

# Visioning and Transportation

## Reference Links

- MARC Transportation Outlook 2040(Direct to: <http://www.marc.org/2040/>)
- I-95 2040 Vision(Direct to: <http://www.i95coalition.org/projects/2040-strategic-vision/>)
- Vision for Route 50(Direct to: <http://www.route50.org/aboutus.html>)
- PSRC Vision 2040(Direct to: <http://www.psrc.org/growth/vision2040>)
- Central Florida - How Shall We Grow?(Direct to: <http://www.myregion.org/index.php?submenu=CollateralMaterials&src=gendocs&ref=CollateralMaterials&category=RegionalVision>)
- Scenario Planning and Visualization in Transportation, FHWA(Direct to: [http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/scenario\\_and\\_visualization/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/scenario_and_visualization/))

## Overview

The basis for this work is the **Vision Guide**, an interactive, visual depiction of the phases and activities of any visioning process.

**Visioning and Transportation** is intended to advance the practice of visioning in support of transportation decision-making.

The application and accompanying Technical Report have been developed in support of Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP2) research on collaborative decision-making to integrate environmental, economic, and community considerations into the analysis, planning, and design of new transportation investments.

Visioning processes are significant sources of information for transportation planning processes, which must now range well beyond topics of connectivity and design to consider community context and a host of interrelated issues. Visions may help illuminate how transportation decisions interact with community livability or how infrastructure investments intersect with desired economic, environmental, and community resources.

The information available within this site is intended to assist transportation agency practitioners in assessing the possibilities of visioning, in identifying practical steps when engaging in visioning, and in establishing links between vision outcomes and transportation planning and project development processes.

To explore the Vision Guide please use Vision Guide tab, or for more information, navigate other tabs. To view educational videos which provide more information about this project, an overview of the navigation of this web site, and present a hypothetical visioning process which applies this research, please use Technical Resource tab.

## Visioning and the Decision Guide

### Visioning and the Decision Guide

Visioning is a planning and policy exercise that engages community stakeholders in creating a consensus about the future of their community. Visions describe the desired future (or futures) of communities and outline clear strategies for reaching the desired future(s), based on present conditions and anticipated future trends. Approaches to visioning often blend traditional strategic and scenario planning with best practices from technical, visual, and interactive community-engagement techniques to maximize public participation. Visions commonly produce a general statement of future direction, a set of goals and objectives, and implementation strategies. Example outcomes may include: high-level decision-making principles, general long-term goals and objectives, conceptual future development maps, or sample streetscape designs.

Visioning can support practitioners in all phases of transportation decision-making. This application includes a visioning activity framework that provides guidance for transportation practitioner participation in broad-based community visioning. This participation will help ensure visioning products that are generated will be useful as inputs into specific transportation planning and project processes. This application identifies the visioning elements that are applicable to transportation, and links these elements to specific key decisions during long range planning, programming, corridor planning and NEPA/permitting. The integration of the Vision Guide and the Decision Guide illustrates where and how visions can support or facilitate transportation decisions.

To get a snapshot of each Key Decision, roll over the Decision Guide graphic below. Click on any individual Key Decision to access detailed information including: purpose and anticipated outcomes; partner roles; integration with external planning processes; linkages across phases; questions to assist decision makers; and data, tools, technologies that support the decision.

Key Decisions that are grayed-out have no specific relevance to the individual application or topic area but are still accessible from this graphic.

## Long Range Transportation Planning

- LRP-1 - Approve Scope of LRTP Process  
Determine if scope, goals, measures and/or commitments from visioning are available and applicable.
- LRP-2 - Approve Vision and Goals  
Consider goals and adopted future from visioning to inform the transportation vision and goals.
- LRP-3 - Approve Evaluation Criteria, Methods and Measures  
Goals and objectives from a vision process can inform the selection of evaluation criteria and performance measures to ensure that the preferred scenario reflects the community vision.
- LRP-4 - Approve Transportation Deficiencies  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- LRP-5 - Approve Financial Assumptions  
Consider partner commitments in the community visioning process to identify potential revenue sources.
- LRP-6 - Approve Strategies  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- LRP-7 - Approve Plan Scenarios  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- LRP-8 - Adopt Preferred Plan Scenario  
Validate that the preferred scenario is supportive of the adopted future(s)
- LRP-9 - Make Conformity Determination by MPO  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- LRP-10 - Adopt LRTP by MPO  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- LRP-11 - Make Conformity Determination  
This key decision is not associated with application.

## Programming

- PRO-1 - Approve Revenue Sources  
Consider partner commitments from visioning to identify potential revenue sources.
- PRO-2 - Approve Methodology for Identifying Project Costs and Criteria for Allocating Revenue  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- PRO-3 - Approve Project List Drawn from Adopted Plan Scenario or Solution Set  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- PRO-4 - Approve Project Prioritization  
Vision implementation priorities can provide data to inform project prioritization criteria.
- PRO-5 - Reach Consensus on Draft TIP  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- PRO-6 - Adopt TIP by MPO  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- PRO-7 - Approve TIP by Governor and Incorporate into Draft STIP  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- PRO-8 - Reach Consensus on Draft STIP  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- PRO-9 - Approve STIP with respect to Fiscal Constraint  
This key decision is not associated with application.

## Corridor Planning

- COR-1 - Approve Scope of Corridor Planning Process  
Determine if scope, goals, measures and/or commitments from visioning are available and applicable.
- COR-2 - Approve Problem Statements and Opportunities  
Consider the problem statement and desired outcomes from visioning.
- COR-3 - Approve Goals for the Corridor  
Consider applicable goals and adopted future from visioning.
- COR-4 - Reach Consensus on Scope of Environmental Review and Analysis  
Review plans, key issues, and visions applicable to social, cultural, natural, and environmental review.
- COR-5 - Approve Evaluation Criteria, Methods and Measures  
Information from scope, approved goals, adopted future, and measures to inform development of criteria or performance measures.
- COR-6 - Approve Range of Solution Sets  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- COR-7 - Adopt Preferred Solution Set  
Validate that the preferred solution set is supportive of the consensus vision and/or adopted future(s).
- COR-8 - Approve Evaluation Criteria, Methods and Measures for Prioritization of Projects  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- COR-9 - Adopt Priorities for Implementation  
Validate project prioritization is consistent with and/or supportive of the adopted future(s).

## Environmental Review/NEPA Merged with Permitting

- ENV-1 - Reach Consensus on Scope of Environmental Review  
Determine if indicators and consensus future(s) impact the scope of the project.
- ENV-2 - Approve Notice of Intent  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- ENV-3 - Approve Purpose and Need/Reach Consensus on Project Purpose  
Determine how the vision problem statement, key issues, consensus future(s), goals and guiding principles impact the project purpose and need.
- ENV-4 - Reach Consensus on Study Area  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- ENV-5 - Approve Evaluation Criteria, Methods and Measures  
Consider indicators, implementation priorities, and action steps from visioning.
- ENV-6 - Approve Full Range of Alternatives  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- ENV-7 - Approve Alternatives to be Carried Forward  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- ENV-8 - Approve Draft EIS with Conceptual Mitigation  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- ENV-9 - Approve Resource Agency Public Notice  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- ENV-10 - Approve Preferred Alternative / LEDPA  
Validate the preferred alternative is consistent with the adopted future(s).
- ENV-11 - Approve Final Jurisdictional Determination  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- ENV-12 - Reach Consensus on Avoidance and Minimization for the LEDPA  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- ENV-13 - Approve Final EIS  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- ENV-14 - Approve the Record of Decision  
This key decision is not associated with application.
- ENV-15 - Render Permit Decision and Approve Avoidance and Minimization  
This key decision is not associated with application.

A vision creates significant benefits with the potential to improve both the quality and timeliness of decision-making.

- **A vision provides a framework for the physical, economic and social context of the future community.** This can help transportation decision makers avoid delays in plans and projects that are caused by fundamentally different points of view on the community's future. Visions provide a mechanism to align transportation decisions with the quality of life outcomes that the community has defined for its future.
- **A vision can articulate consensus from the community on its future.** To achieve consensus, the visioning process must be broad-based and inclusive of all of the diverse interests within a community. It is built on proactive and interactive collaboration of formal decision makers with any and all interested groups or individuals.

The result of this collaboration is both consensus on the vision and a commitment to implement the vision by using it as the foundation for all community plans, projects and priorities. This alignment creates an opportunity to implement integrated planning, including land use, transportation, conservation, and economic development plans that are not only consistent but mutually supportive. Transportation decisions improve when planning and project development builds upon the relationships and partnerships that are established during visioning.

The products of visioning serve as a foundation to guide the scope and broad direction of future transportation plans. In addition, visioning can also be used as a means to facilitate public involvement in the development of a specific project or plan. This application supports both by showing how the outcomes of the visioning process described in the Vision Guide are integrated in all four phases of transportation decision making, from planning through project development. Community visioning can occur at any point in time, but the long range transportation plan process often provides a logical point at which to incorporate the community vision. However, visioning can also guide project prioritization in Programming, provide input for the detailed study of solution sets in Corridor Planning, and be used as a checkpoint in Environmental Review to make sure the preferred alternative is consistent with the community's vision.

### **Vision Guide and PlanWorks Relationship**

Both the Vision Guide and PlanWorks are based on a philosophy of collaboration that includes:

- Interdisciplinary participation by a broad range of formal community, environmental and transportation representatives
- Proactive outreach and interactive involvement of diverse range of stakeholders
- Commitment to using the context and quality of life values defined by the community as the foundation for decision making
- Emphasis on creating and vetting a range of scenarios or solutions
- Expanding decision maker and stakeholder ownership in the decision making process and responsibility for implementation

Both the Vision Guide and PlanWorks are based on robust collaborative practices. The Vision Guide includes four Visioning Components which act as focus areas for different visioning activities. Each of these components is relevant to transportation decision making as well.

- Reaching stakeholders

- Forming partnerships
- Considering communities
- Tracking commitments

### **Forming Partnerships**

Successful visioning requires involvement, collaboration, and partnership by public, private, and civic organizations, including the formal transportation decision making partners. Partner organizations are a major factor in any effort to reach consensus that can be carried forward into implementation. During transportation decision making these same partnerships may be leveraged to ensure the adopted vision is reflected in the adopted transportation plan, project prioritization, corridor or sub-area studies, and environmental review. A lack of collaboration can slow momentum on getting a project implemented and weaken links between the principles that are developed in the visioning process and application of these principles to the plans and policies of partners. This application shows where to consider those partnerships and how those partnerships may be important in *PlanWorks*.

### **Reaching Stakeholders**

A successful visioning process will enhance public understanding and ownership in transportation decisions. Improving communications with stakeholders can produce public trust in the transportation process and give stakeholders the ability to provide appropriate feedback. Visioning also increases stakeholder ownership and commitment to the community consensus for the future. When communities have created a vision, it is essential that transportation decision making use it as the foundation for transportation plans and projects. An important aspect of *PlanWorks* is collaboration with stakeholders and incorporating their input into transportation decision making. *PlanWorks* can be used to build upon the outreach conducted and input gathered in the Vision Guide, to produce a more robust transportation process that is linked and builds on the stakeholder outreach conducted during visioning.

### **Considering Communities**

Visioning gives communities the opportunity to express their desires for the future, including transportation components. Visioning offers a community the chance to better understand how transportation systems can shape the community's future and how specific transportation goals or strategies can help achieve the preferred future. A transportation 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. When local governments are involved in regional visioning processes, the projects they choose to sponsor are often more reflective and cognizant of community values and concerns, and more consistent with established goals; these projects are also more likely to be selected or prioritized for funding within an MPO or DOT transportation plan.

### **Tracking Commitments**

Implementation of a visioning process is as important as the development of the vision. Successful visioning processes create specific actions or "next steps" needed to implement the vision. Transportation agencies are an essential partner in supporting implementation. The linkage between the Vision Guide and *PlanWorks* will help practitioners understand how transportation plans, programs and projects need to support the implementation of the community vision.

## **What is Visioning?**

### **What is Visioning?**

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 upon a desired future or futures, and to develop a clear strategy for how to reach that desired future. The distinguishing characteristics of this approach are considered to be:

- 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
- Expanding ownership in a process and implementation responsibility

Approaches to visioning often blend traditional strategic and scenario planning with best practices from technical, visual, and interactive community-engagement techniques to maximize public participation. Visions commonly produce a general statement of future direction, often for 20- to 50-year horizons, a set of goals and objectives, and implementation strategies. Example outcomes may include: high-level decision-making principles, general long-term goals and objectives, conceptual future development maps, or small-scale detailed streetscape designs.

Visioning processes are intended to address four central questions:

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

These central questions form the basis of the Vision Guide - an interactive blueprint to enable practitioners to engage in visioning in support of transportation planning. The complexity, timeframe, breadth, and depth of these processes vary considerably. However, any general visioning process consists of three phases of activity:

- Preparing
- Creating
- Implementing

Each Phase is made up of a set of Activity Areas which summarize the critical activities, organize key components, and communicate actions which occur within each phase.

Additionally, the Vision Guide includes four Components, or specific elements of a successful vision process. They are linked to relevant activity areas and thus provide a lens through which to view the vision process. The four components of a vision process include:

- Forming partnerships
- Reaching stakeholders
- Considering communities
- Tracking commitments

Detail on each of these phases, components, and the activities within those areas is available through the interactive Vision Guide, and is included in Chapter 4 of the Technical Report.

Please visit the Vision Guide and Technical Resources tab for more information.

## Visioning and Transportation

### Linking Visioning and Transportation

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 country and is increasingly common in a variety of projects, plans, and processes. Visioning is recommended by federal agencies to encourage visioning as a means of proactive and inclusive public involvement. Visioning is embraced in statewide policy by several state departments of transportation to better connect transportation and land use decisions. Visioning is practiced by many metropolitan planning organizations within ongoing planning efforts to facilitate regional coordination of local decisions. And visioning is increasingly employed by civic organizations or 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 which 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 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, or maps of desired future conservation areas maps 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 also 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 linkages to transportation planning and strategic direction for practitioners.

For transportation agency managers interested in the linkages that may exist between visioning and planning, this research, in combination with PlanWorks on collaborative decision-making, highlights applying vision outcomes to transportation decision processes. Please see Section 9 of the Technical Report for more information on visioning in support of collaborative decision-making. In addition, the decision for a transportation agency to become engaged in a visioning process will be based upon the agency's expectations of how a project's outcomes may be more efficient, comprehensive or appropriate to the community than they might otherwise be in the absence of coordination. To help determine whether a transportation agency might engage in a vision process, Chapter 3 of the Technical Report presents a set of factors, and the basis for assessing those factors in determining whether and how to become involved in a vision process.

### PlanWorks

The PlanWorks web site provides a systematic approach for reaching collaborative decisions for transportation investments that enhance the environment, the economy, the community, and that improve transportation outcomes.

The foundation of PlanWorks is the Decision Guide, constructed of many individual key decisions that together represent a best practice approach to collaborative decision-making. The Guide identifies decision points 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" fully implement collaboration.

Transportation decision-making does not occur unilaterally, often there are public as well as private agencies that invest in data-driven community or regional planning. The resulting plans represent a substantial asset and data source for better transportation decision-making. PlanWorks provides information for integration of external processes with transportation decision-making and helps ensure that important values and goals are recognized and accommodated early in transportation decision-making.

Practical applications show how to apply collaboration to a subset of decision points within a given topical area. PlanWorks 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. This application will be operational in 2015 on the PlanWorks site.

## Decision Points in Visioning

To enhance compatibility across current SHRP2 research areas, this project has mirrored the PlanWorks approach by identifying transitions within a typical visioning process at which point a practitioner may arrive at key decision points. In turn, these points also provide important linkages to the transportation processes identified in the PlanWorks Decision Guide. The following descriptions of decision points highlight the importance, purpose, actors involved, and linkages for key transitions within a visioning process.

### What are decision points?

From the perspective of a visioning practitioner, certain points within any visioning process represent a milestone or critical juncture. These transition and decision points may mark the end of a phase or the completion of a key activity, but commonly represent important opportunities to reach consensus on a vision product or outcome with partners and stakeholders.

Decision points also provide important linkages to other processes, plans, or procedures. For example, an approved future, once adopted, is more likely to be utilized by a public agency to inform ongoing efforts. The opportunity to formally recognize a critical point or product greatly assists the challenging process of transferring information from broad visioning efforts to defined planning and project development processes. More detail on each of these decision points is included in the Decision Guide.

- **Approve Scope**-Effectively planning visioning activities and managing the expectations of stakeholders and partners is critical to a successful process.
- **Approve Goals** -Reaching consensus on community goals is a key milestone in a visioning process and substantially informs many future activities.
- **Approve Future(s)** -Common to any visioning processes is the creation and selection of a preferred future.
- **Approve Indicators and Commitments**-Implementation of a vision may be one of the more challenging aspects of any process.
- **Adopt Update Process**-Establishing a process to revisit the vision provides an important future opportunity to readjust the vision to meet evolving priorities of the community.

## Vision Guide

### Vision Guide

**Transportation - Visioning for Communities** interactive **Vision Guide** provides the outline of a model vision process to better enable practitioners to engage in visioning in support of transportation planning.

This interactive graphic represents a generic, multiphase, activity-oriented process for the preparation, creation, and implementation of a vision. Practitioners are encouraged to browse the typical phases and activities involved in developing a vision and to further explore significant components and decisions involved in any visioning process.

### Visioning Phases

Visioning Phases help organize any process. The first phase includes organizational and management activities to prepare for the visioning process. The second phase focuses on technical activities and stakeholder involvement in the creation of the final vision statement of purpose. The third phase provides the framework for implementing the vision.

Click on the **Preparing**, **Creating**, or **Implementing** headers to view detailed information for the activities within that phase.

## Visioning Activity Areas

Visioning Activity Areas help identify the critical activities, key component activities, and potential products which occur within each phase.

Click on any of the blue **Activity Area** buttons to view detailed information for that area.

## Visioning Decision Points

Visioning Decisions Points help identify transitions arrived at within any visioning process that represent a milestone or critical juncture. These decision points may mark the end of a phase or the completion of an activity, but often represent important opportunities to reach consensus on a vision outcome with partners and stakeholders.

Click on any of the orange **Decision Point** buttons, to view information for these transition points.

# Learn More

## Learn More

### About this Project

The 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 which 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 SHRP 2 research is the web-based product, PlanWorks. Information and research reports about this research program and other SHRP 2 projects are available here. This effort produced an interactive Decision Guide to better guide 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, *A Community Visioning Approach to Support the SHRP 2 Collaborative Decision-Making Framework for Transportation Investments*, is to develop a supporting framework for visioning which enables broad, strategic outcomes of visioning to readily transfer 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 web resource presents a model vision process, or Vision Guide, which is a blueprint for the preparation, creation, and implementation of a visioning process. This structured, simplified process will better enable practitioners to engage in visioning in support of transportation planning. The Vision Guide is the foundation of this effort and serves as the organizing framework for the research presented in the Technical Report.

The Vision Guide developed under this project exists outside of the PlanWorks Decision Guide framework, and can be used independently. However, through PlanWorks's interactive web site and the application "Visioning and Transportation", the integration of these two processes provides an invaluable tool to practitioners. It may also encourage those interested in visioning to adapt the PlanWorks model for use in other transportation processes, as well as illustrating the value of visioning to transportation practitioners pursuing a collaborative decision-making model. The resources developed through SHRP 2 Capacity Research will serve a critical role as transportation agencies, regional planning councils, civic groups and others are increasingly tasked with coordinating around and planning within the complex interlay of social, economic and environmental issues.

The **Transportation - Visioning for Communities** web resource was developed by Cambridge Systematics, Inc., based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in association with Louis Berger, Inc.; the University of North Carolina; AECOM; and Planning Communities, Inc.

# Technical Resources

## Linking Community Visioning and Highway Capacity Planning

TRB's second Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP 2) Report S2-C08-RR-1: Linking Community Visioning and Highway Capacity Planning explores community visioning efforts, identifies steps and activities that might be considered when engaging in visioning, and highlights the links between vision outcomes and transportation planning and project development processes.

