believing land use the domain of local governments. The DOT is not likely to participate in future visioning processes that emphasize local issues.</p>

### Summary of Decision Factors

The benefits of agency involvement in visioning processes are subject to uncertainty, whereas the resource and opportunity costs are often known. Agency managers must balance those immediate costs with the potential for long-term gains. The information presented here does not attempt to balance these resource costs with possible cost savings or to present a quantifiable record of successful visioning processes.

Instead, the likelihood of productive vision outcomes depends on many factors, including the scope and scale of a vision, the transportation agency’s role, its level of involvement,

the sensitivity of transportation, environmental, and community issues, and the engagement of stakeholders and elected officials. A manager may take into account these decision factors, which are often unique to the situation, when assessing the potentially positive outcomes or possible unintended consequences of participation. To a certain extent, the involvement of an agency and the characteristics of visioning present opportunities or strategies that may help avoid negative and ensure positive outcomes.

To assist managers in assessing decision factors, Table 3.2 presents decision factors with key questions and potential strategies to help avoid negative outcomes and ensure positive outcomes.

**Table 3.2. Decision Factors for Transportation Agency Involvement in Visioning**

<b>Decision Factor</b>	<b>Key Questions</b>	<b>Strategies to Avoid Negatives</b>	<b>Strategies to Ensure Positives</b>
Improving project delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is a current project stalled or considered likely to stall?</li> <li>• Is there a need to advance a project quickly?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop linkages between vision outcomes and concurrent processes.</li> <li>• Make transportation solutions and alternatives explicit priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximize opportunities for early partner and stakeholder involvement.</li> <li>• Identify priorities early.</li> </ul>
Resolving conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a lack of consensus?</li> <li>• Is opposition anticipated?</li> <li>• Are current conditions adverse?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use vision process as consensus-building technique.</li> <li>• Develop goals, principles, and policies early in process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote early involvement of partners.</li> <li>• Communicate expected outcomes.</li> </ul>
Enhancing process and project outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will a vision in place help advance projects?</li> <li>• Will the vision result in a better mix of projects?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable discussion of alternative approaches.</li> <li>• Encourage participation from diverse stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop links between vision and related processes and plans.</li> </ul>
Increasing public ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the current perception of the agency?</li> <li>• Does the vision address contentious topics or stakeholders?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use process as a part of a broad agency outreach strategy.</li> <li>• Maximize opportunities for interaction and communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage expectations of participants.</li> <li>• Clearly communicate outcomes and processes.</li> </ul>
Ensuring open processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How active and organized are interest groups?</li> <li>• Will an open process result in new ideas?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop relationships with stakeholders and partners.</li> <li>• Encourage alternative perspectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain transparency and clearly communicate methods.</li> <li>• Develop broad outreach and input techniques.</li> </ul>
Arriving at conflicting solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the agency’s ideal solution?</li> <li>• How receptive to change is the agency?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage strategic, policy-level outcomes.</li> <li>• Develop out-of-the-box approaches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform public about agency’s role and priorities.</li> <li>• Focus on developing guidance, not directives.</li> </ul>
Addressing corollary issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the status of interagency working relationships?</li> <li>• Would project benefit from addressing multi-faceted topics?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop connections between transportation and related issues.</li> <li>• Establish interagency partner groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate roles and responsibilities early in process.</li> <li>• Demonstrate willingness to explore linkages between topics.</li> </ul>



## CHAPTER 4

# Vision Guide

### Introduction

The Vision Guide provides a model vision process to better enable practitioners to engage in visioning in support of transportation planning. It is a visual representation of a multiphase, activity-oriented process for preparing, creating, and implementing a vision. In subsequent sections of this report, the Vision Guide will be referenced as the basic framework for linking the research objectives of this project in a format readily accessible to practitioners.

No two visioning processes are identical, and all must adapt to the unique community context in which they occur. However, there are process steps, activities, components, and key decisions common to any visioning process. This high-level, critical information is presented in the Vision Guide. This model vision process is intended to help vision practitioners identify practical activities involved in visioning, in strategically managing aspects of a vision, and in establishing links between vision outcomes and transportation planning and project development decisions. The target audience for this project is a practitioner, defined as a staff member working for an agency or organization engaged at some level in a visioning process, either inclusive or exclusive of a transportation focus. Definitions of the designated roles, and their use in the T-VIZ model process, follow.

A companion resource for this research is the online, interactive version of the Vision Guide, which can be found on the TCAPP website ([transportationforcommunities.com](http://transportationforcommunities.com)). The site supports this research and is the best portal for accessing the information within the Vision Guide.

### Roles within the Visioning Process

Vision processes involve a wide set of public officials, elected leaders, organizers, partners, and public stakeholders, and these relationships have a significant impact on the process,

outcomes, and implementation of a vision. The following roles are used throughout this report to refer to the variety of actors involved in visioning.

- *Practitioner*: A practitioner is a staff member working for an agency or organization engaged at some level in a visioning process. Practitioners, the target audience for this project, may work for any of the following types of organizations:
  - Transportation agency (e.g., state, city, or county department of transportation, MPO, regional planning agency)
  - Governmental agency (e.g., state, regional, local public entity with planning roles and responsibilities)
  - Private or civic organization (e.g., academic, business, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization)
  - Consultant
- *Convener*: Serving as the lead on the vision, a convener is the organization responsible for driving the process, developing partnerships, soliciting public participation, and implementing the vision. Conveners may be public agencies or private or civic organizations.
- *Partners*: Partners are individuals or organizations that have an active and defined role in decision making and that have influence over the scope and scale of the visioning process. Visioning processes are the products of a series of partnerships.
- *Stakeholders*: Stakeholders are distinct from partners in that they provide input and influence over the outcome but are not involved in defining the scope and scale of the process. Inherent to the public involvement emphasis of visioning processes is the inclusion of stakeholders, or those who have an interest in the outcome of the study.
- *User*: A user is one who is affected by the vision, or uses the vision, but is not involved in the vision development process. Citizens, implementing agencies, private and civic sector partners, and future transportation planning, and

development processes are all examples of users that for one reason or another were not an active participant but are able to accept the outcomes of the visioning process in subsequent activities.

- *Transportation agency perspective:* A transportation agency can participate in a vision process through any of the roles described above.

## Overview of the Vision Guide

The Vision Guide summarizes a model visioning process to better enable practitioners to engage in visioning in support of transportation planning. The guide is the result of the initial project research aim to develop a model visioning process that may be applied throughout any community or planning process. However, no two visioning processes are identical, because all must adapt to the unique community context in which they occur. There are basic phases, process steps activities, focus areas, and key decisions common to any process, and it is this high-level, critical information which is represented here. The process depicted in the Vision Guide was developed based on extensive research, literature reviews, and discussions with experts in community visioning.

Currently, there is no common definition of a visioning process, although those in use all exhibit common elements. The earliest, and clearest, description of a model process comes from a project in Portland, Oregon, from the early 1990s (Ames 1993). The conceptual foundation of community visioning can be illustrated through four simple questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where are we going?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?

This theme is repeated in the many existing process definitions for strategic visioning and scenario-based planning and has since been used in countless efforts. These questions form the core of the Vision Guide but also represent a view of visioning that is limited to the process of creating the vision outcome. The Vision Guide expands this process to address the critical questions a practitioner must address in preparing for and implementing the vision. Activities to prepare for a vision are significant and influence the outcomes of the scenario-based planning aspects of vision development, yet they are often not incorporated in vision processes or scopes of work. Similarly, the activities necessary to carry the vision into reality are underemphasized in current literature and in practical examples from around the country. The Vision Guide presents a unified approach to preparing,

creating, and implementing a vision, to provide a complete model process.

## Organization of the Vision Guide

The graphic illustration of the Vision Guide is organized into three phases of critical activities and key decisions. Together, these phases and activities represent a complete process for conducting a vision but are not necessarily sequential, and many may be acted upon independently or concurrently. To accommodate the diverse interests of practitioners and the varied scope and scale of visioning processes, the information contained within this model process can be accessed at multiple levels and for different purposes. A practitioner may select individual activities or view components or particular focus areas directly related to the research aims of the project.

The following descriptions introduce each element of the Vision Guide.

- *Phases* help organize a vision. The first phase, Preparing the Vision, includes organizational and management activities to prepare for the visioning process. The second phase, Creating the Vision, focuses on technical activities and stakeholder involvement in the development of the final vision outcome or products. The third phase, Implementing the Vision, provides the framework for following through on the vision.
- *Activity areas* are the basic steps of a vision. These areas include multiple critical activities, products, strategies, and actions. Areas are building blocks of a vision and are ordered logically, however they may be acted upon concurrently or independently.
- *Components* are specific focus areas relevant to a vision. These themes provide a framework for addressing certain topics and are linked to relevant activity areas. Four components are represented—considering communities, reaching stakeholders, forming partnerships, and tracking commitments—and are drawn from the research presented throughout this technical report.
- *Decisions points* represent transitions within a vision. Decisions may represent critical milestones or junctures and often provide key opportunities to reach consensus on a vision outcome or provide important linkages to other processes or plans.

Figure 4.1 is a graphic depiction of the Vision Guide, highlighting the structure of the process. Vision phases are represented by three columns, activity areas are represented by chevrons, and decision points are represented by gray boxes.



**Figure 4.1. Key elements of the Vision Guide.**

## Description of Vision Guide Elements

### Phase One: Preparing the Vision

For the practitioner, initial preparation activities focus on developing the necessary support and institutional structure to launch and maintain a successful visioning process. Establishing this framework for action involves answering the critical questions: Why should a community engage in visioning? What is the purpose and focus of the vision? How will the vision be organized? Who should be involved?

To resolve these process questions, a practitioner must reach out to stakeholders, assess partnerships, identify key issues, secure commitments, establish an organizational structure, and develop a scope of work. These steps are typically undertaken in planning exercises but may hold additional significance in an interdisciplinary, inclusive, and innovative visioning process. This phase includes organizational, managerial, and foundational activities that are the responsibility of the convening organization. Figure 4.2 illustrates the activity areas in this phase.

**Why are we doing this?** Within this activity area, the practitioner's responsibility is to identify key interests and stakeholders, begin developing relationships, and build support for the vision.

- *Conduct early outreach.* Engaging stakeholders and partners early helps develop interest and ownership in the process and assists in building a compelling case for a vision. Cultivating public champions among influential leaders from public, private, and civic sectors provides essential support for the vision. For more information on tools and techniques to reach stakeholders, see Chapter 6.
- *Frame problem statement.* Articulating the need and context for a vision sets the stage for and direction of future efforts. The need for visioning often arises in cases in which the desired planning focus is on long-term challenges and solutions, not present-day problems. Visioning may be well suited in contexts in which particularly sensitive issues are best addressed through an inclusive process.

**What has been done?** Within this activity area, the practitioner's role is to review existing resources diligently, to inform



**Figure 4.2. Phase One: Preparing the Vision.**

the development of the process, and to identify existing networks as opportunities for future collaboration.

- *Review prior plans and visions.* Taking stock of previous planning efforts, research, or previous visions is an important near-term action to provide background for a visioning process. Related work may provide direct input when determining critical issues, developing relationships with stakeholders, or revealing the value of updating a pre-existing vision rather than developing a new process. Background research also may assist in assessing data on existing conditions and potential future trends, for use in later activities.
- *Assess existing partnerships.* Building on existing relationships is an effective means to engage partners or to establish an organizational structure for a vision. Key stakeholders already may be coordinating within a community and provide ready partnership models.

**What is important?** Within this activity, the practitioner's responsibility is to develop a set of shared community concerns or issues, to facilitate a common understanding of the community, and to reach agreement on the desired outcomes of the visioning process.

- *Determine key issues.* Establishing significant community considerations, key priorities, or driving research questions informs the scale and scope of a visioning process. This activity helps focus the vision and direct future outreach, partnering, and organizational efforts.
- *Identify study area.* Developing an understanding of community boundaries will shape the scale of the visioning process, as well as determine the stakeholders and partners involved. This activity also includes establishing a common community identity, which may be a component of early stakeholder engagement efforts.
- *Establish desired outcomes.* Managing expectations of participants, setting objectives, and reaching agreement on a project's purpose are important early activities. Documenting outcomes may help reduce conflict among stakeholders later in the process, may guide the scope of work, and may establish early objectives.

**What are our resources?** Within this activity, the practitioner's role is to develop a compelling case for involvement and to secure resource commitments from partners.

- *Develop a business case.* Assessing the possible outcomes of involvement in a visioning process will help transportation

agencies evaluate their preferred role and level of support. For potential funding partners, involved stakeholders, or the general community, a business case may be presented based on expected advantages of completing a vision. Chapter 2 provides guidance and decision factors for agencies to evaluate their role in a process.

- *Secure partner commitments.* Initiating and maintaining a vision requires the resources of partners, both in financial support and technical assistance. Securing contributions may be accomplished through establishing partnering structures, negotiating financing for the convening organization, or by securing pledges of in-kind assistance.

**Who will we involve, and how?** Within this activity, the practitioner's responsibility is to clearly establish the lead sponsor for the visioning process, to reach agreement on the representatives and process structure for collaborative decision making, and to define the partnerships and structures best suited to fulfilling desired objectives.

- *Establish convener.* Convening a visioning process should be the responsibility of a primary convening organization. Visioning processes are time- and resource-intensive and are more likely to be successful with dedicated staff and support resources.
- *Define decision-making structure.* Moving a visioning process forward cannot often occur without agreement from multiple partners and interests. A defined decision structure, such as an advisory committee, board of directors, or core partner group, with clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations is critical to the legitimacy and longevity of a vision.
- *Develop partnership models.* Gaining the cooperation of the many stakeholders and representatives involved in a visioning process often requires the creation of new partnerships, or developing the capacity of existing networks. Partnerships may be pursued to fulfill distinct purposes, ranging from enabling decisions, securing resources, implementing commitments, or engaging groups of stakeholders. For more information on forming partnerships, see Chapter 7.

**What is our approach?** Within this activity, the practitioner's responsibility is to develop a structured approach, to craft a public engagement strategy, and to communicate project expectations to the public.

- *Develop scope of work.* Planning and managing activities are critical to a successful process. Ideally, a scope should establish a detailed, phased approach that allows for reassessments at critical junctures. A wide range of strategies and activities are available to complete key visioning elements such as scenario-planning, outreach efforts, and communication of outcomes under any resource constraints.
- *Develop outreach strategy.* Focusing early outreach efforts on building networks, developing media contacts, establishing

a brand and web presence, and presenting information to community members should be part of a public participation and outreach strategy. Outcomes may include public communications materials, media materials, a website, and related branding materials. A complete matrix of available outreach tools and techniques is available in Chapter 6.

- *Establish timeline and milestones.* Communicating the visioning process's purpose, procedures, and decision points helps clearly convey expectations to partners and the public. At the initiation of the vision, the public and partners should be fully informed of the anticipated timetable of the process.

## Phase Two: Creating the Vision

For the practitioner, this phase leads to the creation of the final vision products, and includes the best-known activities of conducting a vision. The critical questions that frame this phase are simple in theory, yet complex in practice. The critical questions, or process steps, are as follows:

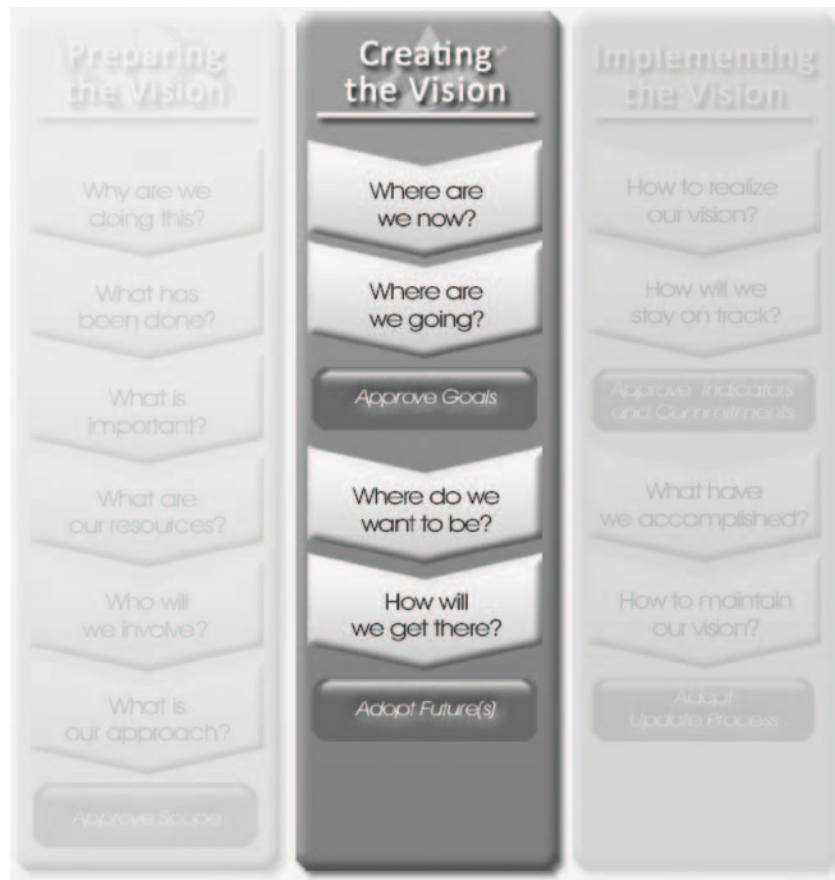
- Where are we now?
- Where are we going?
- Where do we want to be?
- How will we get there?

These statements form the core of a visioning process, which seeks to generate future policy direction from a shared base of understanding.

Technical activities are a focus within this area and include data collection and analyses, modeling and scenario-planning techniques, and indicator development. Typically, scenario-planning actions use early community input and descriptions of current trends—in contrast with alternative futures—to enable public comment and agreement on a preferred future. Significant stakeholder outreach and public engagement also are conducted to assess preferences and to develop consensus vision outcomes. Other actions include leadership engagement and consensus building. The end result of the activities in this phase is most often a concise statement of a preferred future, accompanied by additional products such as decision principles, descriptive maps, long-term goals and objectives, or other guidelines for implementation. Figure 4.3 highlights the activity areas in this phase.

**Where are we now?** Within this activity, the practitioner's responsibility is to collect information on current conditions within the community, and to define and develop indicators to assess those conditions and possible alternatives.

- *Gather baseline information.* Compiling and sharing information on a community is the basis for creating the vision. Data may include statistics and geographic information,



**Figure 4.3. Phase Two: Creating the Vision.**

interviews with community leaders, or public opinion and values surveys. The purpose is to provide a starting point for the issues and values discussions that will occur in later steps.

- *Define and develop indicators.* Providing a basis for judgment is important to help participants fully understand the trade-offs, alternatives, impacts, and potential futures assessed later in the process. Often indicators are related to key issues and are intended to convey statements of future direction and quality, rather than quantity or output. Indicators also provide valuable benchmarks for comparisons or later progress reporting. For a discussion of indicators and measures, see Chapter 5.
- *Refine values and issues.* Reflecting agreement on the values and issues to be addressed in the visioning process provides an opportunity to build public input and support for the vision. This activity may take the form of interactive opportunities for the public to help establish community core values and significant considerations.

**Where are we going?** Within this activity, the practitioner’s responsibility is to inform participants of future trends and policy choices, and to reach agreement on common goals that inform the development of the vision.

- *Document trends.* Providing information on probable future trends helps participants in a visioning process assess their choices and determine preferences. Historic and projected data may be used to help frame problem statements, determine priorities, and develop alternatives.
- *Develop goals and guiding principles.* Building consensus around long-term goals, objectives, or guiding principles may be challenging, but it will provide significant direction for the visioning process. Community goals are often formed through interactive public input opportunities such as workshops and meetings.

**Where do we want to be?** Within this activity, the practitioner’s responsibility is to identify alternatives for consideration and develop representations of those alternatives for assessment, to engage participants creatively in a process to provide input on alternatives, and to reach consensus on a preferred future(s).

- *Identify and evaluate potential futures.* Developing alternative futures helps the public make informed choices. The process for identifying alternatives for analysis, representing those alternatives creatively, and then evaluating

alternatives based on established values and indicators should be iterative, collaborative, and innovative. Potential products within this activity range from involved, technical modeling efforts to simple, illustrative representations.

- *Solicit public and stakeholder input.* Providing the public the opportunity to view, assess, and provide preferences on alternative futures is a hallmark of many visioning processes. For the best results, the process of engaging the public, soliciting input, and utilizing that input should be structured, transparent, and genuine. Interactive, targeted outreach and engagement strategies are often used to provide creative opportunities for involvement.
- *Develop a consensus future.* Collecting, refining, and utilizing public input in developing a consensus future is a critical activity within the visioning process. Without a clear process to accept input in developing a common future, the entire process may disintegrate. Representation of the consensus future, whether by illustration, vision statement, selected alternative, or set of goals must reflect the input provided and be developed with transparent decision making and communication.

**How will we get there?** Within this activity, the practitioner's responsibility is to finalize value, goal, and principle statements in support of the vision; to document, communicate, and distribute the final vision outcome; and to provide guidance on priorities and responsibilities to move the vision into implementation stages.

- *Revise goals and guiding principles.* Matching community goals identified earlier to the preferred future(s) establishes the path forward in the visioning process. Values, goals, issues, and principles may be aligned with the consensus alternatives to provide guidance on the priority issues to be acted upon during implementation. This iterative process allows for public input and consensus building in preparation of communicating the outcomes of the vision.
- *Describe vision outcome.* Developing a unified, concise statement of vision, or supporting vision products, helps achieve the purpose of strategic visioning, which is to provide guidance for future decisions. Communication of final outcomes to participants, stakeholders, and partners is an important component of this activity.
- *Establish implementation priorities:* Moving from vision to reality requires attainable goals, actionable objectives, and measurable outcomes. With the momentum of crafting the shared vision, the roles and responsibilities of partners should be identified, working groups established, and resources dedicated toward implementation. These activities provide the framework for handing off the vision into the implementation phase.

## Phase Three: Implementing the Vision

For the practitioner, this phase focuses on identifying specific actions, roles, and responsibilities to advance the vision into reality. Activities may include endorsement of the vision by elected officials and key stakeholders, transferring vision outcomes into related planning processes, or conducting outreach to significant partners to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the vision over time. Progress made toward the vision and the status of commitments of partners and agencies is tracked and communicated to the public as a means to demonstrate tangible outcomes.

The purpose of implementation is to achieve progress in realizing the vision, but equally important is the creation of lasting structures, partnerships, and processes for continued cooperation. Figure 4.4 highlights the activity areas in this phase.

**How will we realize our vision?** Within this activity, the practitioner's responsibility is to link the vision and community goals to actionable objectives, to assist in the integration of broad vision guidance to specific efforts of partners, and to document commitments to be tracked.

- *Develop objectives and actions.* Long- and near-term objectives and action steps may be identified by utilizing the information collected during the visioning exercise. Actions should be linked to identified values, goals, and principle statements to provide a basis for progress toward the vision.
- *Integrate vision into processes and plans.* Linking vision outcomes and implementation guidance into the efforts of partners provides an important bridge from high-level visions to ground-level processes and plans. Vision outcomes may be formally adopted by partners, provide direct inputs into planning stages, or be reflected in the decisions and documents of partners. Chapter 9 includes additional details on linking vision outcome to transportation planning and development processes.
- *Secure partner commitments.* Documenting and communicating commitments is critical to establishing implementation roles and providing momentum to transfer responsibility for implementation to partners.

**How will we stay on track?** Within this activity, the practitioner's responsibility is to maintain relationships, partnerships, and networks; to develop a clear commitment tracking process to ensure accountability; and to reach agreement on a process to assess progress continually.

- *Maintain public and stakeholder relationships.* Recognizing partner and public contributions to the visioning process and communicating opportunities for future involvement are critical to maintaining interest in the vision. Developing



**Figure 4.4. Phase Three: Implementing the Vision.**

post-vision leadership programs, recognition awards, or involvement opportunities are some activities employed to maintain the relationships developed in the previous phase.

- *Develop commitment tracking process.* Developing a transparent, adaptable commitment tracking process within the sponsoring organization or within participating public agencies helps ensure that the vision is acted on and any benefits to an agency, such as improved public perception, are maintained. Model commitment tracking processes are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.
- *Establish measurement process.* Reporting progress toward the vision is critical to judging results and establishing priorities for implementation. A measurement process should identify the indicators to be reported, responsibilities for data collection, and a period of consistent measurement moving forward.

**What have we accomplished?** Within this activity, the practitioner’s responsibility is to provide information and updates on the status of the vision, the state of the community, and progress toward implementation. Continuing to monitor, measure, and report progress toward the vision is a powerful tool for continuing efforts and adjusting priorities.

Communicating progress may mean developing performance measures and indicators or may include anecdotal stories of success that help inspire action.

**How will we maintain our vision?** Within this activity, the practitioner’s responsibility is to establish a framework and process to sustain the vision over time.

- *Refine implementation strategy.* Judging progress through commitment tracking and performance measurement provides direct feedback into reassessment of implementation priorities and strategies. Monitored commitments may be fulfilled and retired, or reassessed and prioritized, depending on the status of implementation.
- *Refresh partnerships.* Providing motivation to act on a vision, sometimes decades after development, requires that partners are continually reengaged in vision implementation efforts. Strategies to accomplish this include recognition of achievements, collaboration on specific objectives, updates to certain elements of the vision, and other outreach methods to maintain strong community partnerships.
- *Identify new opportunities:* Ongoing environmental scanning and strategy development may help identify new opportunities for the convening organization or for the partnerships developed during the visioning process.



## Decision Points within the Vision Guide

To enhance compatibility across current Capacity research areas, this project has mirrored the TCAPP approach by identifying transitions within the model visioning process at which a practitioner may arrive at key decision points. As a result, these decision points also provide important linkages to the transportation processes identified in the TCAPP Decision Guide. The following descriptions of decision points highlight the importance, purpose, actors involved, and linkages for key transitions within a visioning process.

### What Is a Decision Point?

From the perspective of a visioning practitioner, certain steps are arrived at within visioning processes that represent a milestone or critical juncture. These decision points may mark the end of a phase or the completion of a key activity, but they commonly represent important opportunities to reach consensus on a vision outcome with partners and stakeholders.

Decision points also provide important linkages to other processes, plans, or procedures. For example, a vision outcome once adopted is more likely to be used by a public agency to inform ongoing efforts. The opportunity to recognize and adopt a vision outcome formally is considered a decision point and an opportunity to transfer information from broad visioning efforts to defined planning and project development processes.

Within the Vision Guide, five decision points are identified and depicted as gray boxes. Decision points may occur at the end of a phase or represent interim steps within a phase. Determining decision points was completed in close cooperation with the contractor of the SHRP 2 C01 project to ensure compatibility between the two research efforts. Each decision point is described in more detail below.

### Approve Scope

Effectively planning visioning activities and managing the expectations of stakeholders and partners are critical to a successful process. At this point in the preparation of visioning activities, seeking approval of the project scope from a lead committee, sponsoring organization, or funding partners assists practitioners in both these aims. A scope of work should establish a detailed, phased approach that allows for reassessments at critical junctures in the process. A scope may be approved and committed to by the leadership of a sponsoring organization, but it also should be clearly documented and communicated to a broader audience to help manage expectations of the vision's purpose.

The scope for a visioning process may also provide important links to parallel planning efforts by transportation or

resource agencies. A scope may define the geographical boundaries of a community or establish the range of issues to be addressed, which may in turn inform partner efforts. Establishing the scope also represents a commitment by the sponsoring organization to complete a visioning process within a certain time frame or including certain activities, and can be linked to future progress reporting efforts. This decision point marks the transition from the preparation phase to the activities involved in creating the vision.

### Approve Goals

Reaching consensus on community goals is a key milestone in a visioning process and substantially informs many future activities. Approval of goal statements by stakeholders or sponsors provides an early opportunity to establish a shared identity, to create a sense of purpose for the vision, or to identify common values.

Goal statements are important outcomes that are continually transferred through the visioning process. Community goals are often used as a basis to assess the merits of alternative futures, to organize task forces or issue area working groups, or to inform the principles, indicators, or other outcomes of a visioning process. Approval of goals by stakeholders and the public may be more significant than approval by the vision's decision-making body. Broad buy-in to the ideas and commitments represented by goal statements from a number of partners will help ensure the longevity of the vision. Approval of goals by key partners and implementing agencies also is important and may be completed by a formal process to be recognized by an agency. Once approved, goals may be used as inputs to the planning efforts of partners, by helping establish the scope of a long-range transportation plan, or by assisting in the selection of alternatives to be assessed in a corridor planning effort, for example.

### Adopt Futures

Common to any visioning process is the creation and selection of a preferred future or multiple futures. This may be accomplished through scenario-planning activities and involving stakeholders in assessing alternatives and selecting preferences. This important decision point, when consensus is reached on a preferred course of action, is an explicit objective of visioning.

Adopting a preferred future may be accomplished by soliciting the approval of stakeholders through extensive outreach and involvement opportunities. This may be followed by formal adoption from the leadership of a convening organization, or the pledge of elected officials, or through recognition by public agencies. It is this formal adoption step that enables transfer of the vision's preferred future into related planning efforts.

Formal recognition of a preferred future better enables the transfer of vision products into the planning and development efforts of transportation and other resource agencies. For example, visioning processes that produce preferred future land use maps may readily transfer to the transportation modeling efforts of MPOs and long-range transportation planning processes. Adopted futures might also inform the scope of future planning processes by helping agencies determine community context, define conservation land areas, determine future transportation investment preferences, or suggest the land use and development patterns to be supported by a future transportation system.

### ***Approve Indicators and Commitments***

Implementation of a vision may be one of the more challenging aspects of any process. Implementation necessitates actions on a range of issues, may encompass many jurisdictions and regulatory agencies, and requires the continued involvement of many partners and stakeholders. Two critical tools for advancing implementation efforts include the application of indicators and the tracking of commitments. Reaching a point of consensus approval for either of these tools provides a framework for embarking, monitoring, measuring, communicating, and revisiting the outcomes of a visioning process.

Indicators are measures, benchmarks, criteria, and commitments that provide information on current community conditions, assess impacts of alternative futures, and inform processes to monitor and report efforts toward implementing the vision. Reporting progress toward achieving the vision or commitments made to act on the vision, is critical to assessing results and establishing priorities for implementation. Selecting and approving indicators is the first step in establishing a comprehensive progress-reporting framework. Approval of indicators may be sought from leadership of the sponsoring agency, project partners, or stakeholders involved in early phases of the process. Approved indicators provide the basis for continually monitoring the status of implementation efforts, for documenting the successes and challenges of the vision, for legitimizing continued efforts, or for adjusting priorities.

Commitments include statements of the convening organization to act on the goals, objectives, or actions identified by the vision, agreement from transportation and resource agencies to integrate the vision into planning processes, or pledges of elected officials and public governments to recognize the vision. Approval of these actions is a critical step in implementation and, once made, can be publicized and clearly communicated to stakeholders to provide accountability and reduce potential for misunderstanding. Approved commitments may be readily transferred to tracking processes or related transportation planning processes. For example, a vision may result in an alternative roadway improvement design that a DOT agrees to evaluate

and act on as part of an approved commitment. That commitment may then transfer into the project development process and be clearly communicated and tracked by stakeholders.

### ***Adopt Update Process***

Establishing an update process provides an important future opportunity to revisit and revise the vision to meet the community's evolving priorities. This decision point is often used to mark the culmination of visioning activities, with the understanding that visions are intended to be active processes, not static plans, that may influence decisions and activities of partners and stakeholders decades later. To aid the future relevance of a vision, a clear understanding of the responsibility, timeline, and scope for updating the vision should be established.

Adoption of a plan for revisiting the vision should be completed by the leadership of the sponsoring organization or by those responsible for organizing ongoing efforts. That commitment should be clearly documented and communicated to stakeholders as a future opportunity to reassess efforts. Vision update processes are often adopted as part of the final vision products, with the support and recognition of project partners. For example, a vision update process could be adopted that is timed to coincide with updates to a local government comprehensive plan or an MPO's long-range transportation plan, thus ensuring that the goals and outcomes of the vision are revisited on a periodic basis and in full cooperation with partners.

## **Component Areas of the Vision Guide**

Four component areas are represented within the Vision Guide, each addressing an important element of visioning, and serve to link the project research objectives:

- Considering Communities;
- Reaching Stakeholders;
- Forming Partnerships; and
- Tracking Commitments.

The component elements are linked within the online interactive Vision Guide and are intended to help practitioners see how these specific efforts evolve and emerge through the course of the entire vision process. In the Vision Guide available in the online project website, each component area is represented by highlighting significant activity areas. The following images and descriptions explain the component areas as included in the online Vision Guide. For more details on the topics covered by each component, please see the corresponding chapters of this report.

## Considering Communities

This component area highlights activity areas relevant to determining community context, livability, and quality of life. In Figure 4.5, related activity areas are darkened.

Considering community livability and communicating context through the use of indicators is an important aspect of a visioning process. Community indicators are used in preparing the vision to provide baseline information; in creating the vision to help stakeholders evaluate future alternatives; and in implementing the vision to help gauge progress toward the vision. Within the online Vision Guide, practitioners have access to a variety of real-world tools and examples used in community impact assessment and indirect cumulative effect practices. These tools are drawn from the research documented in Chapter 5 and Appendix C.

## Reaching Stakeholders

A practitioner interested in stakeholder involvement and outreach activities within a visioning process may use the reaching stakeholders component to focus on key activities. In Figure 4.6, related activity areas are darkened.

Reaching stakeholders is an important aspect of a visioning process and is significant in early steps to establish relationships, critical when creating the vision, and important to implementation efforts. Accessing this component through the project website provides access to a variety of outreach tools and techniques, including web links to real-world examples from visioning processes. These tools and techniques are drawn from the matrix included in Chapter 6 and are selected to best represent the tools and techniques applied within each highlighted activity area.

## Forming Partnerships

For practitioners interested in the importance, purposes, and possible structures for forming partnerships, this component area reveals key activity areas. In Figure 4.7, related activity areas are darkened.

Partnerships are crucial to the success of a visioning effort, and are often the most lasting outcome of a collaborative effort. Forming partnerships early in a process is important to build broad support, secure resources, and develop organizational structures. When implementing the vision, partnerships with decision makers, key stakeholders, and elected



Figure 4.5. Considering communities component area.



Figure 4.6. Reaching stakeholders component area.



Figure 4.7. Forming partnerships component area.



**Figure 4.8. Tracking commitments component area.**

officials can be critical to achieving the goals of the vision. Within the online Vision Guide, practitioners have access to summary strategies and potential partnering structures associated with each salient activity area. In addition, real-world examples of partnerships are linked within the description of relevant activities. This information is drawn from research conducted for this report and detailed in Chapter 7.

### Tracking Commitments

For practitioners interested in tracking commitments, this component area highlights key activity areas and provides an integrated model commitment tracking process. In Figure 4.8, related activity areas are darkened.

Commitment tracking, otherwise known as implementation monitoring or performance reporting, is of increasing interest to visioning practitioners. In preparing for and creat-

ing the vision, the foundation of commitment tracking is built, and then it is applied in practice when implementing the vision. Within the online Vision Guide, practitioners have access to summary guidance related to developing a model commitment tracking process, including linkages between a tracking program and the steps in the visioning process. This information is drawn from research discussed in Chapter 8, which includes a full description of the model tracking process.

Chapters 5 through 8 provide the research findings that informed the structure of the Vision Guide and support the tools, resources, and strategies that are found within each activity area. These chapters are organized using the four visioning component topics. As such, they are modular and can be read independently, depending on a user's interest or specific area of concern. The end of each chapter provides specific detail about how the component relates to the relevant activity areas in the Vision Guide.

## CHAPTER 5

# Considering Communities

### Introduction

Visioning offers communities the opportunity to express a desired future quality of life. Understanding, measuring, and communicating the concept of quality of life is an important aspect of a visioning process. Transportation is just one of the many factors and variables that shape quality of life and community livability. The relationship between transportation decisions and community context is complex, and discussion is often limited to the impacts, costs, or benefits of improvements. In contrast, visioning offers the opportunity to understand better how transportation systems may shape the preferred future of a community, whether through urban form, livability, or economic competitiveness. To this end, visioning processes employ innovative tools and techniques to measure existing community conditions, forecast likely conditions, and track progress toward reaching the desired future based on a selected set of shared goals and values. This chapter provides an organizing framework to help the practitioner begin considering communities within a visioning process through the use of tools, techniques, and indicators to describe community context and quality of life.

A number of existing processes and established practices may be useful in considering and establishing quality of life values, including community impact assessment and indirect cumulative effects practices. The use of performance indicators also can be an effective tool related to quality of life within visioning processes. Strategic guidance on indicator selection and sample measures also are discussed here to help practitioners best employ indicators within the framework of the model vision process.

Existing research on the relationship between transportation and quality of life is available in an annotated bibliography included in Appendix C. In addition, a description of the available resources and tools to identify and address quality of life concerns are summarized. The tools and techniques described in this chapter also are available through the interactive TCAPP website.

### Assessing Community Quality of Life

Understanding how transportation decisions may affect communities begins with identifying quality of life considerations. The term “quality of life” is a simple concept for the citizen to discern because it represents the sum of his or her collective daily experiences. If asked specifically about their individual quality of life, most people could provide specifics, and potentially a rating. However, the term is not as straightforward for transportation professionals assessing quality of life concerns within decision-making processes.

Defining quality of life for a group of people is challenging because the concept is largely driven by both broad community values and individual perceptions, and is intertwined with a variety of factors. Within visioning and transportation planning processes, this challenge is typically overcome by enabling stakeholders to identify common community values, which can be organized within categories of quality of life considerations. Defining community values is often an early product of public involvement opportunities such as workshops, town hall meetings, or online discussions.

These values may then later be associated with performance indicators and measures that best communicate the concept, and allow community values to be carried forward throughout a visioning process. For example, values may inform the selection of indicators, which are then used to assess alternative futures and later gauge progress toward achieving the vision.

A sampling of quality of life consideration categories and possible community values is described in Table 5.1. Values provide a framework to begin considering communities within a vision. The terms used here are not comprehensive, but they are representative of potential quality of life value statements that may be developed during a visioning exercise.

Several established practices assess the connection between transportation and quality of life considerations. Within transportation project planning and development, community

**Table 5.1. Quality of Life Categories and Associated Community Values**

Category	Potential Community Goal or Value
Economic competitiveness	Local businesses are competitive, with opportunities for growth. A mix of jobs is available for all income and education levels.
Environmental stewardship	Air and water resources are healthy for residents, wildlife, and ecosystems. Natural resources are managed for multiple uses and future generations.
Transportation and mobility	Access to daily needs (live, work, shop, play) is convenient and reliable. A variety of choices are available for moving people and goods.
Public health, safety, and security	Health care is affordable and accessible. Well-maintained recreation facilities promote physical activity.
Social and cultural resources	Opportunities exist for civic engagement and social networking. Historic and cultural resources are preserved and enhanced.
Community development	Development supports community character and aesthetics. A mix of housing of all types and for all income levels exists.
Governance and public services	Democratic processes engage citizens. Infrastructure and public services are efficiently managed.

impact assessment (CIA) has become accepted terminology to describe the process used to evaluate the effects of transportation decisions on quality of life. This process includes an examination of not only direct effects but indirect and cumulative effects (ICE). The sections below provide additional background on these terms.

### Community Impact Assessment

CIA is defined as a “process to evaluate the effects of transportation actions on a community and its quality of life” (U.S. Department of Transportation, FHWA 2011a). CIA is an iterative process that raises awareness and understanding of both positive and negative effects of proposed actions on the human (social and economic) environment. CIA uses data analysis as well as community interaction to enable informed transportation decision making. This process is distinct from public involvement in that it relies on data analysis to provide a picture of the community, and then solicits additional comment and insight from the public based on that data. The assessment should include all items of importance to people, such as mobility, safety, employment effects, relocation, isolation, and other community issues. Information developed early in the process can support the development of alternatives, inform choices on major design concepts, and assist with other aspects of decision making.

Community impact assessment involves four steps:

- Gather existing community information from secondary sources. (What major projects have occurred or are planned? What is the accident history and level of service on roadways? Where are environmentally sensitive areas?)

- Map available community data (e.g., schools, churches, fire, police, and shopping) for presentation to the public.
- Compile a list of elected officials, staff of participating agencies, interest groups, community leaders, and residents that may be affected by the project. Start building working relationships and knowledge of the area.
- Analyze available data and present it to the public, asking them to confirm and add to your information (Center for Urban Transportation Research et al. 2012).

The CIA process is a means to develop an understanding of a community’s context, which relates directly to the early steps in preparing for the vision. Data developed for community profiles can be framed as a set of indicators for later use in assessing alternative scenarios, creating and communicating the final vision outcome, and tracking the performance of implementation.

CIA is closely related to CSS practices for transportation planning and project development. Both practices are considered specific to transportation and represent relatively focused efforts, when compared with visioning processes. For the transportation practitioner, previous agency experience with CIA and CSS may help inform the agency’s involvement in a visioning process.

### Indirect and Cumulative Effects

FHWA and other federal agencies are responsible for addressing and considering direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The regulations define the impacts that must be addressed to satisfy the requirements of the NEPA process.

Direct effects are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place. Indirect effects are caused by the action

**Table 5.2. Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

Perception of Project Effects	Community Goals	Performance Indicators	Project Effects Measured by Practitioner
More traffic congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve safety</li> <li>• Improve commute time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) growth as a ratio of population growth</li> <li>• Commute costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct: Increased traffic</li> <li>• Indirect: Decrease in pedestrian safety</li> <li>• Cumulative: Auto-oriented development</li> </ul>
Decrease in property values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a mix of housing choices</li> <li>• Enhance community character</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in location and balance of available jobs and housing</li> <li>• Change in property values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct: Acquisition of property</li> <li>• Indirect: Noise or aesthetic impacts</li> <li>• Cumulative: Redevelopment of properties to undesirable land uses</li> </ul>

and occur later or farther removed but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include induced changes in land use, population density, and related effects on air, water, and other natural systems.

Cumulative impact is the impact on the environment, which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency undertakes other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

Consideration of indirect and cumulative effects is an important element within the visioning process because many goals expressed by communities concerning potential futures are indirectly related to transportation projects. The ICE analysis framework can be useful in evaluating how different futures perform against the selected performance indicators. This can aid with scenario-planning exercises that help visioning participants see what would happen under alternative futures. The framework is also beneficial in facilitating the trade-off dialogue between stakeholders and the practitioners or decision makers. Table 5.2 provides examples of the relationship between sample public perceptions, community goals, performance indicators, and possible project effects.

Additional information and selected indicators are available in Appendix C.

### Defining Community Indicators

Performance measurement is used frequently by transportation agencies to improve understanding of the outcomes of transportation system investments, and to provide accountability for decisions. The same principles of collecting and monitoring data can be used in a visioning process to support several key activities: providing a baseline of conditions, illustrating future trends, assessing alternative futures, and judging progress on implementation of goals and objectives.

The terms *measures* and *indicators* are often used interchangeably and are employed differently by agencies,

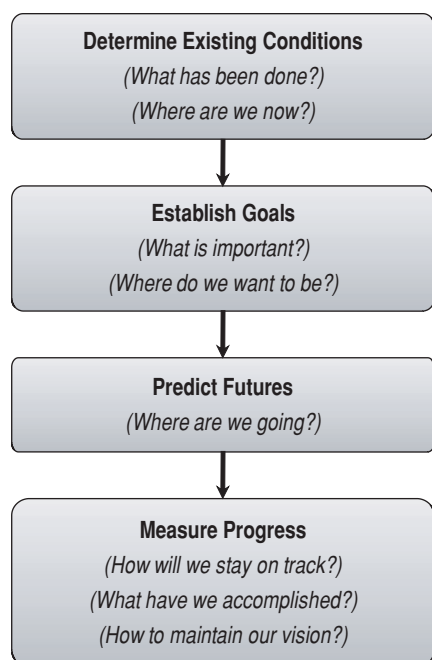
academics, and practitioners. For the purposes of this report, the terms are defined as follows:

- *Measures* are quantitative or qualitative data used to describe a condition. By themselves these measures are value neutral because they do not reflect an intended direction of progress. Examples include vehicle hours of delay for a particular corridor; or the number of housing units within a designated distance of a proposed right-of-way.
- *Indicators* are quantitative or qualitative data used to provide information on how well a vision is achieving desired goals. Indicators are chosen to reflect community values, quality of life considerations, and other context variables that allow practitioners and stakeholders to assess whether the community is headed in the preferred direction. Examples include the proportion of municipalities adopting the vision into comprehensive plans, or change in conservation and recreation lands accessible to population centers.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the activities supported by performance indicators and how they relate to the Vision Guide's activity areas.

The Vision Guide is based on a process that begins by looking at trend analysis of where a community is, forecasts the implications of specific projects and policies, and then tracks progress toward a goal. Each of these efforts relies on the provision of contextual, value-based information. Measures and indicators can be selected to track those data points that reflect the conditions of chosen highest value in a community (e.g., safe streets around schools, transit access to regional medical centers). These same indicators can be used to assess community effects under different scenarios, and will then provide benchmarks of current conditions or desired future points from which to measure the progress and performance of the vision. Benchmarks and performance indicators used to track vision commitments may then be used to refresh the original community goals, completing a cycle centered on the visioning process. Chapter 8 (Tracking Commitments) discusses the implementation of the vision outputs in more detail.





**Figure 5.1. The role of performance indicators within the Vision Guide.**

## Selecting Performance Indicators

The process of selecting performance indicators that reflect quality of life considerations can create an objective communication framework between practitioner and stakeholder. Utilizing indicators can facilitate consensus building by moving participants beyond intangibles to something they can see and understand, and elevate dialogue above conflicts resulting from different values and priorities to discussion that reveals underlying issues.

Using performance indicators within the context of a visioning process offers a way to test possible futures against one another to see which will best deliver livability and quality of life goals expressed during the vision. There are several important questions to consider when selecting community indicators:

- What are the community characteristics and issues of importance?
- How might agency and community goals be related?
- What data and resources are available?
- Can data points be clearly understood and communicated?
- Do the data provide meaningful insights or basis for comparisons?

As part of the research for this project, a table of community indicators was created to support the Vision Guide. Table 5.3 provides sample objectives for each category and a

sample measure for each objective. The full table is included in Appendix C.

The use of indicators within visioning processes provides the means for the practitioner to communicate the importance of policy and planning decisions with stakeholders. As noted above, the selection of indicators that are clear, comprehensive, meaningful, and readily understood will help tell a story and better enable stakeholders to compare and contrast the impacts of future policy choices and investment decisions. Figure 5.2 illustrates these principles from the ONE BAY visioning effort in Tampa Bay, Florida. ONE BAY began its visioning process by conducting values surveys of residents that illustrated the importance of travel choices, environmental preservation, and energy conservation. This initial research and subsequent public meetings and workshops informed scenario-development activities and, ultimately, the choice of indicators used to depict differences among those futures. The indicators used include vehicle miles traveled, acres of impacted wetlands, and average household energy electrical usage. Scenarios were modeled and data developed, which were then simplified and made clear for use in public scenario comparison guides and outreach materials.

As described above, and as illustrated in the following chapter on applying quality of life considerations within the Vision Guide, the use of performance indicators is relevant through much of a vision process. The actual indicators and utilization of measures may change but should remain rooted in the community values and goals established early in a process. Within TCAPP, the sections titled Considering Communities describe how indicators may be used within relevant activity areas, and provide links to tools and resources to help practitioners effectively bring community consideration to visioning.

## Application within the Vision Guide

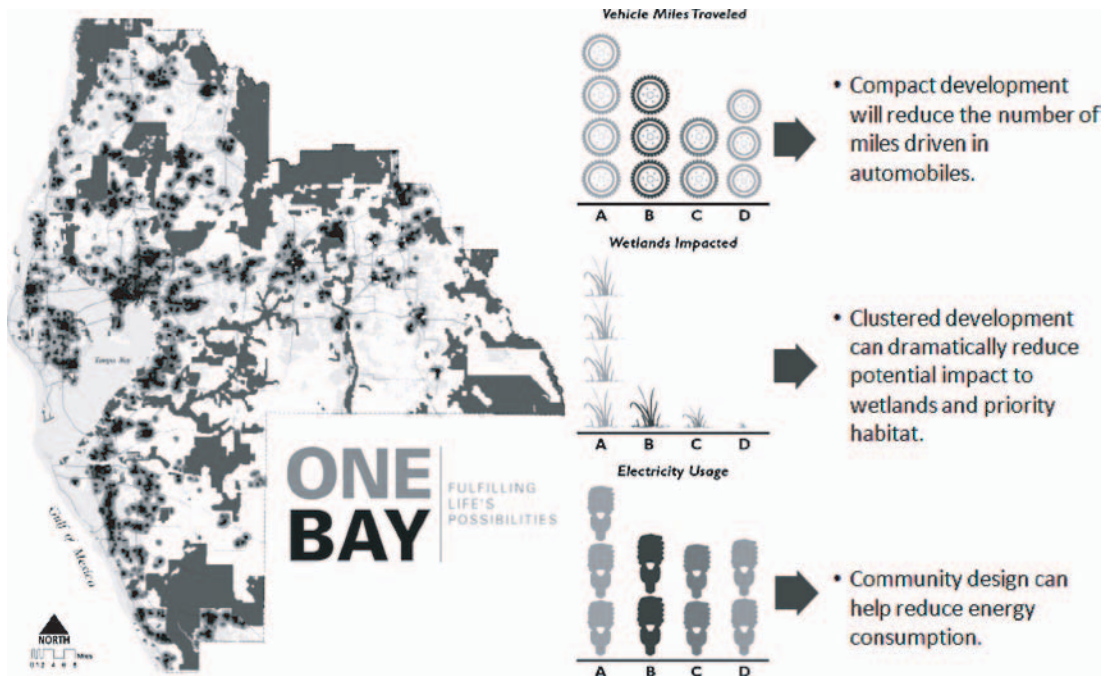
Community context tools and performance indicators provide useful input to the Vision Guide. The following sections provide guidance on how context tools and indicators can be used to define community context, develop baseline condition and trend information, assess alternative scenarios, inform the selection of preferred futures, and track progress toward that future. TCAPP offers the information on this component area, with additional web links to relevant online resources.

## Preparing for the Vision

During this phase, the practitioner should document the community's unique context, including considerations and

**Table 5.3. Community Quality of Life Indicators**

Quality of Life Category	Potential Community Goal or Value	Sample Measure
Economic competitiveness	Local businesses are competitive, with opportunities for growth.	Employment growth relative to state and nation
	A mix of jobs is available for all income and education levels.	Per capita income of residents, by industry
Environmental stewardship	Water and air resources are healthy for people and ecosystems.	Percent of water bodies meeting regulatory standard and number of air quality warning days
	Natural resources are managed for multiple uses and future generations.	Percent of resource management plans with sustainability guidelines
Transportation and mobility	Access to daily needs (live, work, shop, play) is convenient and reliable.	Commute time and cost between population centers and employment centers
	A variety of transportation choices are available for moving people and goods.	Transportation system extent, transit ridership, and logistics costs
Public health, safety, and security	Health care is affordable and accessible.	Percent of uninsured households and proximity to health care facilities
	Available recreation facilities promote physical activity.	Number of recreations within a half-mile radius of schools
Social and cultural resources	Opportunities exist for civic engagement and social networking.	Volunteerism rate, by age
	Historic and cultural resources are preserved and enhanced.	Number of buildings on national register of historic places
Community development	Development supports community character and aesthetics.	Percent of total building permits issued within city limits
	Mix of housing of all types and for all income levels exists.	Transportation and housing affordability index
Governance and public services	Democratic processes engage citizens.	Voter registration rate
	Infrastructure and public services are efficiently managed.	Local government outcome performance measurement



Source: ONE BAY Vision, Tampa, Florida.

**Figure 5.2. Scenario assessment with community indicators.**

community values that aid in understanding and identifying quality of life goals. Visioning exercises are best suited to focus on community interests and needs that align closely with quality of life considerations (see Table 5.1). Context helps identify what is important to communities and ensures that a full range of indicators are chosen to reflect livability goals. Establishing these principles and priorities during the preparing phase will create an important foundation for the subsequent phases.

### ***What Has Been Done?***

Scanning prior studies, plans, and documents for data sources and existing measurement programs will help form the foundation of a baseline conditions analysis. Although the exact indicators used throughout the process may change, this activity may help identify possible data sources and provide options for synergies among partner and stakeholder agency performance measurement tracking efforts.

### ***What Is Important?***

Once a set of core issues has been established, an initial set of preferred indicators can be selected. This list will likely be informed, but not limited to, those identified in earlier activities. Documenting likely outcomes using measures may help reduce conflict among stakeholders further in the process, guide the scope of work, and assist in establishing early objectives.

### **Creating the Vision**

Quality of life concerns should be present and considered throughout many of the activity areas within this phase for two main purposes: to create a baseline scenario and to inform the development of futures under consideration.

### ***Where Are We Now?***

Compiling and communicating information on a community is an entry point for almost any visioning process. Data sources may have been identified during the previous phase. Information may include quantitative data in the form of statistics, inventories, audits, and geographic information, or qualitative data in the form of interviews with community leaders or public opinion and values surveys. The purpose is to provide a starting point for the issues and values that will be the focus of the visioning process. Providing a basis for judgment is important to helping participants engage fully in the trade-offs, alternatives, impacts, and potential futures assessed later in the process. Indicators should be based on community values and intended to convey statements of direction, value, quality, or progress.

### ***Where Are We Going?***

Previously selected indicators may provide a framework for trend analysis of likely futures given a set of policy choices. Providing information on probable trends helps participants assess choices and determine preferences. Historic and projected data may be used to help frame problem statements, determine priorities, and develop community indicators.

### ***Where Do We Want to Be?***

Data should be used here to compare the trend analysis with those of a different set of program and policy selections that will likely lead to a distinct future. The data will help ground the ideas of the future vision and provide critical input to the next activity.

### **Implementing the Vision**

For the practitioner, this activity track focuses on identifying specific actions, roles, and responsibilities to advance the vision into reality. Indicators are critical during this phase to help monitor the progress and provide guidance for adjustments necessary to maintain the vision over time.

### ***How Will We Stay on Track?***

Reporting progress toward the vision is critical to judging results and establishing priorities for implementation. A measurement process should reach agreement among stakeholders on the indicators to be reported, responsibilities for data collection, and a period of consistent measurement. It is important for the practitioner to select from indicators previously identified that can best capture the effects and anticipated changes resulting from implementing the vision. These metrics should communicate both process steps, such as adoption of the vision by local governments, and outcomes, such as building permits aligned with the principles of the vision.

### ***What Have We Accomplished?***

Continuing to monitor, measure, and report the status of implementation or progress toward the vision is a powerful tool for documenting the impact of the vision, legitimizing continued efforts, and adjusting priorities when necessary.

### ***How Will We Maintain Our Vision?***

Ongoing data collection can provide indication about how the vision is being realized over the implementation period. Feedback is critical to refocusing the vision to achieve the established goals and objectives.

## CHAPTER 6

# Reaching Stakeholders

### Introduction

Public engagement is a hallmark of visioning processes that use innovative techniques to build public awareness and ownership in a process, to help stakeholders make informed choices among alternative futures, and to engage a wide variety of partners in vision development and vision implementation activities.

This chapter provides guidance on stakeholder involvement tools and techniques to be used in a visioning process. Outreach methods used in transportation processes are drawn largely from urban planning and related fields, in which transportation is usually a variable in a larger process. However, as visions are used more widely in transportation planning, agencies and practitioners are relying on new tools and techniques to engage participants. This research will help practitioners review emerging best practices and select appropriate outreach tools to develop a vision, reach nontraditional stakeholders, and leverage new technologies and resources.

### Summary of Current Practices

Public involvement and partner outreach is a rapidly evolving field, and technical tools and nontraditional stakeholder outreach methods continue to advance. Traditional techniques are commonly used in visioning processes; however, increasingly, efforts are focusing on applying technical, interactive scenario-planning support tools and software. Many of these new tools are developed specifically to facilitate visioning.

Literature addressing visioning and outreach was reviewed to identify techniques that support a visioning process that facilitates collaborative decision making. Specifically, the team reviewed guidance documents, case studies, and syntheses of practices; they are listed in Appendix D. The case studies conducted for this project were reviewed to identify those with effective outreach and participatory processes.

### Involving Stakeholders in Visioning

Appropriate, effective outreach tools and techniques are key to a successful visioning process, and opportunities for outreach are present in all phases of the process. Visioning processes are unique because of their relatively high level of involvement and input from a range of stakeholders. These may include formal decision makers (e.g., public agencies), stakeholders typically involved in a planning process (e.g., advocacy groups), as well as other members of the public not traditionally involved (e.g., low-income, minority, or limited English proficiency groups).

Interactive aspects of public involvement are foundational to a visioning process. In comparison to a public comment period or publicly noticed open hearing, required by most planning processes, visioning processes tend to employ proactive outreach and interactive techniques to gather input. It is this active engagement in contributing ideas, assessing alternative futures, and registering opinions on outcomes that provides the basis for developing a shared vision for the future.

The SHRP 2 TCAPP Decision Guide framework identified key attributes of collaborative decision making. These principles help ensure that decision making is collaborative and that participants support the ultimate outcomes of a process. These principles are particularly relevant to the interactive, interdisciplinary approach of visioning:

- *Informed participation* ensures that traditional communications tools and techniques provide opportunities for reactive input, and proactive or interactive planning tools that relate technical concepts help advance informed public participation to greater levels.
- *Participant continuity* refers to the role stakeholders and public meetings have traditionally played in maintaining a core group of interested parties. Visioning processes tend to open up these core groups to ensure the continued

engagement of a greater range of participants, through innovative mechanisms, targeted outreach, and ongoing opportunities for participants to stay involved.

- *Shared interest* is a result of employing tools and techniques that are highly collaborative or interactive, including facilitation and consensus-building activities, so that participants learn about the interests of others and develop common goals to support a shared vision.
- *Decision-making influence* is important for agencies involved in visioning because it affects the success of collaboration and stakeholder trust in an agency. It is important for agencies to determine their presence and level of involvement at the outset of a process, so that the vision and associated outreach processes appropriately convey the agency role to stakeholders. Feedback mechanisms for public and partner involvement are critical to help decision makers understand input and how that input may relate to possible changes in future decisions.
- *Level of commitment* to a vision often depends on variables such as initial participant attitude, effectiveness of outreach techniques, and how well a collaborative process culminates in a final vision. The early and continued involvement of stakeholders in a process increases the level of commitment and helps sustain the outcomes of a vision.

## Outreach Techniques and Tools

The following provides guidance on specific outreach tools and techniques, and how a practitioner may select appropriate tools within the framework of the Vision Guide. Public outreach efforts are generally undertaken by the lead agency or entity involved in the visioning, but because of the broad scope and scale of these efforts, public involvement can be a cooperative venture involving any number of partners. Multiple partners may be involved in outreach at varying levels. For example, local community groups, volunteers, citizen teams, consultants, and others may lead specific outreach activities during a larger process, allowing more stakeholders to be reached with higher levels of involvement. Therefore, for the purposes of this report, the public involvement coordinator is the equivalent of the visioning practitioner, as identified earlier.

Although public outreach tools and techniques often serve a variety of functions, there are three primary purposes of activities. These purposes are consistent with guidance from FHWA and are used to organize the examples of outreach activities provided here:

- *Informational techniques* are critical to ensuring informed participation. They help garner initial public interest in involvement, support ongoing involvement opportunities,

enable information to be disseminated readily, and increase the visibility and public awareness of an effort.

- *Feedback tools and techniques* provide opportunities for active input into a visioning process, including outreach through traditional and nontraditional means, as well as innovative interactive scenario-planning support tools.
- *Collaborative techniques* are essential to developing consensus and encouraging active and informed engagement of stakeholders, as well as developing lasting programs and partnerships to help sustain a vision.

## Selection of Outreach Tools and Techniques

Table 6.1 presents outreach tools and techniques with applications for each relevant activity area within the reaching stakeholders component of the online Vision Guide. In addition, the matrix notes other useful criteria for selecting methods, from cost-effectiveness to applicability for outreach to traditionally underserved populations. The tools and techniques also may be found on the TCAPP website (transportationforcommunities.com).

## Informational Techniques

### Public Meetings

Public meetings provide opportunities to gather members of the public, agencies, and interested parties to learn more about a vision process and to provide input. Meeting formats vary, but key elements include informative speakers and presentations, facilitated exchanges or group discussions, and broad outreach through publicized and accessible meeting locations. One resource for information on public meetings is in Chapter 2 of FHWA's Public Involvement report (U.S. Department of Transportation et al. 2002).

### Speaker Bureaus

Speakers bureaus involve volunteers or project staff who seek opportunities to address public and private organizations on behalf of a visioning process. Speakers provide additional advocacy for the vision and are often visible public champions of an effort. Stakeholders should be given the opportunity to request briefings, or staff may actively seek out stakeholders as part of a targeted outreach program.

### Online Resources

Online technologies allow the widespread dissemination of project information and innovative involvement of stakeholders on social networks such as Twitter and Facebook. These social networks are free, quick, and accessible tools that

**Table 6.1. Public and Partner Involvement Tools and Techniques**

Outreach Tools and Techniques	Preparing the Vision				Creating the Vision				Implementing the Vision			Other Criteria			
	Why Are We Doing This?	What Is Important?	What Are Our Resources?	Who Will We Involve?	Where Are We Now?	Where Are We Going?	Where Do We Want to Be?	How Will We Get There?	How Will We Stay on Track?	What Have We Accomplished?	How Do We Maintain Our Vision?	Potential Implementation Cost	Potential Resource Needs	Addresses Nontraditional Stakeholders	
<b>Informative Techniques</b>	<b>Informational Meetings</b>														
	Public meetings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	\$\$	<input type="radio"/>	(Y)
	Speaker bureaus			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	(Y)
	<b>Online Resources</b>														
	Project website		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$\$	<input type="radio"/>	
	Webinars and video		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$	<input type="radio"/>	
	Blogs and networks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	
	E-mail lists and e-newsletters		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	\$	<input type="radio"/>	
	<b>Printed Materials</b>														
	Printings and mailings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	
	<b>Visualizations and Maps</b>														
	Visualizations		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$	<input type="radio"/>	(Y)
	<b>Media</b>														
	Media strategies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	
<b>Design and Public Relations</b>															
Representation and branding	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$	<input checked="" type="radio"/>		
<b>Feedback Tools and Techniques</b>	<b>Traditional Feedback Techniques</b>														
	Opinion surveys	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				\$\$	<input type="radio"/>	(Y)
	Focus groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				\$\$	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	(Y)
	Community outreach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	\$\$	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	(Y)	
	<b>Scenario Planning Software</b>														
	ArcGIS					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			\$\$	<input type="radio"/>	
	INDEX						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$\$	<input type="radio"/>	
	MetroQuest						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					\$\$\$	<input type="radio"/>	
CommunityViz						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					\$\$\$	<input type="radio"/>		
TELUM						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					\$\$	<input type="radio"/>		

(continued on next page)

**Table 6.1. Public and Partner Involvement Tools and Techniques (continued)**

		Preparing the Vision				Creating the Vision				Implementing the Vision			Other Criteria			
Outreach Tools and Techniques		Why Are We Doing This?	What Is Important?	What Are Our Resources?	Who Will We Involve?	Where Are We Now?	Where Are We Going?	Where Do We Want to Be?	How Will We Get There?	How Will We Stay on Track?	What Have We Accomplished?	How Do We Maintain Our Vision?	Potential Implementation Cost	Potential Resource Needs	Addresses Nontraditional Stakeholders	
Feedback Tools and Techniques	PLACE <sup>3</sup> S					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						\$\$	○		
	Urban Sim					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						\$\$	○		
	What If?					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						\$\$\$	○		
	<b>Nontraditional Outreach</b>															
	Community events	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$\$	○	(Y)
	Community leaders	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$	○	(Y)
	Community canvassing		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							\$\$	●	(Y)
Community tours		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							\$	○	(Y)	
Collaborative Techniques	<b>Interactive Techniques</b>															
	Public workshops		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$	○	(Y)
	Charrettes		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				\$\$\$	○		
	Scenario planning games					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						\$\$	○		
	Visual preferences						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					\$	●	(Y)	
	<b>Stakeholder Groups</b>															
	Task forces			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$	○	
	Citizen advisory committees			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				\$\$	●	(Y)
	<b>Programs and Partnerships</b>															
	Interagency working groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	\$	●	
Elected official forums		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$	○		
Leadership development programs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		\$\$\$	●		
<b>Primary Tool/Technique</b>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Resource Needs</b>									<b>Potential Cost to Implement</b>				
<b>Addresses Nontraditional Stakeholders</b>		(Y)	●	High	●	Medium	○	Low	\$	Low	\$\$	Medium	\$\$\$	High		

allow users to receive information and updates, exchange comments, and communicate with others rapidly. Used in conjunction with traditional communication methods, online resources can provide a low-cost communication method to help engage the public across a broad area and encourage interaction and discourse with the lead agencies.

More and more communication now takes place online, and blogs and project websites provide a bridge connecting the public to members of the project team to answer any questions, discuss concerns, and provide recommendations. Online communication allows for the cost-effective dissemination of information to a larger population than traditional public outreach tools such as newspaper and radio advertisements. The use of online resources, such as the examples provided here, can make the planning and decision-making process more transparent and allow inclusive and vibrant community-driven dialogue.

Project websites enable easy access to critical information, news and events, and key staff. When regularly maintained and updated, websites can be used as primary means of organizing, publishing, communicating, or soliciting comments (see Vision North Texas 2011a; Vision 2030 Routh 2009).

Webinars and videos expand opportunities for participation. Hosting webinars reaches stakeholders unable to attend public meetings and encourages remote participation. Archived meeting videos or documentary videos may be hosted easily on YouTube and other video-sharing sites (see Vision North Texas 2011b).

Online systems such as blogs and networks allow for rapid dissemination of information and interactive involvement for stakeholders. When integrated into a project website, a blog or discussion forum provides informal, frequent, and widely available information on vision activities. Increasingly, social networking websites are used to develop networks of interested parties and relay information of events and activities. Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (2012) blog GOTO2040, updates, and social network links take this approach.

Notifications through e-mail and e-newsletters provide broad and easy access to project information, news, events, and updates for stakeholders. Production is relatively inexpensive and can be accomplished with most desktop publishing programs, and even integrated into a project website. Tennessee's Cumberland Region Tomorrow (2012) uses e-mail blasts and news updates.

### ***Printings and Mailings***

Direct mailings and promotional materials inform stakeholders. Brochures, event flyers, and opinion surveys may be appropriate tools when the goal is to reach every resident or business owner in a study area. Vision brochures,

announcements, newsletters, comment cards, and other hard-copy materials also provide valuable take-away materials at public meetings (see Vision into Action 2011).

### ***Visualizations and Maps***

Visuals allow a wide variety of information and complex concepts to be conveyed and understood readily. Maps are often used to illustrate existing issues within a community, and visual representations can be used to inform stakeholders of future choices (see Metropolitan Area Planning Council 2012). This technique also may improve communication for participants with limited English or technical proficiency.

### ***Media Strategies***

Media strategies can encourage press coverage and can help achieve public awareness goals and increase the visibility of visioning process. Press kits, frequently asked questions briefs, and informative materials help ensure consistent messaging, and news releases alert reporters to opportunities for local coverage. Local public broadcasting affiliates are often ready partners in producing and releasing informative video documentaries or public access promotions about the vision. The Central Florida regional vision effort "How Shall We Grow?" (myregion.org 2011b) partnered with a local public broadcasting station to produce and present a documentary (bGenesis Productions et al. 2007).

### ***Representation and Branding***

Effectively communicating and branding a visioning process is greatly assisted through graphic design of project logos, materials, website design, and other commissioned art. Branded materials develop a recognizable image of the visioning process within the community and help generate public interest. Reality Check for Central Arizona (Urban Land Institute 2011) has used branding strategies.

## **Feedback Tools and Techniques**

### ***Traditional Feedback Techniques***

Traditional feedback techniques are used to gauge community perception of the process and gather input for the vision. Example products include online surveys, opinion polling, comment collection, and other direct qualitative methods such as community interviews, listening campaigns, or focus groups.

Opinion surveys provide opportunities for broad or targeted outreach to stakeholders concerning community values, importance of issues, preferred future direction, or the selection of alternative futures. Opinion surveys may be made available online and in print media, or administered by



a professional research organization or in partnership with a local university (see One Bay 2008).

Community outreach can provide targeted communication with local leaders. The involvement of leaders is important because they may provide early direction and ongoing public support, contribute resources, represent diverse stakeholders, or offer connections to traditionally underrepresented stakeholders (see Vision PDX et al. 2006).

Focus groups provide unique research into community values and opportunities for stakeholders to describe ideas in their own words. Focused research, or a listening campaign, is often used early in shaping a process and when shaping alternative futures or a vision statement (see Baltimore Regional Transportation Board 2003).

### **Scenario-Planning Software**

Scenario-planning software includes a suite of technological tools for creating, analyzing, and communicating alternative futures. Alternative futures engage stakeholders in actively determining a desired future based on the visualization and representation of future policy and development choices. A wide variety of software tools are available to suit different needs and purposes. Most planning support systems are capable of modeling the outcomes of variables such as population, employment, and housing location, as well as transportation or environmental indicators. Software programs typically require in-house technical skills or consultant support, as well as data requirements. Most programs are designed to be interactive and allow stakeholders to manipulate variables, develop scenarios, and see the outcomes of different choices in real-time. The FHWA Scenario Planning website (U.S. Department of Transportation, FHWA 2011b) articulates noteworthy practices and innovative uses of scenario planning for transportation planning.

ArcGIS is a data analysis and mapping program developed by Esri that stores, manages, and presents data, and allows advanced spatial analysis, model operations, and visualization. Geographic information systems are the basis of many of the planning support tools available and also can be used independently to display and analyze technical information.

INDEX is an integrated suite of geographic information system (GIS) tools used to assess existing community conditions, design future scenarios in real time, assess scenarios with performance indicators, and monitor implementation of adopted plans. INDEX also supports implementation efforts by evaluating the consistency of development proposals against vision goals. The program is fee-for-service and maintained by Criterion Planners, Inc.

MetroQuest, a GIS-based program, is a customizable and interactive that enables participants to change policy assumptions or variables and immediately see the effects of those

decisions on future scenarios. MetroQuest is noted for its customization and interactive elements and can be used within workshops, online, or in public venues to allow participants to create scenarios and see changes in real-time. The program is fee-for-service and maintained by MetroQuest, Inc.

The program CommunityViz is a suite of GIS-based planning tools that provide decision support for a range of issues, including development, land use, transportation, and conservation. CommunityViz is flexible in application and commonly supports scenario planning, sketch planning, 3-D visualization, suitability analysis, impact assessment, growth modeling, and other techniques used in visioning. The program is fee-for-service and maintained by Placeways LLC.

Transportation, Economic, and Land Use Model (TELUM) is an integrated interactive software package for evaluating the land use impacts of regional transportation improvement projects. Based on user inputs, TELUM uses current and prior data to forecast future values and spatial patterns of future residential, employment, and land use types. The program is free to MPOs and state DOTs and is maintained by the FHWA and New Jersey Institute of Technology.

The GIS-based program Planning for Community Energy, Environmental, and Economic Stability (PLACE<sup>3</sup>S) is intended to foster public participation and community development design. Designed for local and regional governments, PLACE<sup>3</sup>S can be applied to identify existing conditions, develop a base model using current policies and market trends, develop and analyze alternatives, select a preferred alternative, and adopt, implement, monitor, and revise as needed. The program is primarily used within California and maintained by the California Energy Commission.

UrbanSim is a GIS-based simulation system designed to show interrelationships between land use, transportation, economics, and the environment and how various combinations of land use and transportation policies can influence future growth and trends. UrbanSim is particularly applicable for projects with a focus on real estate development, housing, and business development. The program is open source and free.

WhatIf? is a GIS-based planning support system used to explore community alternative futures. The program can be used to prepare long-term land use, population, housing, and employment projections for districts, political jurisdictions, and user-defined areas such as school districts and traffic analysis zones. This fee-for-service program is maintained by WhatIf?, Inc.

### **Nontraditional Outreach**

Nontraditional outreach maximizes public awareness and participation, particularly for underrepresented, hard-to-reach, or strategically targeted populations. When identifying stakeholders to include in the decision-making process, it is

crucial to direct energy into identifying and then designing outreach methods for nontraditional stakeholders. These stakeholders are typically those groups that are difficult to reach and are not usually included in the process. This group may consist of minorities, low-income families, people with disabilities, populations with limited English proficiency, and the elderly. Reasons for noninvolvement could include a conflict between the time of an event and family or work responsibilities; the format in which project-related information is presented; or lack of access to meeting locations. Young professionals and youth may also be nontraditional stakeholders in long-term visioning processes. Many vision efforts specifically conduct outreach to elementary schools, even holding contests for children to imagine and draw their own concepts for the future. Young professionals are commonly the least active in public processes but have the greatest stake in long-term visions. Youth organizations are often organized by chambers of commerce or university alumni associations and can be targeted for involvement.

The outreach methods listed below, when used in conjunction with other tools and techniques discussed in this chapter, can be used to help build strong relationships through the creation of safe and respectful environments for discussion and the distribution of project-related information to better prepare and educate all interested parties and provide opportunities for meaningful involvement. These approaches are a sample of techniques that could be used to reach out to nontraditional stakeholders.

Community events provide forums for informing, receiving feedback, and collaborating with stakeholders. Nontraditional settings include shopping centers, community fairs, sporting events, public school activities, religious and non-profit gatherings, and any event that draws a number of people to a public space. Traditional options for meetings and events, such as schools, public buildings, and libraries often have the benefit of accessible and inexpensive meeting space, but they may not offer the same opportunities to engage groups on their own terms.

Community leader outreach includes strategically identified key civic, political, environmental, or institutional leaders, and provides opportunities to discuss a visioning process and solicit feedback. Input from community leaders, particularly representatives of groups traditionally underrepresented in public involvement, may be an effective means for project staff to learn of and address concerns.

Community canvassing involves the distribution of promotional materials, in-person opinion surveying, or requests for participation by project staff in public places. This approach may require substantial staff resources, but it may be particularly helpful in reaching underrepresented populations.

Community tours are commonly used activities intended to engage and educate stakeholders or leaders directly in shared, real experiences within the community.

## Collaborative Techniques

### *Interactive*

Interactive techniques encourage collaboration, consensus, and ownership among participants. Facilitated techniques commonly include small group discussions, workshops, or scenario-planning activities intended to provide participants hands-on experience in creating alternative futures, establishing community values, developing goals, or other tangible outcomes. Interactive techniques may be used early in a visioning process to provide direction and gather perspectives from stakeholders. In mid-process, these techniques may help develop alternative futures or arrive at a solution to a specific problem. Late in a process, this level of interaction may be useful in resolving an impasse, or reaching consensus on a shared vision.

Public workshops provide opportunities for interaction among community members, project sponsors, and additional stakeholders and are among the most common techniques used in visioning. Organized public workshops are valuable opportunities to vet ideas and obtain meaningful public feedback. Most workshops include informational presentations, facilitated group discussions, and interactive techniques to encourage stakeholders to collaborate on community values and objectives, desired future outcomes, specific challenges and solutions, and alternative futures. Interactive activities may include scenario planning, visualizations, discussions, role-playing games, and myriad other exercises.

Charrettes are intensive, collaborative sessions in which a group drafts a solution to a given challenge (see Missoula Redevelopment Agency and Office of Planning & Grants 2007; Dover, Kohl & Partners and Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company n.d.). Often used for design or architectural topics, they have been used successfully in visioning processes to craft alternative scenarios. These are resource- and time-intensive efforts, requiring facilitation, mediation, and support.

Scenario planning games, such as Transopoly (Center for Neighborhood Technology 2001), allows participants an opportunity to create alternate futures and select preferences. There are many variations, although most involve role-playing, decision-making exercises, or strategy development. In some games, small working groups place markers, icons, or Legos representing population, employment, or housing on a map to create future scenarios. Transportation networks are often represented using strings to connect population and employment markets. These activities also may give the participant a view into funding or implementation challenges.

Visual preferences such as surveys or images are intended to elicit response and establish common ground among participants when forming a future vision. Typically, illustrative examples of a concept, design, community form, or future scenario are presented, and participants are asked to identify visual preferences. Interactive variations include workshops,

exhibits, or displays in public spaces with stakeholders registering their preference using markers or stickers to tabulate preferences and demonstrate consensus.

### **Stakeholder Groups**

Stakeholder groups encourage ownership of a visioning process from within the community as well as provide valuable guidance and executive leadership. Membership often includes community leaders, interest group representatives, users of the transportation system, and elected officials or agency executives, and they may be provided agency or project staff technical support.

Task forces are collaborative decision and policy groups that play an active role in a visioning process, lending guidance and credibility, drafting recommendations, and providing solutions or decisions on significant issues. Task forces often operate by consensus and propose recommendations to leadership or agency officials.

Citizen advisory committees act primarily in an advisory role, studying issues, presenting opinions, or producing guidance, but they are not necessarily required to reach consensus and may simply provide a forum for issues to be voiced. Committees may be formed to address different aspects within a visioning process, such as a public involvement campaign, scenario planning technical support, or issue-specific groups, such as bicycle and pedestrian or environmental interests.

### **Programs and Partnerships**

Often formed during visioning processes, programs and partnerships facilitate vision development and may then continue as lasting outcomes of the process. Developing a cooperative relationship with partners and stakeholders is critical to the successful completion and institution of a vision. A wide variety of programs and partnerships are formed during visioning efforts, although they generally include collaboration with public agencies, elected officials, and community leaders. For more information on forming partnerships see Chapter 7.

Interagency working groups can enhance coordination among public agencies, either through formal means, such as a memorandum of agreement, or informal means, such as interagency councils (see North Carolina Department of Transportation 2011; Puget Sound Regional Council 2011). These partnerships are often formed during a visioning process as technical advisory groups, or they already may be in existence as standing interagency partnerships.

Developing a forum for elected officials is often essential to implementing and integrating a vision into local development regulations. A forum for elected officials provides continuing educational and outreach efforts because many officials are term limited and may not be knowledgeable of long-term, ongoing efforts (see [myregion.org](http://myregion.org) 2011a).

Leadership development programs are increasingly common techniques to develop civic capacity, enable leadership, and further educational efforts among community leaders. Examples of leadership programs include AASHTO's National Transportation Leadership Institute and the Central Florida Regional Leadership Academy.

## **Application within the Vision Guide**

TCAPP provides an interactive method to select the tools and techniques referenced earlier in this chapter, as well as hyperlinks to additional web resources and real world examples of visioning best practices. The following section discusses key practitioner activities, roles, and responsibilities related to reaching stakeholders for relevant activity areas within the framework of the Vision Guide. This high-level, strategic guidance is intended to present critical questions and key activities to be considered by the practitioner.

### **Preparing for the Vision**

The groundwork for effective outreach and involvement efforts is established in early phases of a visioning process by determining the scope, purpose, audience, and resources of the process. Within the first phase of a vision there are five activity areas relevant to the reaching stakeholders component.

#### **Why Are We Doing This?**

Engaging stakeholders and partners early helps develop interest and ownership in the process and helps build a compelling case for a vision. Cultivating public champions among influential leaders from public, private, and nonprofit spheres also may provide essential support for the vision as it progresses. Outreach in this initial activity area is focused primarily on informative techniques to share background information regarding the project's purpose and need. Articulating the need and context for a vision sets the stage and direction of future efforts, and stakeholder outreach helps determine potential activities, direction, and scope. Informative techniques may include providing press releases and communications materials, establishing an informational website or blog for the project, or even conducting initial community meetings. A number of feedback techniques may prove useful. Key techniques may include opinion surveys, community canvassing efforts, focus groups, and other in-depth early community outreach. Collaboration should be encouraged from the very start of the process, and this may be an appropriate time to begin working with community leaders, forming task forces and community working groups, and developing partnerships.

Practitioners may consider these questions when assessing outreach tools:

- What feedback is needed from stakeholders to begin framing the problem statement for the vision?
- How do we best communicate with stakeholders? (For example, is the audience web accessible, or are there significant groups of hard-to-reach stakeholders?)
- What does the public already know about the planned visioning effort? (That is, are there public perception issues or specific messaging activities that must be managed?)

### ***What Is Important?***

Establishing significant community considerations, key priorities, or driving research questions informs the scale and scope of a visioning process. Stakeholder outreach will help determine the boundaries of the region, the communities involved, the range of topics addressed, and the desired outcomes of the process. Outreach activities often focus on obtaining feedback on what communities know now and want to know more about. Informative techniques may be used, such as interviews with community leaders or key stakeholders, agency coordination meetings, and opinion surveys or questionnaires. Collaboration with community leaders will support the development of a visioning process that is widely supported.

Practitioners may consider these questions when assessing outreach tools:

- Is there a common regional or community identity?
- How far into the future are we looking?
- What key issues should be considered and addressed?
- What can stakeholders tell us about desired outcomes?

### ***What Are Our Resources?***

Outreach activities within this area are focused primarily on communicating with potential funding partners and key stakeholders. Feedback from these parties will help develop a business case based on expected outcomes of completing a vision. Collaborative techniques are critical to support the cultivation of direct financial and in-kind resources from partners and stakeholders. Community leader outreach and the formation of programs and partnerships will help the practitioner determine available resources.

Practitioners may consider these questions when assessing outreach tools:

- How may outreach be targeted to key participants, including funding partners?
- Can partnerships assist with funding requirements or act as in-kind resource pools?

### ***Who Will We Involve***

Gaining the cooperation of the many stakeholders and representatives involved in a visioning process often requires creating new partnerships or leveraging existing networks. The role of outreach in this step is to ensure that key contributors are not overlooked and that feedback is used to identify all partners and stakeholders. Input from public meetings, questionnaires, online communications, community conversations, and other feedback mechanisms can be used to ensure that all contributors are identified.

Practitioners may consider these questions when assessing outreach tools:

- Who has regulatory powers or implementation authority over key issues to be considered in the vision?
- Which groups may have a vested interest in the process or might be most affected by the vision outcomes?
- What partners or networks currently exist within the community?

### ***What Is Our Approach?***

This activity area focuses on finalizing a public participation and involvement strategy for significant activities in the next phase. At this point in the process, outreach tools should be finalized, networks developed, media contacts made, and information presented to community members. Final products often include public communications materials, media materials, a website, and related branding materials.

Practitioners may consider these questions when assessing outreach tools:

- Is the project ready to begin soliciting significant public involvement?
- What is the level of initial public interest or media coverage?
- Does the outreach strategy address all major partners, stakeholder groups, and the general public?

### ***Creating the Vision***

Active engagement of stakeholders in creating the vision is vital to ensuring its collaborative development. The groundwork for effective outreach and involvement efforts is established within this second phase of the visioning process. There are four activity areas relevant to the reaching stakeholders component.

#### ***Where Are We Now?***

Outreach techniques in this activity focus on feedback and collaborative processes, as information gathered feeds into later scenario and indicator development. Assessing data and

stakeholder input will assist in selecting an appropriate scenario-planning tool. Informative techniques such as visualizations and maps are effective at conveying baseline information. Public meetings and interactive forums are useful in informing participants and gathering feedback on core values. Collaborative techniques are effective in engaging key stakeholders to make final decisions on information presented or indicators to use in later visioning activities.

Practitioners may consider these questions when assessing outreach tools:

- How can we tell a compelling story of conditions, issues, and challenges to be addressed in the vision?
- How can we provide opportunities for the public to help establish community core values?
- How can we engage stakeholders for input on key issues and values to determine the indicators to assess future scenarios?

### ***Where Are We Going?***

Providing information on probable future trends helps participants in a visioning process assess their choices and determine preferences. Building consensus around long-term goals, objectives, or guiding principles may be challenging, but it will provide significant direction for the community. Community goals are formed on the basis of information presented and input provided, and principles provide guidance toward meeting those goals. Targeted outreach may occur, which focuses on specific expert or professional stakeholders who may help answer questions about significant trends that will shape the community. Outreach should actively inform, engage, and excite stakeholders by providing information about possibilities for the future.

Practitioners may consider these questions when assessing outreach tools:

- How can we tell a compelling story of future trends in the community?
- How can we best use public input in determining goals and guiding principles for the vision?
- Which stakeholder groups should be targeted for information on trends and a future outlook?

### ***Where Do We Want to Be?***

Developing potential alternative futures helps the public make informed choices. Providing the public the opportunity to view, assess, and provide preferences on alternative futures is the hallmark of successful visioning processes. For the best results, the process of engaging the public, soliciting input, and utilizing that input should be structured, transparent, and genuine. Interactive, targeted outreach and engagement

strategies provide creative opportunities for involvement. The result is a well-planned stakeholder outreach strategy that helps ensure that the community vision best represents interests and input from all stakeholders. This is a key point in any visioning process and often is the stage at which clear communication and full participation are critical to ensuring later buy-in and commitment to the vision's outcomes.

Selection of a scenario-planning approach and associated outreach activities is a key element of this activity area. A variety of scenario tools and techniques can be used to foster participation, convey ideas, and solicit feedback and comments during vision development. The tools and techniques available range from complex technical software to basic role playing and board games. Each community is unique, and available tools and techniques may be customized to provide the best fit. Tool selection considerations might include cost and budget available or the focus of the tool (e.g., land use, transportation, and environment), among other criteria. From an outreach perspective, key considerations may be how intuitive or visually effective the scenario tool is in conveying information. The selection matrix earlier in this chapter provides additional information and links to a variety of scenario-planning support options.

Practitioners may consider these questions when assessing outreach tools:

- What is the most appropriate scenario-planning approach for the community (e.g., technical software, interactive role-playing games, or conceptual visual preference surveys)?
- How can we best engage the maximum number of participants in viewing, learning, evaluating, and registering a preference for the alternative scenarios produced?
- What innovative methods, technologies, or resources are available to reach the broadest range of stakeholders?
- How can we best gather and use public input in a transparent manner, so the process is not jeopardized?
- What is the exact role of the public in crafting the final preferred future?

### ***How Will We Get There?***

Values, goals, issues, and principles may be aligned with consensus alternatives to provide guidance on priority issues to be identified in the vision and acted upon during implementation. This iterative process allows for building public agreement in preparation of the release of vision outcomes or products. Collaborative techniques such as community working groups, breakout groups at public meetings, and other decision-making partnerships organized for the visioning process can be encouraged to lead the development of the final vision. The vision can be tested for acceptance through outreach to a broad range of stakeholders, through online resources, public media, or large-scale meetings. Communicating the final vision in a compelling and accessible manner is a critical

part of outreach. Simplicity is often best, and final visions are commonly represented as conceptual images, future maps, or simple statements. Final project materials also should incorporate information on the development process, implementation, roles and responsibilities, and future stages of the visioning process.

Practitioners may consider these questions when assessing outreach tools:

- Is stakeholder input into the preferred scenario and final vision statement clearly demonstrated and communicated?
- Have we addressed participant concerns with the scenario-development process to ensure maximum consensus and ownership of the outcomes?
- How do we best communicate the final vision to stakeholders?
- How do we begin to prepare stakeholders for implementation?

## Implementing the Vision

Even the most successful vision development process will result in little without a plan that outlines how the vision will be accomplished and that further increases stakeholder commitment to the vision. Continuing engagement of stakeholders through this phase ensures that implementation efforts are effective and that motivation remains to sustain the vision. Within the third phase of a vision there are three activity areas relevant to the reaching stakeholders component.

### *How Do We Stay on Track?*

Recognizing partner and public contributions to the visioning process and communicating opportunities for future involvement is critical to sustaining the vision. Maintaining existing relationships and outreach efforts provides a critical transition from active visioning to implementation efforts. Practitioners may engage lead stakeholders and partner organizations to review action items and to determine responsibility over the execution of various elements of the vision. Collaborative techniques such as meetings with stakeholders are useful to review roles and responsibilities and to continue ongoing interagency and partner coordination established within the visioning process.

Practitioners may consider these questions when assessing outreach tools:

- Which stakeholders must be involved in implementation efforts, and which stakeholders hold responsibility for future actions?

- What are the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders to ensure implementation and evaluate progress?
- What partnerships and relationships from the visioning process can be leveraged for implementation efforts?

### *What Have We Accomplished?*

Continuing to monitor, measure, and report the status of implementation is a powerful tool for continuing efforts and adjusting priorities. Stakeholder outreach is a critical component of communicating progress and assisting in maintaining public support and interest in the project. Online resources, publications, and visualizations are effective techniques to help distribute information and progress reports to wide audiences in a compelling and accessible way.

Practitioners may consider these questions when assessing outreach tools:

- How can we best communicate to stakeholders the vision's progress, performance, and achievements?
- How can we best involve those stakeholders in contributing toward the implementation of the vision?

### *How Do We Maintain Our Vision?*

Providing motivation to act on a vision, sometimes decades after development, may require partners to re-engage continually in implementation efforts. Strategies to accomplish this include recognition of achievements, collaboration on specific objectives, updates to components of the vision, and other outreach methods to maintain strong community partnerships. Informative tools can be used to engage stakeholders in the performance of the vision and in raising awareness of planned updates. Collaborative techniques such as leadership councils, community programs, and elected official groups are effective in developing an update process and refreshing partnerships. Ongoing partnerships and programs also are examples of techniques used to maintain momentum and interest in ongoing efforts.

Practitioners may consider these questions when assessing outreach tools:

- How can we refresh partnerships and continue the stakeholder relationships developed?
- Are there new stakeholders or partnerships that could be involved in an update process?
- How do we maintain stakeholder interest or galvanize participants long after the active public involvement activities of the vision are complete?

## CHAPTER 7

# Forming Partnerships

### Introduction

The broad scope of a visioning effort often involves organizations representing concerns well beyond the traditional roles of transportation planning and project agencies. This feature of visioning necessitates the formation of partnerships among various public, private, and civic organizations, as well as partnerships among transportation and resource agencies, and within a transportation agency itself. Partnerships are generally developed to convene and facilitate a visioning process. This may involve a number of internal and external models and approaches.

This chapter describes partnerships formed to prepare, create, and implement visioning processes. Key purposes and characteristics of effective partnerships are discussed, based on a review of national examples of visioning processes. Potential partnership models are illustrated, both internal and external to the vision's convening organization.

### What Is Partnering?

A partnership brings together diverse groups to achieve a common goal. In the context of this research, that goal is developing a shared vision. As described in earlier sections illustrating the model Vision Guide, partners are individuals or organizations with an active and defined role, and with influence over the visioning process. Partnerships may be formed to leverage financial or in-kind resources for a vision, to provide a forum for stakeholder cooperation, or to provide executive-level decision-making authority. Most often these relationships are informal, and partners are bound by a shared commitment and common interest in a visioning process. Partnerships also may be secured formally, for example, by inviting participation on the board of directors of a vision's lead organization or through interagency agreements among public entities.

Within the framework of a visioning process, partnerships often bring together multiple public, private, and civic entities, including:

- Transportation interests (state DOTs, MPOs, regional authorities, local governments, private modal partners, and federal agencies);
- Resource interests (local, regional, state, and federal environmental agencies, water or air quality management districts, conservation and wildlife organizations, and private landholders);
- Elected officials and staff;
- Community interests (public or private partners with responsibility for decisions related to land use, economic development, community resources, housing, and related subjects);
- Private-sector interests (major employers, industry associations, or chambers of commerce); and
- Civic interests (universities, community foundations, neighborhood associations, or community groups).

### Purposes of Partnerships

Agencies responsible for transportation planning and project development have traditionally worked within well-defined environments with specific responsibilities. In the past, partnering has been used most commonly in the construction and environmental review stages of transportation project development. State DOTs develop partnership agreements with regulatory agencies to describe the ground rules for working together, solving problems, and governing dispute resolutions. However, recently agencies are increasingly partnering with resource agencies and other organizations in preconstruction activities such as problem identification, planning, design, and visioning. Partnerships greatly improve the effectiveness of these integrated and interdisciplinary planning efforts.

Partnering, as a formal organization or management practice, has mostly been pursued in the private sector. As with the practice of visioning itself, visioning partnership approaches are constantly evolving and increasingly inventive (Lorange et al. 1992). The primary reasons why partnerships are undertaken vary from case to case but primarily include the following:

- Developing decision-making authority;
- Strategically involving stakeholders;
- Guaranteeing financial or in-kind resources; and
- Providing a structure for implementation efforts.

### **Developing Decision-Making Authority**

Visioning processes are complex arrangements of stakeholders that require consensus agreement at key decision points to sustain a successful process. Although visions are open, inclusive, and consensus-based processes, they do require executive-level decision authority to reconcile differences, craft summary language, agree on methods, data, tools and techniques, put forth recommendations, and make final decisions on key outcomes. In some cases, visioning processes have developed tiered partnerships with different decision-making authorities governing these tasks. At the broadest level, partnerships such as task forces and working groups involve many partners on a voluntary basis to develop information and discuss ideas. A secondary partnership level may include key stakeholders, including those with financial commitments, regulatory authority, or elected officials with rule-making responsibilities. At the highest level, an executive council or board of directors may be convened by the lead organization to provide a final voice in outcomes or products, or when approving scopes, schedules, budgets, or staff commitments.

### **Strategically Involving Stakeholders**

In early stages of a visioning process, a solid partnership that brings together representatives from all perspectives will help guide the process by ensuring stakeholders are provided ample opportunity for input. Partnerships may provide venues for sharing project information with stakeholders, thereby improving transparency and providing a forum for vetting and building consensus around project milestones and outcomes. Partnerships intended to involve stakeholders strategically include task forces working to address goals within specific issue areas, working groups of technical staff for scenario-modeling efforts, or staff of elected officials to provide connections to leadership. Representation of stakeholders on the lead organization's board of directors or executive council often satisfies a strategic purpose, but in broad visioning efforts these preexisting groups may need to expand to include additional

representatives. In this case, informal or temporary partnerships may work well to bring together groups of important stakeholders or to expand an existing partnership to cover all stakeholder groups.

### **Guaranteeing Financial or In-Kind Resources**

Partnerships often are cultivated to secure funding or resource commitments. This may occur as a result of a matching grant program requiring the cooperation of multiple partners; membership in a partnership may be offered to induce financial contributions; or governmental agencies providing funding may require a voice in the decision-making process. Visions led by civic organizations tend to develop partnerships with key funders and then include those partners in decision making to recognize contributions. Visions led by governmental agencies tend to have established partnerships structures and may be bound to expand partnerships as a result of state or federal funding agreements.

### **Providing a Structure for Implementation**

A characteristic of many visions is that the lasting outcome of the process is not necessarily the vision statement, map, or alternative scenario but rather the partnerships formed during the process that continue to work together on implementation efforts or entirely new initiatives. Organizations founded for the purpose of leading a vision must develop lasting partnerships with regulatory agencies and community and private-sector interests to maintain momentum, pursue implementation efforts, and continue to justify operation. Partnerships also may be founded explicitly for implementation purposes, for example, organizations that approve, fund, and monitor demonstration projects, or councils of elected officials and key stakeholders that establish priorities or commit resources toward implementation.

### **Structuring Partnerships**

Communities and regions have taken different approaches to structuring the role of the lead organization and the roles and responsibilities of partners. Generally, visioning efforts are created under two basic structures:

- Existing organization convenes through an existing public, private, or civic organization. In these cases, an existing organization may be broadened through strategic partnerships to develop legitimacy when addressing broad issues and to facilitate greater stakeholder involvement in the process.
- New organization convenes through an entity or partnership created explicitly for the purposes of visioning. In these cases,



strategic partnerships often are created to develop decision-making authority, involve funding partners, and facilitate greater stakeholder involvement in the process.

The basic hierarchy and organizational structure of a visioning process tends to remain the same, whether the lead organization is existing or new. However, the partnerships created or leveraged for visioning may have different purposes. For the purposes of this project, partnerships are organized according to whether they are considered internal or external to the lead organization of the visioning process. This distinction is made because the relationships developed, method of partner outreach, formal or informal agreement, and often the basic purpose of partnerships vary in each arrangement.

**Internal Partnerships**

Partnerships internal to the lead organization include formal or informal arrangements created for the purposes of developing information, securing resources, or providing decision-making authority.

- Formal arrangements include partnership models such as boards of directors, councils, or any executive-level decision-making entity.
- Informal arrangements include partnership models such as task forces, working groups, advisory committees, or

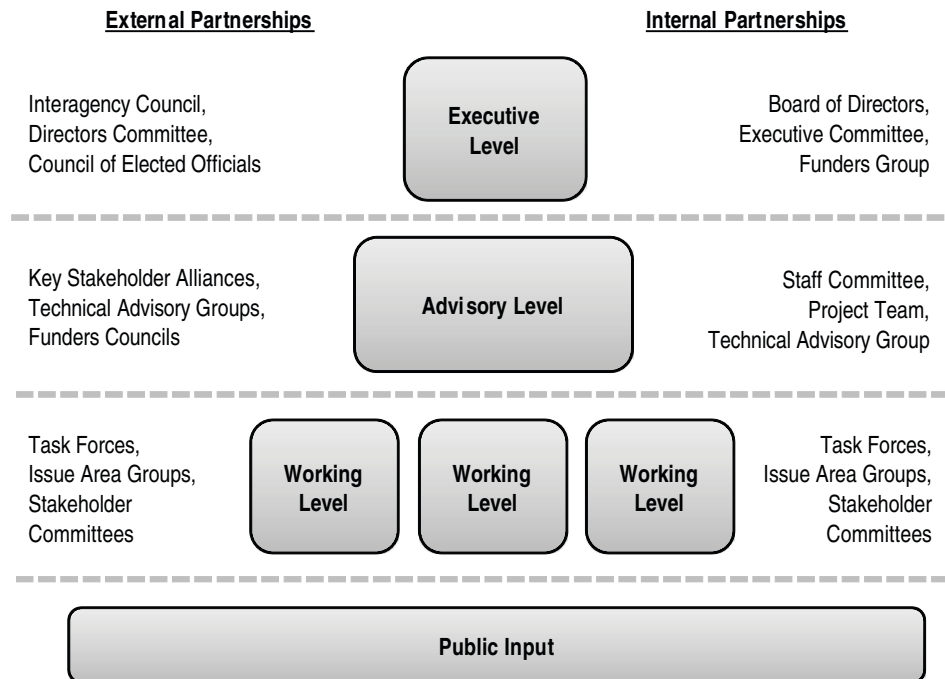
project teams formed for specific purposes, such as public outreach, technical efforts, or implementation monitoring and reporting.

**External Partnerships**

Partnerships external to the lead organization include formal or informal arrangements between the convener and other key stakeholders. Whether created or existing partnerships, these are leveraged for the purposes of involving stakeholders, lending legitimacy to efforts, securing resources, and aiding implementation efforts.

- Formal arrangements include partnership models such as the creation of councils of elected officials, interagency or agency director committees, representative bodies, or new community-based organizations or civic institutions.
- Informal arrangements include partnership models such as agency staff working groups, public-private advisory committees, or task forces formed for a specific purpose.

Figure 7.1 illustrates a generic organizational structure for a vision and potential partnership models, both internal and external to the lead organization. This representation is an example, and visioning processes are not limited to the structure or models presented here. However, most visions are organized starting from the bottom up, with working-level



**Figure 7.1. Generic vision organizational structure and partnership models.**

partnerships having the responsibility to solicit and use public input. Often, advisory-level partnerships are formed to involve stakeholders strategically and to hold some decision-making responsibility or advisory role in complex activities, such as scenario or indicator development. Finally, executive-level partnering models provide ultimate authority over the approval and adoption of final vision outcomes. The next section provides several partnership examples from existing visioning processes.

## Partnership Examples

### *Arizona State Route 179*

A vision for the State Route 179 corridor was organized by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), in partnership with FHWA, Coconino National Forest, Big Park Regional Coordinating Council, Yavapai and Coconino Counties, and the city of Sedona. These entities were represented on the executive team, which was the ultimate decision-making body. External partnerships included design advisory panels with members from each executive team agency, additional stakeholders, and citizen volunteers representing a wide range of interests, whose role was to solicit input on design considerations. Additional internal partnerships at the working and advisory levels included a public outreach team, a project management team, and ADOT's technical team.

### *New Visions 2015–2030*

The Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) convened *New Visions*, a visioning effort to address issues in Upstate New York in conjunction with an update to the region's LRTP. The committee leveraged an existing internal partnership, the Policy Board, to provide executive-level guidance for the vision. Board members include the New York State DOT, Capital District Transportation Authority, Capital District Regional Planning Commission, New York State Thruway Authority, Albany County Airport Authority, Albany Port District Commission, county and at-large community representatives, FHWA, and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The CDTC's internal planning committee, composed of staff and technical experts from Policy Board organizations, provided advisory-level support. In addition, five *New Visions* Working Groups were organized as external partnerships to draw broad stakeholder input. Other significant external partnerships included alliances with the Capital District Regional Planning Council, to provide technical support; the Center for Economic Growth, which conducted complementary scenario analysis; and ARISE (A Regional Initiative to Support Empowerment), which was involved in coordinating outreach activities.

### *Central Florida Regional Growth Vision*

The civic organization *myregion.org*, a subsidiary of the Greater Orlando Chamber of Commerce, convened a regional visioning process in Central Florida. The effort involved elected officials from seven counties, 86 cities, five MPOs, three water management districts, and two regional planning councils, and engaged additional state, regional, and local agencies, as well as community and business partners. The *myregion.org* board of directors had significant decision-making authority in the visioning process. An external informal committee of significant partners provided policy direction and vetted outcomes, and a technical advisory committee and project team provided technical support and guidance in managing the project. Later, an external partnership was organized to lead implementation efforts, known as the Congress of Regional Leaders. This partnership involves elected officials from around the region in implementation efforts.

## Key Factors in Successful Partnerships

Effective partnerships are critical to the development and implementation of a successful vision. This section identifies key factors or characteristics of partnerships that may significantly inform the visioning process.

### **Committed Leadership**

The convening organization and participating agencies must consistently communicate and demonstrate strong executive-level support and committed leadership throughout the visioning process. Effective leaders are often chosen to chair partnerships, with responsibility for engaging partners, developing consensus, ensuring participation, and maintaining communication channels. Leadership may come from agency directors, elected officials, organizational representatives, or members of the public. These leaders often become the public face and visible champions for a visioning effort, lobbying internally and externally to maintain momentum and support for the vision.

### **Adaptable Organizational Structure**

A visioning process benefits from an organizational structure that allows for a variety of external and internal partnerships to be developed as needed. Various external partnerships are useful to support specific aspects of a process at different times, such as the facilitation of stakeholder engagement, technical input on scenario efforts, vision outcome and policy direction, and implementation efforts. In addition, internal partnerships may evolve as opportunities arise to reach

out to new stakeholders, elected officials or partner leadership may change, the roles of project funding or agency partners may fluctuate, and the scope and scale of a vision may be adjusted at any point in a process. An organizational structure that is able to adapt to current conditions, while maintaining clear management responsibility and decision-making authority, will be best suited to fulfilling the purpose of visioning and best able to sustain efforts well into the future.

### **Involvement of Decision Makers**

The involvement of a diverse set of stakeholders is important in any visioning process; however the involvement of partners with ultimate regulatory powers, decision authority, or implementation responsibility is critical. For example, a vision that addresses issues of transportation and land use will find it challenging to implement the vision if local governments are not involved from the onset, or at the very least involved in implementing partnerships to help craft recommended futures, policies, or goals. Similarly, a regional or statewide vision ultimately needs ownership and commitment of regional entities for its successful implementation. Decision makers are often involved through external partnerships that assist in advisory capacities to fine-tune public involvement input or in processes to transfer vision outcomes to related plans and processes. A process also may target the involvement of elected officials through unique partnerships that suit the professional demands of these rule makers.

### **Diverse Representation**

Partnerships often are formed for the purpose of stakeholder involvement. Public participation and input opportunities alone cannot ensure diverse representation, but balanced and strategic partnerships can assure that the key stakeholders, interests, and players have a voice in the vision development process. Private-sector and community representatives are important in ensuring that a vision has local champions, broad business community support, and access to a range of expertise and perspectives, and implementation resources.

### **Application within the Vision Guide**

Forming partnerships is a key task throughout the visioning process, and partners can be engaged either as a need arises or for the duration of the project. In addition, partnerships often are the lasting outcomes of a vision, maintaining cooperative relationships and momentum for the vision's goals long after public involvement activities are completed.

Within the interactive, online Vision Guide a forming partnerships component helps practitioners identify activity

areas most relevant to partnering. The following sections correspond with the model Vision Guide and provide high-level guidance for structuring and forming partnerships.

### **Preparing the Vision**

Partnership development is critical within early stages of a visioning process. When preparing for the vision, the practitioner must establish an organizational structure, identify and reach out to key partners, secure resource committee members from partners, and develop a broad base of support for the visioning effort. These activities require a great deal of resources and time but are invaluable to organizing a successful visioning process.

#### *What Has Been Done?*

Visioning processes are sponsored by an existing organization or a newly formed organization. Existing organizations may be public agencies or private entities, whereas newly formed organizations often are public-private partnerships. Assessing the capacity, reach, and commitments of existing partnerships or organizations can provide valuable information that will help inform whether new strategic partnerships or existing partnerships will be more effective to organize the visioning process.

#### *What Are Our Resources?*

Securing commitments from partners is a primary purpose of forming partnerships and a valuable tool for practitioners when organizing a visioning process. Formal partner commitment structures may be established, such as sponsorship opportunities, requiring funders to buy in to decision-making bodies, or entering into formal contractual arrangements. Informal structures can elicit partner support through pledges of in-kind technical or cash assistance, utilizing existing contracting mechanisms for consultant or staff support, or fundraising to support specific tasks within the process.

#### *Who Will We Involve?*

Establishing a defined and accepted decision-making and organizational structure is necessary for a visioning process to move forward. A generic organizational model for a vision process typically involves an executive-level body such as a steering committee; advisory-level structures such as a technical advisory group; working-level groups such as task forces; and the public input level, from which direction is initially drawn. Each of these organizational structures represents an opportunity to develop diverse, multisector partnerships

among key stakeholders, such as elected officials, implementing agencies, funders, or citizen groups.

## **Creating the Vision**

Although partnerships are significant during the development of a vision statement, it is the final steps of creating the vision that sets the stage for implementation efforts. Without the agreement of significant partners on the final outcomes of a vision, the process risks continuing without full support and is not likely to achieve objectives. Maintaining strong partnerships through this phase is challenging and likely requires significant networking, compromises, and consensus building, but it is necessary to reach a shared vision and a plan to move forward.

### ***How Will We Get There?***

The roles and responsibilities of partners should be clearly communicated and identified when developing the final vision outcomes or products. Partnerships developed during earlier input or planning processes may be continued, or the practitioner may foresee the need to create new partnerships geared specifically toward implementation. Partner responsibilities developed at this stage may be transferred to future commitment tracking or outcome measurement processes. Partnership models or arrangements developed at this point in a process may include formal councils or committees (of elected officials or implementing agencies) or informal stakeholder groups with assigned actions or objectives.

## **Implementing the Vision**

Without the support of key partners, particularly decision makers, implementation efforts cannot succeed. Effective partnerships may actually become the most lasting outcome of a visioning process by coalescing support for coordinated and collaborative activities. Acting on goals and objectives, tracking progress, and maintaining support for the vision require continued efforts to maintain current partners and forge new partnerships.

### ***How Will We Realize Our Vision?***

The involvement of partners, particularly decision makers, assists in the transition and transfer from high-level visioning

to ground-level processes and plans. Partnership models that serve to integrate related plans with the vision include formal adoption by local agencies or informal endorsement by private organizations. Securing partner commitments also is critical to establishing implementation strategies and for providing momentum to transfer responsibility for action to partners. Commitments from partners may include pledges to accept and act on the recommendations of a vision, formal adoption of the vision into related plans, or agreements to develop demonstration projects.

### ***How Will We Stay on Track?***

Sustaining momentum and partner involvement may be challenging in later stages of a visioning process. Partnership structures may help maintain communication among key partners through implementation committees or other formal models. Informal, broad partnerships such as citizen advisory groups may morph into other areas or functions but still provide oversight and public pressure to act on vision objectives. Developing a reliable commitment tracking process also relies on the assistance of partners in developing agreements and guidance on tracking and reporting efforts to advance the vision.

### ***What Have We Accomplished?***

Recognizing the contributions of partners toward vision outcomes provides an opportunity to reward partners in success and motivate partners in failure. Partnerships such as steering committees or technical advisory groups are often established or renewed to help develop community indicators or progress reports, or to revisit the vision and determine next steps.

### ***How to Maintain Our Vision?***

For partners to continue to buy into and act on a vision, sometimes decades after development, they may need to be reengaged in visioning efforts. Partnerships such as steering committees or technical advisory groups are often renewed or established to update components of a vision or to recognize projects. Partnership structures may be continued or entirely new organizations may be spun off to address specific priorities or projects.

## CHAPTER 8

# Tracking Commitments

### Introduction

Implementation of a visioning process is as important as the development of the vision itself. A source of frustration for many communities is that after developing a shared vision, implementing agencies proceed with a business-as-usual approach that trivializes the selected preferred future. For example, a transportation agency may fail to carry through commitments made during visioning to project development, design, or construction activities. For the purpose of this project, the term “commitment” refers to any action or process a partner agency agrees to complete as a result of the vision. This includes the ongoing monitoring of performance indicators.

There are a variety of reasons why a transportation agency may fail, either in appearance or in actuality, to honor commitments. Often it is difficult to develop commitments that are specific enough to be verified without additional documentation and ongoing dialogue. For instance, commitments to investigate or attempt mitigation action, to coordinate with resource agencies, or to take some action contingent upon external events all require ongoing communication with the community and additional documentation, if an agency is to demonstrate action on a commitment. Or, a commitment may appear not to be honored if the vision produces a long-term objective that may not remain consistently important to implementing agencies as they deal with shorter-term priorities and requirements and periodic changes in leadership. Sometimes the challenge may be organizational. For example, staff responsible for reviewing the transportation impacts of a separate development proposal or approving a permit for new access, or even designing and engineering new facilities, may not realize that these applications do not support the aims of the shared vision.

A transportation agency also may be relying on partners to follow through on project support commitments. A project

may involve multiple jurisdictions and agencies, with distinct leadership, planning processes, time frames, objectives, and requirements. For example, a vision may require initial action by a local government to amend comprehensive plans or zoning practices to ensure compatible land uses adjacent to a transportation corridor, before a DOT can honor a commitment. Or the vision may include transportation system goals and commitments that require intense coordination among a DOT, MPO, transit agency, and local government. Elected and appointed leadership of agencies and governments may change multiple times before the vision is implemented, and new leaders may not be familiar with or support the vision. The process of handing off vision implementation responsibility then becomes critical. If the partner agency does not follow through, the transportation agency may have limited recourse to ensure that the conditions for the vision and related projects remain in effect.

In spite of these challenges, best practices can be used as the basis of an effective, performance-based community commitment tracking process. Several of the case studies developed for this project feature successful commitment tracking elements. Further, independent of visioning efforts, transportation agencies in a number of states have implemented successful commitment tracking systems and approaches that carry through from long-range planning to design and construction. These have lessons relevant to implementing a vision.

A common theme in the examples of commitment tracking is that commitments must be explicitly recorded and reported, and there should be periodic review of the degree to which an agency is meeting its commitments. Implementing a robust, performance-based process for tracking commitments can help increase the likelihood that commitments made will be honored. Equally important, a process can help build trust between the transportation agency, other partners, and the community that is instrumental in successfully implementing the vision.

## Review of Existing Tracking Practices

A review of existing practices was performed to characterize experiences with commitment tracking and to identify elements of previous efforts that could be incorporated in a model tracking process. The review included the case studies developed for this project, as well as a comprehensive literature review. The literature review covered the commitment tracking processes of 15 DOTs, and it also reflects survey results for a number of additional agencies. The findings from this literature are included in Appendix D.

The following sections summarize existing practices described in the case studies, detail additional practices identified through the review, and provide a summary of best practices and issues identified.

### Case Study Summary

Several of the case studies incorporate aspects of commitment tracking. Full case study summaries are included in Appendix A. Notable aspects related to commitment tracking from the case studies are detailed here.

#### *Arizona SR 179*

The visioning process included formation of advisory panels that consulted on project design details, resulting in a Needs-Based Improvement Plan that informed the design. Results of the visioning process were documented on a project website.

#### *Atlanta 2020*

A set of 22 benchmarks was established based on the visioning effort. Historic data and specific measures were identified for benchmarks, and progress was tracked on vision initiatives for approximately five years. However, specific commitments and actions were not identified through the visioning or subsequent processes, and tracking was discontinued.

#### *CDTC New Visions*

This effort did not include a formal commitment tracking process. However, the visioning process resulted in projected budgets for various investment categories in the MPO's Transportation Improvement Plan, which the MPO regularly monitors for consistency with vision targets.

#### *Idaho Transportation Futures*

This effort included an Implementation Strategy Workshop to address specific strategies for obtaining stakeholder buy-in and commitment and maintaining momentum.

#### *I-90 Snoqualmie Pass*

As part of this effort, WSDOT made several specific commitments related to the project that were documented in the environmental impact statement and record of decision for the project. WSDOT also committed to maintaining a project website to notify the public on project progress.

#### *New Hampshire CTAP*

Following the initial visioning process, work was performed to evaluate the program and make recommendations for improved communication among partners. Status reports were prepared documenting progress of the programs developed through the visioning effort, detailing budget expenditures, planned versus actual progress, and program schedules.

### Commitment Tracking Models

The case studies and literature provide a number of examples of commitment tracking approaches in use among transportation agencies. The examples presented here differ in scope and approach, but for the purpose of summarizing existing practices, examples may be classified within the following general categories: static commitment lists, ongoing commitment monitoring, and overall performance monitoring.

#### *Static Commitment Lists*

Static commitment lists consist of commitment listings resulting from a visioning exercise or project development effort, but they lack a formal process for ongoing review of fulfillment. The widespread use of green sheets for listing project commitments is an example of this type of approach. Of the case studies, the Arizona SR 179, I-90 Snoqualmie Pass, and Virginia Route 50 visioning efforts resulted in lists of commitments that subsequently were incorporated in project development. The practices of the Indiana and New Jersey DOTs described in the literature review provide further examples.

Making a list of commitments is an important first step in commitment tracking. However, ideally, a commitment tracking process would address additional aspects of the tracking process, such as monitoring of commitment fulfillment, and specifying how commitments should be resolved. The existence of a commitment list often serves to motivate agencies to fulfill commitments. To the extent that many commitment lists include environmental commitments in legally binding environmental documents, the implied threat of litigation may serve as a very real motivation for an agency to fulfill its commitments. An approach based on compiling a list of commitments is most appropriate for cases in which responsibility is clearly delineated and other mechanisms already are in place for ensuring fulfillment.

### Ongoing Commitment Monitoring

Commitment monitoring is a comprehensive approach to commitment tracking that establishes a set of commitments and defines a process for monitoring fulfillment over time. Typically, the organization charged with fulfilling the commitment will have the most information and the most immediate stake in tracking the commitment. However, other parties may want and need to be involved in reviewing and tracking commitment progress. Of the case studies, the New Hampshire CTAP case provides the best example of an ongoing commitment monitoring approach. In this example, the visioning process resulted in a set of 12 initiatives, and periodic reviews were held by CTAP, at least for the first year following the visioning effort, to review progress on each initiative. Many of the state examples described in the literature include a monitoring component. For instance, the systems used in Kentucky, Indiana, Maryland, Virginia, and Washington all support ongoing monitoring.

Establishing ongoing monitoring implies the need for certain elements that may or may not be addressed in a process that relies on static commitment lists. First, a commitment must either be fairly specific, or translated into specific actions, to enable monitoring. Second, specific responsibilities must be assigned, both for monitoring the commitments and fulfilling them. Third, a timeline must be established for monitoring and fulfillment. For instance, an agency might set deadlines for each commitment and establish a review process, or review project commitments as specific project milestones. These additional elements are needed for institutionalizing the monitoring process. They are expected to be particularly valuable for monitoring commitments made outside the formal environmental process, such as for high-level commitments made independent of a specific project during visioning, or for ongoing commitments that extend beyond the life of a construction project. Thus, the model tracking process described later in this chapter incorporates these and other elements intended to help institutionalize the commitment tracking process and integrate it within the a vision process.

### Overall Performance Monitoring

Visioning processes often precede project development and result in high-level commitments that do not relate to specific projects. These can be established through an adopted performance indicator program. Although many indicators are tied to specific project activities, it can be difficult to translate a vision into a specific set of commitments. Further, one can argue that the success of the vision should be judged in the context of the overall performance of the transportation system over time, and how it supports the community values, rather than whether any given commitment is fulfilled. With this perspective, the Atlanta 2020 and Idaho Transportation

Futures efforts both established a set of performance measures that should be monitored over time, rather than a specific set of commitments.

Performance monitoring is a valuable tool, independent of visioning. Ideally, agencies would implement performance monitoring separately from visioning, and any commitments recommended through a visioning effort would be incorporated into an agency's existing performance management initiative. Ideally, a visioning effort would identify target performance levels for the transportation network and result in commitments on the part of visioning participants to monitor performance of the system. If a commitment tracking process is to be successful, it should be institutionalized into agency practice, rather than treated as a one-time effort.

### Potential Barriers to Implementation

Agencies interested in implementing commitment tracking processes face a number of potential barriers. The most significant barriers include:

- *Inertia:* In any agency, the path of least resistance is typically to abide by the status quo. Any change, however well intentioned, is bound to face resistance and skepticism. Overcoming this inertia often requires high-level support and demonstration that changing the system will yield benefits.
- *Finite resources:* Agency staff are hard-pressed to find the time and other resources to accomplish their existing responsibilities. Allocating staff time or resources for process and system development represents a challenge for many agencies.
- *System integration challenges:* Agencies are burdened with multiple competing, possibly conflicting, system and process improvements, each of which requires significant integration with other processes. It simply is not practical to implement all the changes at once that an agency may desire, even absent resource limitations. Environmental streamlining, implementation of new project tracking systems, performance measurement initiatives and GIS integration efforts all may provide opportunities that a commitment tracking effort could leverage, or insurmountable barriers to getting a new effort under way.
- *Inability to achieve consensus:* Implementing commitment tracking requires consensus, both within an agency and with resource agencies and other partners involved in the process. Reaching consensus on the details of a new process or system can require significant time and effort.
- *Lack of a champion:* Ultimately, high-level support in the form of a committed champion is needed to overcome the challenges described here. If an effort lacks such an individual, or loses its champion to staff changes or competing priorities, then efforts to implement a new commitment tracking process may be stalled or redirected.

## Expected Benefits of Commitment Tracking

Supplementing visioning with a commitment tracking process represents an additional complication to completing a vision. Nonetheless, the potential benefits of implementing commitment tracking are significant, and extend beyond the visioning process.

### *Enhanced Visioning Process*

With an effective commitment tracking process, stakeholders will have increased confidence in the results of the visioning process and an increased commitment to establishing and acting on a shared vision.

### *Improved Agency Accountability*

Commitment tracking demonstrates that an agency respects its community and honors its commitments. This creates improved accountability for the agency among stakeholders, generating increased trust and more productive interaction with other agencies, community groups, and the public.

### *Streamlined Agency Processes*

Identifying, meeting, and reviewing commitments requires significant time and energy on the part of transportation agencies, resource agencies, and other stakeholders. Instituting improved processes and systems has been demonstrated to help streamline agency business processes, remove delay, and help agencies deliver transportation services more efficiently.

### *Fostering a Stewardship Model*

A common theme in the transportation community is the need for shifting from a model in which environmental, community, and other concerns with a compliance mind-set are seen as barriers to overcome, to a model in which such concerns are recognized as integral to the transportation system. Commitment tracking is a tool that helps bridge the gap between compliance and stewardship, by translating a shared understanding of a transportation agency's commitments into an actionable set of steps for an agency to implement.

### *Better Results*

Implementing commitment tracking in conjunction with visioning is needed to improve the results a transportation agency delivers. By helping agencies and stakeholders produce a better vision, the process should yield transportation enhancements that better reflect society's needs. To the extent that commitment tracking streamlines agency processes, transportation agencies should be able to leverage the process

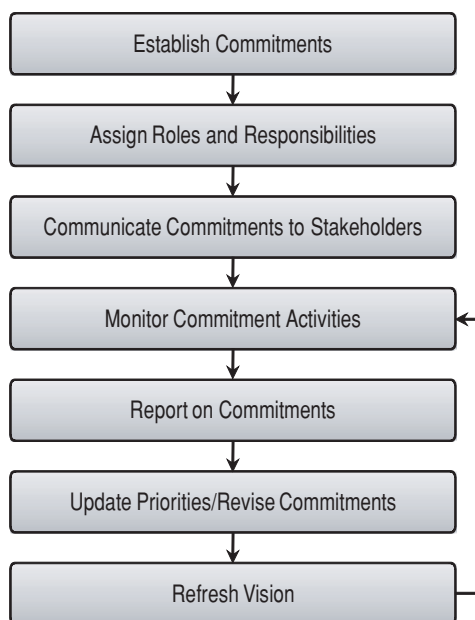
to deliver system improvements in a more timely and cost-effective manner.

## Model Commitment Tracking Process

A model commitment tracking process has been developed to track commitments made during a visioning exercise in the implementation phase. The process is intended to apply to all forms of commitments, including environmental or community, and commitments by an agency to review performance. The process was developed assuming a single organization with overall responsibility for maintaining and tracking commitments. In practice, a visioning effort may result in commitments on the part of multiple organizations. In this case, one agency might be assigned overall responsibility for commitment tracking, or the commitments resulting from a visioning effort may be subdivided by agency as an initial step. Figure 8.1 illustrates the steps within the commitment tracking process. A description of each process step follows.

### Establish Commitments

The initial step is to use outcomes from the visioning process to establish commitments. Visioning outputs may include a final statement, decision-making principles, or illustrative future scenario maps. Additional effort may be needed to translate these materials into a set of commitments, and to gain consensus on which organizations are responsible for fulfillment. For instance, if the visioning effort results in a set



**Figure 8.1. Model commitment tracking process.**



of performance goals for the transportation system, this step would involve defining a commitment to measure and report on those performance goals. If the vision establishes a set of quality of life considerations, this step could involve selecting indicators that monitor progress toward ensuring community values.

### **Assign Roles and Responsibility**

In the next step, a specific individual, office, or other stakeholder should be assigned responsibility for completing each of the commitment actions. A champion should be identified who is in charge of tracking commitments at the agency level. The champion monitors and reports the progress of commitments, actively communicates with commitment owners, and coordinates with stakeholders.

### **Communicate Commitments to Stakeholders**

This step leverages stakeholder relationships established throughout the vision process. Stakeholders should be made aware of the plan for vision implementation through the commitments that have been made. They should be told who is accountable for fulfilling the commitments, and be provided with updates as commitments are completed or adjusted.

### **Monitor Commitment Activities**

In this step the lead convener, or implementation lead responsible for reviewing commitments, monitors commitment progress. This activity involves reviewing the list of commitments and specific actions, and analyzing any progress made since the last update.

### **Report on Commitment Performance**

Periodically, the lead party responsible for monitoring commitments should generate a report on commitment performance for all stakeholders. The reporting period should be agreed upon by the vision lead and stakeholders. Reports should list ongoing commitments, commitment status, actions for the commitment, due dates for the actions, and any overdue actions.

### **Update Priorities and Revise Commitments**

Reporting commitment progress may identify areas in which commitments are not being met or a commitment needs to be modified. For instance, if construction of a new facility is completed, but there are ongoing commitments related to maintenance of the facility, it may be necessary to transfer responsibility for the commitment to another party. In

this step, champion and stakeholders will review the report on commitment performance and determine whether any commitments require revisions.

After commitment revisions are identified, the lead or other stakeholders revise any commitments as needed. The exact details of this process will depend on the structure agreed upon between the champion and stakeholder. In some cases, the organization responsible for tracking the commitments may be responsible for determining when revisions are needed. In other cases, the champion may have a watchdog role and not have authority to revise commitments, or may work with a steering committee on any the details of any revisions. Whatever the details of this process step, the end result is that revisions to a commitment are proposed and approved.

### **Refresh Vision**

After the commitments have been revised, the vision lead will adjust the vision outputs as necessary. The data that have been gathered during the commitment monitoring process will indicate how any goals or objectives may need to shift. For example, a community could face new development pressures or opportunities that were not present when the vision process was originally completed. These new conditions may provide opportunities for economic growth but also could threaten to change a community's character. Depending on existing leadership and changes that may have to be made, the vision refresh may need to include a stakeholder outreach. After the vision has been refreshed, the commitment tracking process should be revised accordingly. The process then loops back to the monitor commitments step, and begins anew.

## **Application within the Vision Guide**

Commitment tracking is relevant at each of the three phases of the Vision Guide. Consideration of the indicators, data, and commitments that might be relevant during the Preparing the Vision phase will provide a solid foundation and consistency throughout the vision process.

### **Preparing for the Vision**

This first phase of the Vision Guide sets the stage for developing the vision and for commitment tracking of vision implementation. Implementation of a commitment tracking process involves reviewing what has been done, what is important, and even who is involved. The agency already may have experience with commitment tracking for plans, programs, and specific projects. This experience can be applied to vision commitment tracking. The only difference is that vision tracking may be done at a slightly higher and broader level. Also, the various

stakeholders may be able to offer certain goals or actions they would like tracked. The most significant step in preparing for the vision may be to develop the overall approach to commitment tracking.

### ***What Is Our Approach?***

Agencies may have more commitment tracking experience at the project level and somewhat less at the plan level. This experience may be applicable to vision tracking, or at least be beneficial from a lessons-learned standpoint. The vision lead should spend time during this activity area mapping out a process that will provide inputs to the commitment tracking process as the vision moves forward. A commitment tracking process implemented in support of visioning should be comprehensive, and should not be limited to only those commitments made during visioning. During this activity area, all partner agencies can explore any existing commitment tracking frameworks that may be relevant to the vision process. In particular, other commitments made through the agency environmental and project development processes should be included in the commitment tracking process.

### **Creating the Vision**

Once a vision's goals have been developed, the agency should begin to develop performance indicators that will monitor and track implementation of actions. Those responsible for implementation need to be involved in developing performance indicators and establishing commitments for each step in this phase.

### ***How Will We Get There?***

This area of the vision process should list activities necessary to accomplish the vision, such as goals and actions. These will be used to develop performance indicators and commitment tracking processes. For example, if the vision includes the goal of enhancing the environment, then one of the actions might involve implementing an ecological approach to mitigation. Actual implementation of this action may require changing agency policies, modifying legislation, or increasing funding for advance mitigation of entire watersheds, as opposed to project levee mitigation. Therefore, implementation of such an action may need to track a number of indicators, such as agency policy making, legislative activity, and budget initiatives for mitigation.

### **Implementing the Vision**

The model commitment tracking process discussed previously provides a framework and related activities for implementing the vision. Figure 8.2 illustrates how the model commitment tracking process interfaces with the Vision Guide. Each step

within the commitment tracking process is associated with one of the activity areas. The text below provides the Vision Guide context for the model commitment tracking process.

### ***How Will We Realize Our Vision?***

The initial step in the process is to use the output from the visioning process to establish a set of commitments. Additional effort may be needed to translate outcomes into a set of commitments, and to gain consensus on what organizations or agencies are responsible for commitment fulfillment.

### ***How Will We Stay on Track?***

Performance indicators for each action should provide a schedule for implementation, which is then monitored. Some actions will take longer to implement than others. Actions that require new legislation may take a while.

#### *ASSIGN ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITY*

A specific party should be assigned responsibility for completing each of the commitment actions. Also, no later than this step, a champion should be identified who is in charge of tracking commitments at the agency level and who monitors and reports progress and actively communicates and coordinates with stakeholders.

#### *COMMUNICATE COMMITMENTS TO STAKEHOLDERS*

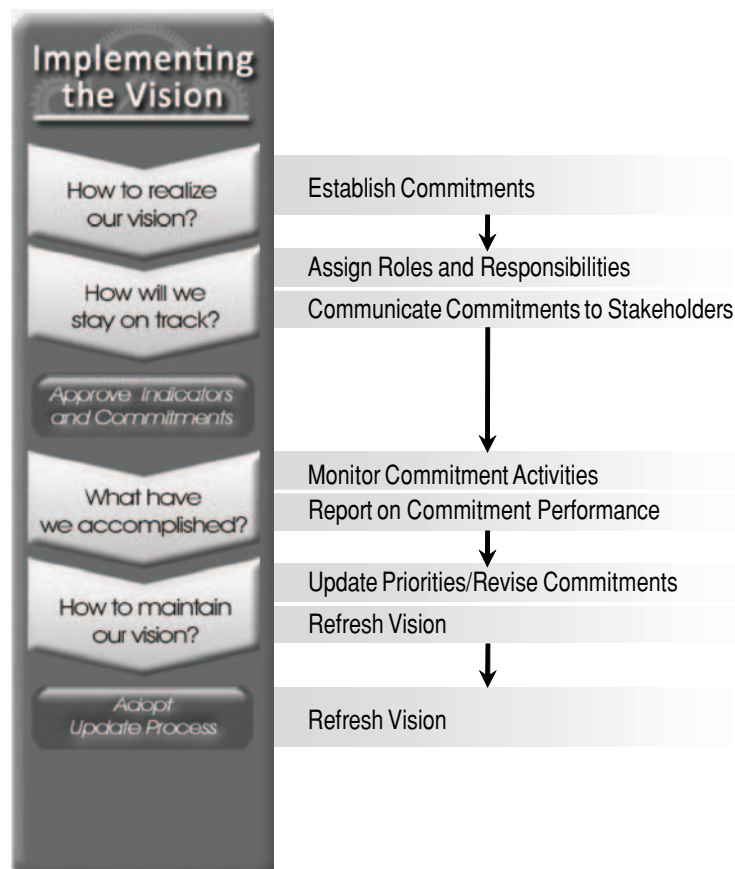
This step leverages stakeholder relationships established throughout the vision process. Stakeholders should be made aware of the plan for vision implementation through the commitments made. They should be told who is accountable for fulfilling the commitments, and be provided with updates as commitments are completed or adjusted.

### ***What Have We Accomplished?***

Progress on implementing the vision, goals, and actions should be monitored on a regular basis. Given that visions are normally implemented over the long term, the actions may be monitored and reported on an annual or semiannual basis. Commitments at the project level, such as environmental commitments, may be reported on more often. A periodic review system should be established that includes a list of commitments indicating what already has been implemented, what is in progress, what is overdue, what is planned, and if there have been any modifications to the commitment.

#### *MONITOR COMMITMENT ACTIVITIES*

In this step, the lead convener or implementation lead responsible for reviewing commitments monitors commitment progress. This activity involves reviewing the list of commitments and specific actions, and analyzing any progress made since the last update.



**Figure 8.2. Relationship between implementing phase and model commitment tracking process.**

#### *REPORT ON COMMITMENT PERFORMANCE*

Periodically, the lead responsible for monitoring commitments should generate a report on commitment performance for all stakeholders. The reporting period (e.g., biannual or annual reports) should be agreed upon by the vision lead and stakeholders. Reports on commitment performance should list ongoing commitments, commitment status, actions for the commitment, due dates for the actions, and any overdue actions.

#### *How Do We Maintain Our Vision?*

As described previously, implementation of the vision and its specific goals and actions should be monitored regularly, so that any necessary adjustments will be recognized and action taken. Likewise, the action may be modified to ease implementation, or the schedule may be adjusted. For example, if the action requires new legislation, the language in the proposed legislation may need to be modified to make it more

acceptable, or the proposed budget adjusted. A person must be identified who is responsible for monitoring implementation and notifying stakeholders of progress and status on a regular basis.

#### *UPDATE PRIORITIES AND REVISE COMMITMENTS*

The report on commitment progress in the previous activity may identify areas in which commitments are not being met or a commitment needs to be modified. Upon reviewing the commitment performance report, the process champion and stakeholders will determine whether any commitments require revision. After commitment revisions are identified, the lead or other stakeholders will revise any commitments as needed.

#### *REFRESH VISION*

After the commitments have been revised, the vision lead will adjust the vision outcomes as necessary. Data gathered during the commitment monitoring process will indicate how goals or objectives may need to shift.

## CHAPTER 9

# Conclusion

### **Visioning in Support of the Collaborative Decision-Making Framework**

This project's objective is to develop a model visioning process that produces outcomes that support the transportation planning processes within the TCAPP Decision Guide. As the research documented throughout this report supports, visioning processes provide a framework for the identification, analysis, integration, and implementation of community concerns, the needs of a transportation system, or the alternatives of a highway capacity project.

The Vision Guide, based on case studies, literature reviews, and other background research, supports a range of applications and provides outputs that flow easily into the TCAPP Decision Guide structure. Whether an agency is undergoing a long-range transportation plan, corridor planning, or environmental review process, the decision points included in the Vision Guide can be applied to collaborative decision-making processes. In addition, collaboration is a key component of visioning, and agencies can leverage many aspects of a visioning process within related transportation decision-making processes.

Carrying visions forward within complex agencies is challenging. Often, a vision developed at the local or regional level is not communicated to the state level or even shared within departments of the same agency. For example, improving communication between planning staff and engineering and design staff is key to ensuring implementation and transfer of the vision. The TCAPP Decision Guide structure provides a means and structured process to link processes better.

The following section discusses the relationship between visioning and collaborative decision making, and outlines possible direct links and practical examples of these links between the Vision Guide and the Decision Guide. Additional

information about how the Vision Guide can support the Decision Guide is included in the Visioning and Transportation application on the TCAPP website.

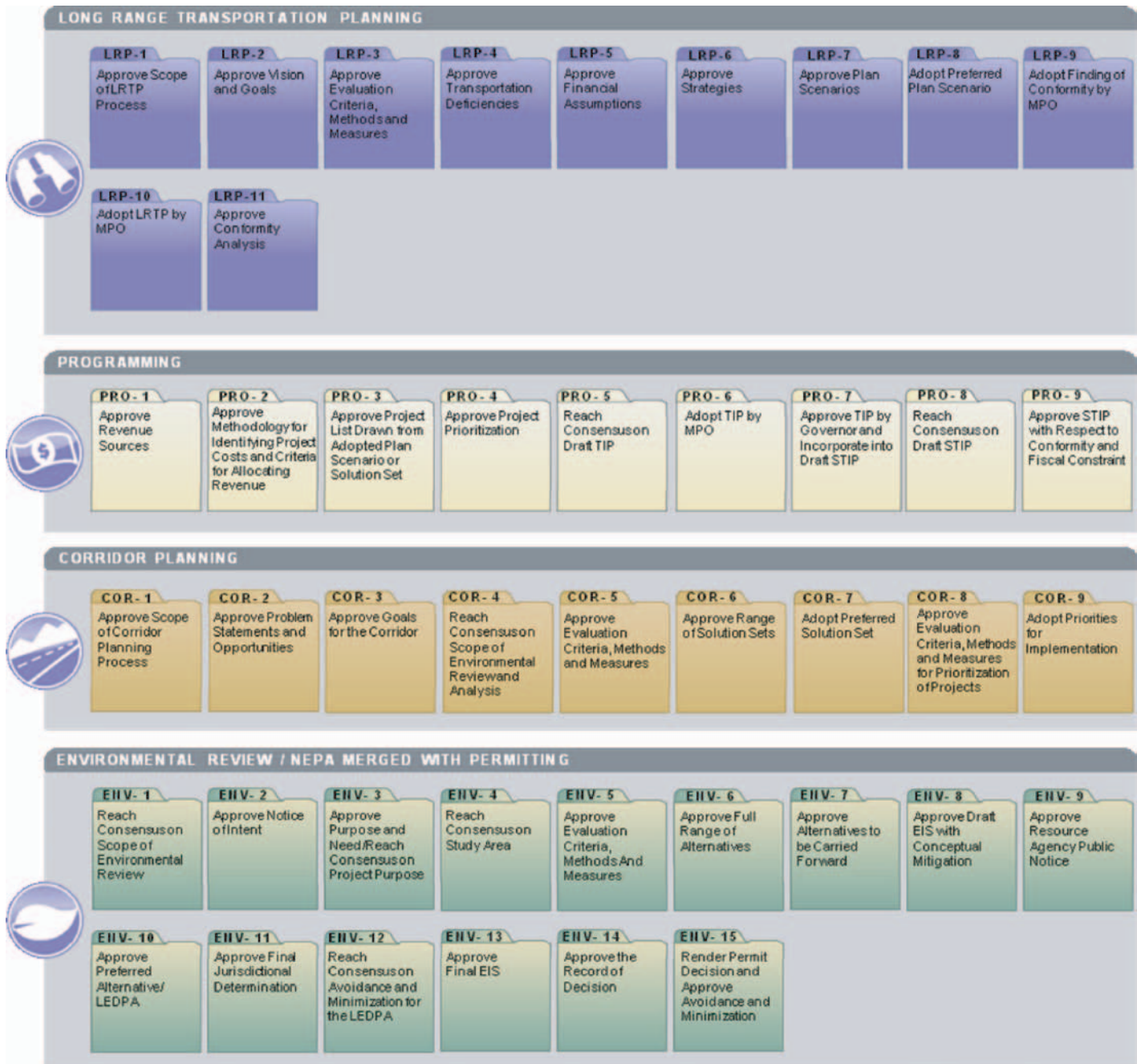
### **The Collaborative Decision-Making Framework**

Collaboration is a key aspect of successful visioning. Visioning offers an opportunity for communities to look past current challenges and consider tomorrow's opportunities. Chapter 5, *Considering Communities*, reflects on the complex set of characteristics and considerations documented and measured through diverse perspectives, voices, and data. The chapters *Forming Partnerships* and *Reaching Stakeholders* describe the complexity and importance of bringing together those diverse perspectives to reach consensus on a shared vision for a community's future. This chapter illustrates practical conclusions to build on a successful visioning effort by integrating vision outcomes into transportation decision-making processes.

This Vision Guide was developed to support Capacity Project C01, *A Framework for Collaborative Decision Making on Additions to Highway Capacity*. The major product of the C01 project is the *Transportation for Communities: Advancing Projects through Partnerships* model framework and Decision Guide. This resource provides a systematic approach for reaching collaborative transportation decisions that enhance the environment, the economy, and the community.

The Decision Guide, pictured in Figure 9.1, is constructed of many individual key decisions that together represent a best practice approach to collaborative decision making. The guide identifies key decisions in four phases of transportation decision making: long-range transportation planning, corridor planning, programming, and environmental review and permitting. This structure of key decisions common to all

Color versions of the figures in this chapter are available online: [www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/166047.aspx](http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/166047.aspx).



**Figure 9.1. Processes of the TCAPP Decision Guide.**

transportation agencies contains data to support an understanding of collaboration, and each key decision provides information on how to implement collaboration fully. Transportation decision making does not occur unilaterally; often, public as well as private agencies invest in data-driven community or regional planning. The resulting plans represent a substantial asset and data source for better transportation decision making. TCAPP provides information for integrating external processes with transportation decision making, and ensures that important values and goals are recognized

and accommodated early in transportation decision making. One of the identified external processes is visioning.

Visioning is a relevant and useful tool that lends itself to collaborative decision making. A visioning process can establish necessary partnerships and stakeholder involvement, which can then translate into the processes defined in TCAPP. The Vision Guide process developed under this project exists outside of the TCAPP framework, and can be used independently. However, the two processes are readily integrated.

## Linking Decision Points of the Vision Guide and Decision Guide

There are two basic models for how a vision process can relate to one of the TCAPP decision-making processes. In the first, a vision process can be integrated within a concurrent transportation planning process, and the decision points can effectively be joined. In the second, the outcomes of a completed vision process (e.g., goals and indicators) may directly support the TCAPP decision points in a later transportation-planning process.

Table 9.1 provides an overview of the linkage between the decision points included with the Vision Guide and those decision points within the TCAPP Decision Guide processes. Vision Guide decision points inform the inputs and outputs of relevant Decision Guide key decisions.

The following sections provide an overview of how each Vision Guide decision point supports the Decision Guide key decisions.

### *Vision Guide: Approve Scope*

This decision point provides a road map for the vision process. Preparing visioning activities, seeking approval of the project scope from a lead committee, sponsoring organization, or funding partners at this point in a visioning process assists practitioners in effectively planning visioning activities and managing expectations. A scope of work should establish a detailed, phased approach that allows for reassessments at critical junctures in the process. A scope may be approved and committed to by the leadership of a sponsoring organization,

but it also should be clearly documented and communicated to a broader audience to help manage expectations of the purpose of the process.

The scope for a visioning process may also provide important links to parallel planning efforts by transportation or resource agencies. A scope may define the geographical boundaries of a community or establish the range of issues to be addressed, which may in turn inform partner efforts. Establishing the scope also represents a commitment by the sponsoring organization to complete a visioning process under a certain time frame or to include certain activities, and can be linked to future progress reporting efforts. This decision point marks the transition from the preparation phase to activities linked directly with creating the vision.

This decision point supports the following:

- *Decision Guide: Approve Scope of Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRP-1).* The scoping key decision involves a broad assessment of the data, decisions, and relationships to consider, acquire, or make throughout the entire long-range transportation plan (LRTP) process. Decisions made at the scoping key decision in long-range planning inform both corridor planning and environmental review, by establishing the baseline information that will dictate those subsequent processes. This is a key point to form new or acknowledge existing relationships with partners in transportation and other decision-making processes, such as land use, natural environment, human environment, capital improvement, and safety and security. If a vision is part of the LRTP process, this decision point will be merged with the Approve Scope decision. If the processes exist

**Table 9.1. Linkages Between the Vision Guide Decision Points and Long Range Transportation Planning**

Vision Guide  Decision Points	TCAPP Decision Guide Process			
	Long-Range Transportation Planning	Programming	Corridor Planning	Environmental Review/NEPA Merged with Permitting
Approve Scope	LRP-1	NA	COR-1	ENV-1
Approve Goals	LRP-2	NA	COR-2	ENV-3/PER-1
	LRP-6		COR-3	
Adopt Future(s)	LRP-8	NA	COR-7	ENV-9
			COR-9	
Approve Indicators and Commitments	LRP-3	PRO-2	COR-5	ENV-5
	LRP-7		COR-8	
	LRP-10			
Adopt Update Process	NA	NA	NA	NA

separately, the outputs from the Approve Scope decision should be integrated here.

- *Decision Guide: Approve Scope of Corridor Planning Process (COR-1)*. This is a crucial first step of corridor planning. It involves a process of assessing what data, decisions, and relationships need to be considered, acquired, or made throughout corridor planning. The corridor planning scope is informed by long-range transportation planning and informs environmental review. This is a key point to form or acknowledge existing relationships with partners in transportation and other decision-making processes. If a vision is part of the LRTP process, this decision point will be merged with the Approve Scope decision. If the processes exist separately, the outputs from the Approve Scope decision should be integrated here.
- *Decision Guide: Reach Consensus Scope of Environmental Review (ENV-1)*. The scoping key decision is a crucial first step of the environmental review phase. Consensus is reached on the data, decisions, and relationships to be considered, acquired, or made throughout environmental review and permitting. The scope is informed by the adopted long-range transportation plan and corridor plans, as well as current information being developed from plans in process. Relationships with planning partners are formed. NEPA and Permitting are environmental processes that describe how the natural and human environments are affected by transportation decisions. Consequently, the decision-making process is an environmental process. A visioning process is not typically merged with an environmental review process, but the outputs from the Approve Scope decision point can provide support here.

### ***Vision Guide: Approve Goals***

Reaching consensus on community goals is a key milestone in a visioning process and substantially informs many future activities. Approval of goal statements by stakeholders or sponsors provides an early opportunity to establish a shared identity, create a sense of purpose for the vision, or identify common values.

Goal statements are important outcomes that are continually transferred through the visioning process. Community goals are often used as a basis to assess the merits of alternative futures, to organize task forces or issue area working groups, or to inform the principles, indicators, or other outcomes of a visioning process. Goals also may be used as inputs to the planning efforts of partners, by helping establish the scope and goals of a long-range transportation plan, for example.

This decision point supports the following:

- *Decision Guide: Approve Vision and Goals (LRP-2)*. At this key decision, the community's values, whether stated as a

vision and goals or simply agreed upon by the stakeholders for the planning area, are used to guide the transportation-specific vision and goals. This decision is the first opportunity for public stakeholders to inform the process or provide their input. Linkages also are established with the scoping and goal-setting key decisions in corridor planning and environmental review, so the vision and goals approved at this key decision point should eventually influence what transportation projects are built. To facilitate collaboration, partnerships with other planning processes are established at this key decision. If a vision is part of the LRTP process, this decision point will be merged with the Approve Goals decision point. If the processes exist separately, the goals generated during the Approve Goals decision should be integrated here and can provide an excellent foundation from which to start the discussion.

- *Decision Guide: Approve Problem Statements and Opportunities (COR-2)*. The full range of deficiencies and opportunities within a corridor are defined at this key decision. Deficiencies and opportunities extend beyond transportation; for this reason, the key decision is integrated with other planning processes such as land use planning and natural environment planning. Input from stakeholders also informs the key decision. The problem statements and opportunities resulting from this key decision are informed by the transportation deficiencies identified in long-range planning, and inform the purpose and need during environmental review. The goals identified in the Vision Guide Approve Goals decision point can be considered to highlight both the deficiencies and opportunities.
- *Decision Guide: Approve Goals for the Corridor (COR-3)*. At this key decision a broad range of transportation, community, and environmental goals are considered that are specific to the corridor. The key decision is informed by the goals approved during long-range transportation planning and informs the purpose and need for projects in environmental review. To facilitate collaboration, the goals from other plans, including those established during a related or integrated vision process, are rationalized with transportation goals in the corridor.
- *Decision Guide: Approve Purpose and Need/Reach Consensus on Project Purpose (ENV-3/PER-1)*. This key decision documents the agreed-upon purpose and need for both NEPA and the Section 404 permitting process. Integration with land use partners is important at this step to substantiate the project purpose and need. Stakeholder input also is important both to gauge the public reaction to the purpose and need and to identify any missing aspects of the purpose and need. A visioning process is not typically merged with an environmental review process, but the outputs from the Approve Goals decision point can provide

support here. In addition, the stakeholder input and outreach in a vision process can be leveraged and integrated at this decision point.

### ***Vision Guide: Adopt Future(s)***

Common to any visioning processes are the creation and selection of a preferred future. This may be accomplished through scenario-planning activities and the involvement of stakeholders in judging alternatives and selecting a preferred future. This important decision point, in which consensus is reached on a preferred course, is an explicit objective of visioning.

Adopting a preferred future is often accomplished first by soliciting the approval of stakeholders in town hall meetings, regional summits, online polling, or other involvement techniques, followed by more formal adoption by leadership of the sponsoring agency, the pledge of elected officials, or recognition by public agencies. It is this formal adoption step that enables transfer of the vision's preferred future into related strategic planning efforts.

Formal recognition of a preferred future can directly inform the TCAPP decision processes. For example, visioning processes that produce preferred future land use maps may readily transfer to the LRTP processes, or inform the scope of future planning processes by helping agencies determine community context, locate environmental assets, or define conservation areas. Additionally, maps may help agencies determine the selection of preferred alignments during environmental reviews.

This decision point supports the following:

- *Decision Guide: Adopt Preferred Plan Scenario (LRP-8)*. At this key decision, a preferred plan scenario is adopted for inclusion in the Draft LRTP. A comparison of the plan scenarios using the evaluation criteria, methodology, and performance measures is the basis for the selection of the preferred scenario. This represents the conclusion of the iterative process to evaluate and refine scenarios. If a vision is part of the LRTP process, this decision point will be merged with the Approve Futures decision point. If the processes exist separately, the goals generated during the Approve Futures decision should be integrated here and can provide an excellent foundation from which to start the discussion.
- *Decision Guide: Adopt Priorities for Implementation (COR-9)*. Individual projects within the adopted preferred solution set are ranked to identify the appropriate sequencing for implementation. Prioritization supports both programming and environmental review by ensuring that identified projects are ready for implementation when funding

is provided. This also allows other implementation actions, such as land use changes, to be made in support of the priorities. The information used in the Vision Guide to reach the Adopt Futures decision should be applied to the project prioritization process.

- *Decision Guide: Approve Preferred Alternative (ENV-9)*. Decision makers approve a preferred project alternative using input from stakeholders and planning partners and detailed information about potential impacts. A checkpoint is included to ensure that the preferred alternative is consistent with the LRTP, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The adopted future resulting from a vision process can be compared to and inform this project-level selection.

### ***Vision Guide: Approve Indicators and Commitments***

This decision point moves the vision into the implementation and monitoring stage. Two critical tools for advancing implementation efforts include the application of indicators and the tracking of commitments. Reaching a point of consensus approval for either of these tools provides a framework for embarking, monitoring, measuring, communicating, and revisiting the outcomes of a visioning process.

This decision point is applicable both as a support for implementation of plans, and for use in evaluation and assessment. The performance indicators that are adopted and monitored during the final phase of a vision process can be fed directly into establishment of performance measures for an LRTP, or the evaluation criteria and a project prioritization process.

This decision point supports the following:

- *Decision Guide: Approve Evaluation Criteria, Methodology and Performance Measures (LRP-3)*. At this key decision, the evaluation criteria, methodology, and performance measures are approved that will allow decision makers to compare scenarios to the vision and goals and to one another. The evaluation criteria, methodology, and performance measures are developed with input and data from both partners of other planning processes and stakeholders. The evaluation criteria, methodology, and performance measures used in long-range transportation planning inform those used in both corridor planning and environmental review to ensure consistency across the entire transportation decision-making process. The goals and objectives measured through performance indicators in a vision process can be leveraged easily here.
- *Decision Guide: Approve Plan Scenarios (LRP-7)*. Scenarios are based on approved strategies and are compared using



the evaluation criteria, methodology, and performance measures. Collaboration with partners from other planning processes is important at this stage because scenarios could involve strategies that encompass land use, infrastructure, or other components. This step begins the iterative process of refining scenarios to select the preferred scenario. The vision performance indicators can provide necessary data to evaluate potential scenarios.

- *Decision Guide: Approve Methodology for Identifying Project Costs and Criteria for Allocating Revenue (PRO-2)*. This key decision establishes a consistent methodology for estimating project costs for both the long-range transportation plan and the TIP. It also documents the specific requirements and restrictions associated with each funding source. The vision performance indicators can provide necessary data to establish project prioritization criteria.
- *Decision Guide: Approve Evaluation Criteria, Methodology, and Performance Measures (COR-5)*. At this key decision, evaluation criteria, methodology, and performance measures are approved that will allow decision makers to compare solutions that address the corridor's opportunities and problems and are consistent with the approved corridor goals. The evaluation criteria, methodology, and performance measures are developed in consideration of transportation, community, and environment. They are informed by the evaluation criteria, methodology, and performance measures used in long-range transportation planning and are considered during environmental review to ensure consistency across the entire transportation decision-making process. Vision performance indicators can provide necessary data to establish solutions prioritization criteria.
- *Decision Guide: Approve Evaluation Criteria and Methodology for Prioritization (COR-8)*. At this key decision, priorities are established for implementing individual solutions. A second set of evaluation criteria, methodology, and performance measures is used for this purpose. The vision performance indicators can provide necessary data to establish solutions prioritization criteria.
- *Decision Guide: Approve Evaluation Criteria, Methodology and Performance Measures (ENV-5)*. Evaluation criteria, methodology, and performance measures are used to compare how alternatives meet the purpose and need. The criteria used in long-range planning and corridor planning may influence those used in environmental review. Land use and capital improvement planning data also are analyzed so that the criteria and measures incorporated will ensure the alternatives are consistent with these plans. The vision performance indicators can provide necessary data to evaluate alternative scenarios.

To support this integration, the TCAPP website includes an application called Visioning and Transportation, which serves as a filter through which a practitioner can view the elements of the Decision Guide that relate specifically to visioning.

### Practical Integration of Visioning in Transportation Planning Processes

This final section provides several practical examples of integrating a visioning process with the related transportation decision points in the Decision Guide. The examples included here are intended to assist the practitioner in imagining practical linkages between visioning and transportation decisions.

The example provided in Figure 9.2 illustrates a hypothetical scenario in which a visioning process is used by a transportation agency within a corridor planning effort to design transportation improvements that best meet established community goals and objectives. In this example (moving from top left to bottom right), a community vision explored alternative designs and accompanying policies for a new highway interchange. The design proposal for the facility is vetted with intensive public involvement and scenario visualizations, and DOT staff assist community members in understanding critical design considerations. The preferred solution is chosen that best matches the community's values and goals, and the agency's requirements, as established in a parallel community visioning process. The interchange selected meets safety and engineering considerations, but it also supports community goals to minimize disruption to sensitive lands near the river and to improve connectivity for local businesses and residents. Within the Vision Guide, the decision point Adopt Future(s) represents this consensus agreement on a preferred future scenario. The outcomes of the vision were adopted by resolution in the City Council, and the DOT committed to honor the community's proposed alignment. The adopted outcome and commitment may then be readily accepted by a transportation agency as guidance to the key decision point Adopt a Preferred Solution Set within the corridor planning process of the Decision Guide. In this case, the DOT agreed to a commitment to fast-track the preferred option through development and engineering phases.

The example in Figure 9.3 illustrates the linkage between a strategic regional growth and development vision and a regional long-range transportation plan. At top left, a regional vision might produce a conceptual map of future regional population and economic growth centers, linked by multi-modal corridors, and coordinated with desired conservation lands. At center, an MPO may then use this future growth scenario to guide future regional transportation investments consistent with the vision. The vision may provide information

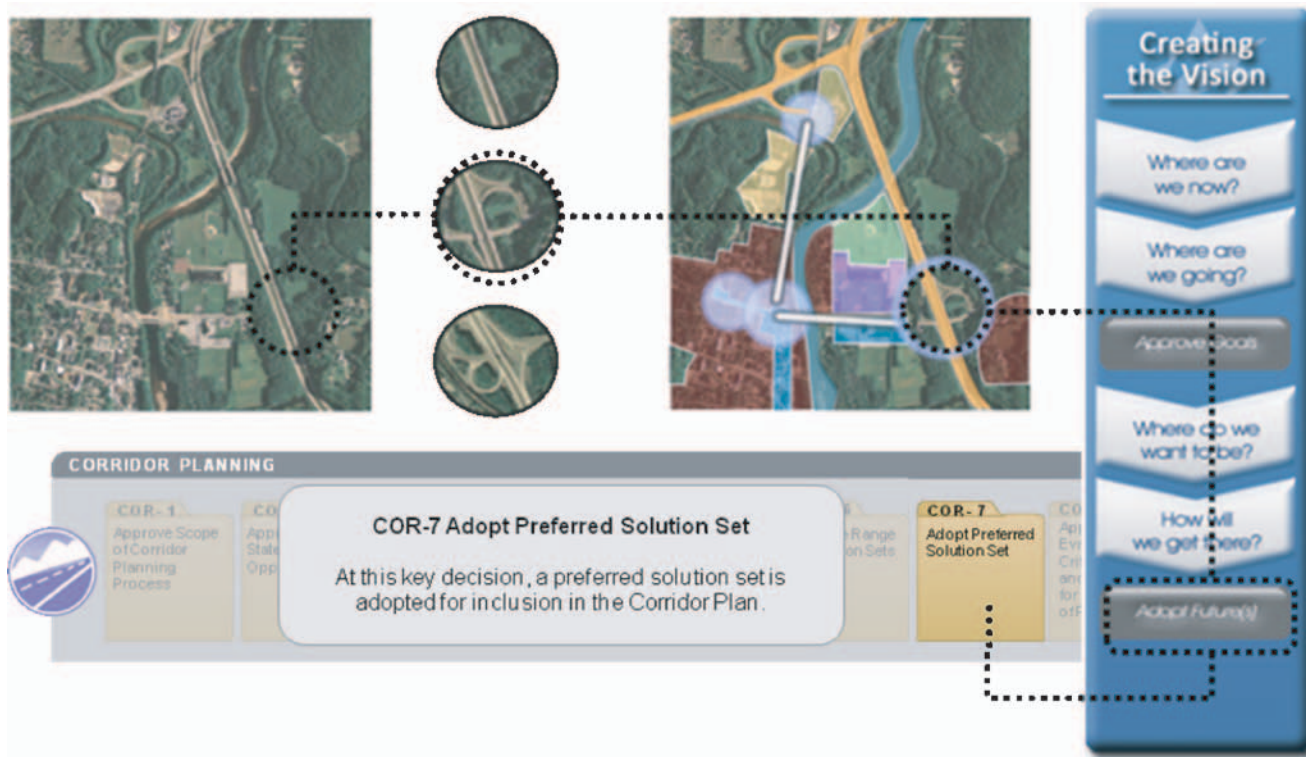


Figure 9.2. Example of adoption of Vision Outcomes into corridor planning: Integrating the Decision Guide and the Vision Guide.

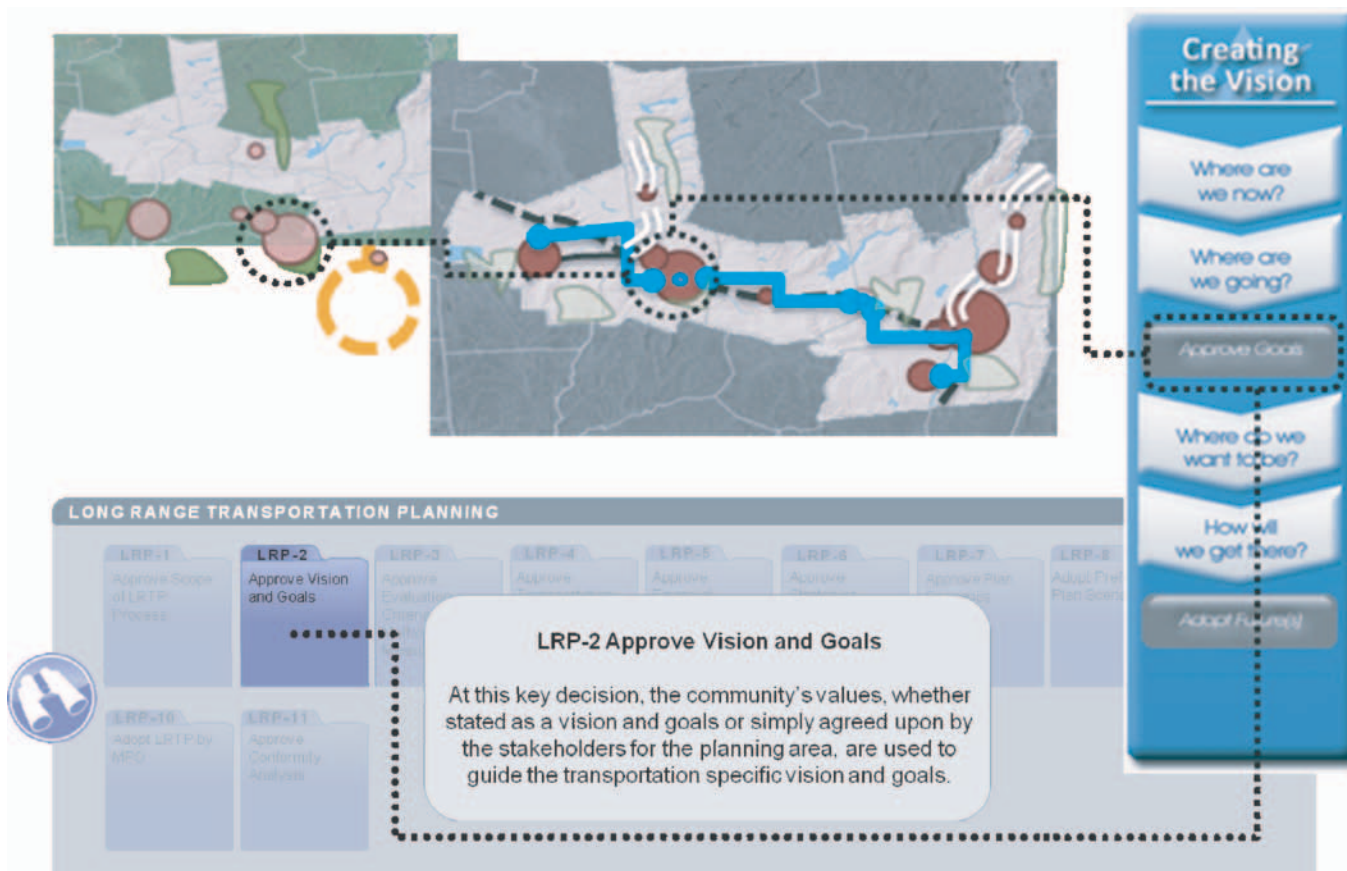
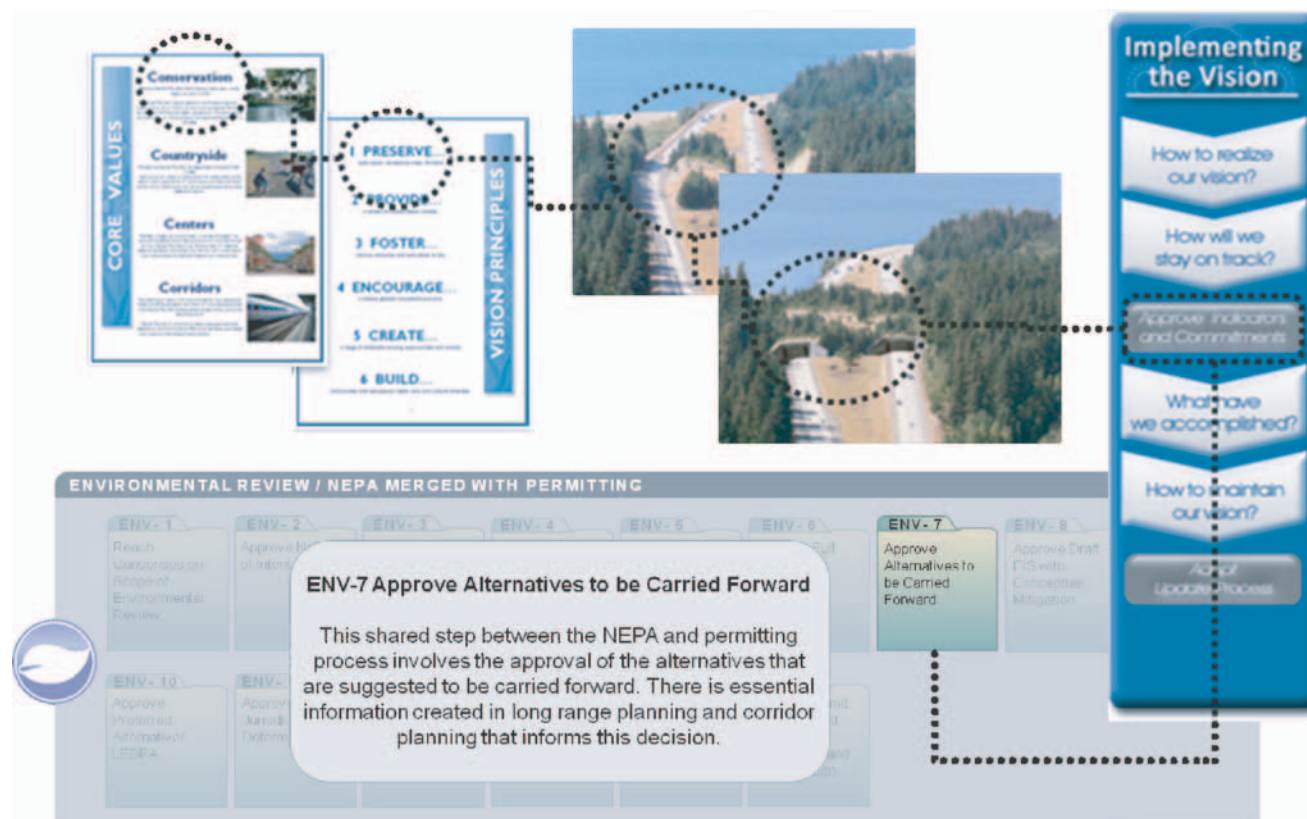


Figure 9.3. Example of adoption of Vision Outcomes into long-range planning: Integrating the Decision Guide and the Vision Guide.



**Figure 9.4. Example of adoption of Vision Outcomes into environmental review: Integrating the Decision Guide and the Vision Guide.**

the MPO did not previously have, such as residents' preferences for which conservation and recreation areas need greater access, and which areas should be avoided. Or the goals enumerated in the vision may provide the MPO with an indication of strong public support for the development of an integrated, multimodal transportation system, which was not previously evident in smaller-scale, project-focused public input processes. Incorporating a vision into a later or concurrent transportation plan is represented by the Vision Guide's decision point Approve Goals. This approval and integration process then relates to the TCAPP key decision point of Approve Vision and Goals, which is used to guide the transportation vision identified in the region's long-range transportation plan. This is one example of how a regional vision may link to a regional long-range transportation plan.

The example in Figure 9.4 describes a hypothetical visioning process integrated with an environmental review process. In this case, the vision's values and principles emphasize a strong commitment to conservation of open spaces and preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems. These community values may then influence the commitments made by an agency when scoping and evaluating alternatives within the NEPA environmental review process. At center in this

example, the DOT is aware of the community's emphasis on conservation values through involvement in a previous corridor visioning effort, and the alternatives evaluated include an emphasis on wildlife crossings and other considerations for the natural environment.

Within the Vision Guide process, the Approve Indicators and Commitments decision point is the point at which the vision's outcomes are linked to the commitments of partner agencies. In turn, this decision point links to the environmental review process and key decision point Approve Alternatives to be Carried Forward, as described in the TCAPP Decision Guide.

### **Visioning in Support of Collaborative Transportation Decision Making**

The above examples illustrate the unique nature of the relationship between visioning and collaborative transportation decision making. That is, a visioning process may be completed well before a transportation process, may occur in parallel to a transportation effort, or may be integrated within a transportation process to solve a specific challenge. The value

of visioning lies in its flexibility, interdisciplinary, consensus-based approach, which ultimately leads to collaborative processes that produce responsible decisions.

Visioning can play an important role in the support of the TCAPP Decision Guide's collaborative decision-making process. To fulfill the research aims of this project, the Vision Guide was designed to support directly the information needed at many of the Decision Guide's key decision points. However, because of the nature of visioning, these linkages remain at a relatively broad level.

Through further work with TCAPP's interactive website and leveraging the application Visioning and Transportation,

the integration of these two processes to provide specific data transfer and collaboration points could provide an invaluable tool to practitioners. It also may encourage those interested in visioning to adapt the TCAPP model for use in other transportation processes, as well as illustrate the value of visioning to transportation practitioners pursuing a collaborative decision-making model. Tools and resources such as those developed through SHRP 2 will serve a critical role as transportation agencies, regional planning councils, civic groups, and others are tasked increasingly with coordinating around and planning within the complex interlay of social, economic, and environmental issues.

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# Appendices

Appendices A through D are available online: [www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/166047.aspx](http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/166047.aspx). The appendices are as follows:

Appendix A: Case Study Summaries

Appendix B: Considering Communities Resources

Appendix C: Stakeholder Outreach Resources

Appendix D: Commitment Tracking Literature Review

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\*Membership as of February 2012.



## Related SHRP 2 Research

A Framework for Collaborative Decision Making on Additions to Highway Capacity (C01)

Performance Measurement Framework for Highway Capacity Decision Making (C02)