

**Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson
Metropolitan Planning Commission**

**2040
Regional Transportation Plan
Review and Appraisal**

Adopted May 2016

This Plan was paid for by funds from the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Ohio Department of Transportation, West Virginia Department of Transportation and dues from BHJ member governments.

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2016 LONG RANGE PLAN

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**BHJ REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION 2040 PLAN
REVIEW AND APPRAISAL
SUMMARY OF PROJECT DEMAND & CHALLENGES**

The Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission (BHJ) is an association of governmental units in Brooke and Hancock counties, West Virginia and Jefferson County, Ohio. The BHJ fosters intergovernmental cooperation by providing a public forum in which local elected officials and interested citizens may coordinate planning and decision making on issues that cross local jurisdictional boundaries. Since 1969, by joint agreement of the governors in Ohio and West Virginia, the BHJ has been the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Greater Steubenville, OH – Weirton, WV Metropolitan Area. In accordance with codified federal regulations, the BHJ adheres to the following statement.

“The MPO, in cooperation with the State Highway Agency, and with the operators of publicly owned transit services shall be responsible for carrying out the metropolitan planning process.”

Within the context of existing federal transportation legislation, Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) signed into law December 4, 2015, the BHJ is required to update its regional Long Range Transportation Plan for the region every four years. The BHJ Transportation Study Policy committee adopted the BHJ Region 2035 Transportation Plan (Plan) in May 2012. This document serves as a four-year update, review, and appraisal of the Plan.

The BHJ has reviewed and appraised the contents of the Plan and updated the following elements:

- Goals and Objectives
- Regional Overview & Geographic Area
- Determining Future Transportation Needs and Planning Assumptions
- Highway & Ohio River Bridge Inventory
- Non-Highway Facility Inventory
- Project Considerations
- Financial Forecast and Fiscal Plan
- Transportation Air Quality Conformity Analysis, and
- Environmental Factors & Mitigation (including Community Impacts and Environmental Justice)

Two areas of concern present a major challenge developing this long-range transportation plan. First is the major downturn and shutter of the region’s steel industry and shift to an energy production economy through oil and natural gas, regional freight and commuter travel patterns are uncertain. Although most of the drilling and fracking activity in Marcellus and Utica Shale is taking place along the fringes of the BHJ area, the majority of the freight movements for

supports services in the occur in Brooke, Hancock, and Jefferson counties. These movements include storage and delivery of piping and drill casings, as well as railroad to truck transloading of sand and water necessary for the fracking process. The downturn in the steel industry presents new economic prospects through brownfield redevelopment; however, these opportunities may take up to 10 to 15 years to mature and are dependent upon many factors such as availability of funding to assess and clean these sites and willing property owners and investors to develop these sites. Secondly, with eventual completion of the Wellsburg Bridge over the Ohio River and the uncertainty of the Market Street Bridge after the new bridge is open to traffic, it is difficult to predict future travel patterns after 2020.

The following sections outline the BHJ Metropolitan Region's basic long-range transportation needs. The BHJ Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) developed these projects and programs through data collection, technical analysis, and input from the BHJ Transportation Study Policy Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee.

The majority of the future needs at this time are maintenance and preservation type projects such as resurfacing, bridge replacement, and intersection improvements.

Project Demand – Major Construction and Future Freight Movements

Project Demand – Major Reconstruction

This plan recognizes two major construction projects to improve traffic condition on West Virginia State Route 2, slope repair and widening of the state highway between Beech Bottom and Wellsburg in Brooke County and relocating WV-2 on a new alignment in Hancock County through New Cumberland.

Project Demand – Freight Flows

Other projects include improving freight flows in various locations in the study area. One such project is the redesign of the intersection of Birch Drive and Freedom Way in Weirton at the Half Moon Industrial Park. Another project is reconstruction and resurfacing of South Commercial Avenue in Mingo Junction. South Commercial is the last mile to the Norfolk Southern Rail Yard from Ohio State Route 7 interchange at State Route 151. Hi-Crush Partners LP operates an eight-silo on-site storage facility at the rail yard that off-loaded frac sand from rail cars. The sand is then loaded onto trucks for transport to well sites constructed by operators in the oil and natural gas industry in an approximate 150-mile radius from Mingo Junction in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. This plan also considers a third freight-related project located in Amsterdam in northwest corner of Jefferson County, OH. BHJ and ODOT are designing a curve realignment of OH-43 in the south end of the village. The curve is

geometrically deficient prohibiting the smooth flow of truck traffic traveling to destination inside and out of the county. Other locations where freight flows need improved include North Fourth Street in Toronto, OH and Old State Route 7 through Rayland, Tiltonsville, and Yorkville in the south end of Jefferson County. These locations connect active Ohio River barge facilities to Ohio State Route 7 at various highway interchanges.

One other consideration for freight flows is to improve Truck Parking facilities in the study area. In 2015, the Ohio DOT built a Truck Parking facility financed with funds sub-allocated to the BHJ MPO. BHJ in partnership with ODOT will continue review possible locations to construct other such facilities in Jefferson County

Project Demand – Deficient Intersection Improvements

This plan also introduces two projects in Jefferson County to improve traffic flow in the south end of Steubenville at two geometric-deficient intersections. The first is South 4th Street and Lincoln Avenue at the Lincoln Avenue off-ramp of OH-7 and the other intersection at Lincoln and Wilson avenues.

This long-range plan lists the reconstruction and widening of Commerce Street at Washington Pike in Wellsburg, WV. With the eventual construction of the new Ohio Bridge south of the city, widening and reconstructing this intersection is of regional significance.

Project Demand – Regional Rideshare Opportunities

CommuteInfo[®] is a coordinated partnership of transportation management agencies and providers, as well as businesses and non-profit service organizations throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania and the Weirton-Steubenville, WV-OH Metropolitan Area, specifically the BHJMPO. The partnership provides commuter information and services for persons who desire commuter travel alternatives to driving alone to their jobs and/or school primarily into Southwestern Pennsylvania. With the growing number of single occupancy commuters starting in the Weirton-Steubenville, OH-WV Metropolitan Area and ending in Southwest, PA, the BHJMPO desires to continue its Vanpool/Rideshare Program in partnership with *CommuteInfo*. Existing Park and Ride Facilities in the BHJ area are inadequate to handle increased interest in shared options. Therefore, BHJ is reviewing suitable locations in Jefferson and Brooke counties to site new Park and Ride locations to expand ridesharing opportunities. To date four locations are under review: Toronto, OH at the SR 7 and Franklin Street Interchange, north of Steubenville, OH adjacent to an existing Park and Ride lot at SR 7 & 213, and two in Weirton, WV the US 22 and Harmon Creek Interchange and the US 22 and Colliers Way Interchange.

Project Demand – Public Transit & Human Services Transportation

The West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Public Transit (WVDOT-DPT) contracted with RLS Associates of Dayton, OH to update the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for Brooke and Hancock counties, West Virginia. RLS & Associates released the Final Report July 2015. The plan primarily addressed the needs of potential recipients of the FTA §5310 – Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program and how they interact with FTA §5307 recipients, primarily the City of Weirton and its third party operator the Weirton Transit Corporation, operating in both counties. The BHJ MPO last adopted a plan update in for Jefferson County, OH recipients in May 2012 inclusive in the Long Range Transportation Plan Update.

A wide variety of public transit and human service transportation programs serve the BHJ region. First, the Steel Valley Regional Transit Authority (SVRTA) operating in Mingo Junction, Steubenville and, Wintersville and the Weirton Transit Corporation (WTC), providing transit service in Weirton, are both designated recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) §5307 funds in the urban area. Other transportation services in the region include a variety of service organizations for seniors, behavioral health, and the mentally disabled throughout Brooke, Hancock, and Jefferson counties. Urban Area Public Transit operators in the BHJ area include:

- Steel Valley Regional Transit Authority – Services Jefferson County, Ohio throughout the urbanized areas of Mingo Junction, Steubenville, and Wintersville
- Weirton Transit Corporation – Services Brooke and Hancock counties, West Virginia throughout the City of Weirton

Human Service Agencies operating in Jefferson County, Ohio include:

- Checker Transportation
- Jefferson Behavior Health Systems
- Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities
- Prime Time Office on Aging

Human Service Agencies operating in Brooke and Hancock counties, West Virginia include:

- Brooke County Senior Center
- CHANGE Inc.
- Hancock County Senior Wellness Center
- Hancock County Sheltered Workshop
- Healthways

The major issue facing the both urban operators is maintaining adequate levels of local public subsidies to sustain services and capital assets in their respective areas as well as expand

services in other areas based on public needs and demand. First, the WTC has difficulties sustaining local dollars, due to the absence of an operating levy tax and a reassessment of “in-kind” service contributions through the City of Weirton by the FTA Region 3 office during its last triennial review. FTA and WVDOT-DPT has agreed to grant WTC a “toll revenue credit” for Fiscal Year 2017 as local match for federal operating assistance until the city can place either a city or county-wide a levy issue on the ballot in 2018. Second, another concern facing WTC is an inordinate amount of Human Service Operators such as religious organizations and out of state non-emergency medical transportation providers transporting consumers in Weirton that did not participate in 2015 Coordination Plan Update. On the other hand, BHJ and SVRTA, in cooperation with ODOT, Office of Transit, are discussing funding opportunities to update Jefferson County’s Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. Lastly, SVRTA continues to seek funding opportunities to extend services to other urban areas in the county and to operate an intercity service in Allegheny County, PA and Ohio County, WV.