

An Overall Transportation Plan is one of the most important tools to facilitate orderly urban and rural development, as it guides the location and type of roadway facilities that are needed to meet projected growth within an area. It enables cities and counties to determine and plan for their existing and future transportation improvement needs and to acquire adequate rights-of-way. An Overall Transportation Plan is a means of assuring that basic infrastructure needs and right-of-way will be available when travel demand warrants new or improved highway facilities.

STUDY BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population within the City of Georgetown study area has grown from 14,842 persons in 1990 to 28,339 persons in 2000. This represents an annual growth rate of approximately 6.7 percent per year. Significant commercial and residential developments have occurred over the past several years, which have and continue to increase traffic volumes on the study area's transportation system, and very significant additional development is currently underway. Since the 2000 U.S. Census, the City of Georgetown, using residential building permits issued, estimated that the City's population had increased to 36,567 by 2003. From 2000 to 2003, the estimated annual population growth was 8.9 percent, even higher than the annual growth rate of 6.7 percent per year for the previous ten year period.

The purpose of this study was to develop an Overall Transportation Plan (OTP) for the City of Georgetown and its Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), which included recommended roadway improvements needed to accommodate travel demands through the Year 2030. An implementation program that prioritized the recommended Plan improvements was also developed and included short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term elements. Georgetown, the County Seat of Williamson County, was incorporated in 1848. For more than a decade, Williamson County has been among the top 10 fastest growing counties in the nation. The City of Georgetown is located on the northern end of the fast growing Austin-San Antonio Corridor, and this area is projected to continue experiencing population and employment growth resulting in associated mobility and access improvement needs. Potential roadway improvements considered included the widening of some roadways, extensions of others, or construction of new facilities. The study involved an evaluation of various roadway improvements and considered impacts related to traffic/mobility, engineering/costs, and environmental/land use.

The OTP identifies needed transportation improvements as well as their traffic and land use impacts, which can be used by the City of Georgetown, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and other involved agencies in prioritizing and implementing roadway construction projects over the next 27 years. Extensive residential and commercial development is occurring within the Georgetown area, and this Plan will help to meet the transportation needs generated by this growth. Further discussion is provided within this document about the large development that is occurring and planned (see Chapter 2).

Independent School District (GISD), and Southwestern University. The following representatives served on the TAC for the Overall Transportation Plan:

TAC Member	Representing
Joe England	Williamson County
Michael Aulick	Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
David Biesheuvel	Georgetown Independent School District
Ed Collins	TxDOT Austin District
John Wagner	TxDOT Georgetown Area Office
Gerald Pohlmeier	TxDOT Georgetown Area Office
David L. Marsh	Capital Area Rural Transportation System
John Aldridge	City Of Georgetown
Mark Miller	City of Georgetown
Edward Pensock, Jr.	TxDOT
Robin Bruno	Southwestern University
Ed Polasek	City of Georgetown
Amelia Sondgeroth	City of Georgetown
Chris Bryce	City of Georgetown
Joe Holland	TxDOT Austin District

During the course of the project, the TAC provided technical guidance, expertise and review, as well as important data needed in the OTP’s development. The TAC provided key guidance in the development of project goals and objectives, and assisted in preparations for public meetings. Three TAC meetings were held throughout the course of the study.

In addition to the TAC, a Stakeholder Focus Group, comprised of a broad range of key community stakeholders, provided guidance and helped to shape the plan development process. The following community members participated in the Stakeholder Focus Group:

Stakeholder Focus Group	
David Hays	Sam Miller
Leo Wood	David Johnson
Jack Stroobandt	Harry Gibbs
Todd Jansen	Henry Carr
Roland Waits	Don Garbe
Clay Shell	Richard Patterson
Jim Gunn	Janet Timmins
Ellie Skross	Marlene McMichael
Bob Mathis	Kevin Brass
Jeff Vercolan	Ken Fuller
Tim Harris	Tom Buckner
John Kirby	Doug Brown
Doug Smith	Johnny Dunlap
Mary Louise Poquette	Bob Horick

The Stakeholders also provided an important review function during this process from the community's perspective. Three Stakeholder meetings occurred during the project, as well as two public meetings. Workshops and formal presentations also were conducted with GTEC, City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission. In addition to these meetings, periodic meetings between the Consultant Team and City Staff occurred to ensure that the project was proceeding successfully, and to help prepare for the above mentioned meetings.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

One of the initial tasks of this study was the establishment of goals and objectives for use as guidelines in developing and evaluating alternative transportation systems. The goals and objectives developed for this study provide a framework for developing the Overall Transportation Plan and maintaining it as a dynamic document. They set forth value judgments and direction to guide local government officials in planning and implementing transportation improvements.

City Staff, TAC Members and Stakeholders were all asked to participate in the development of the goals and objectives. During a series of meetings, all participants provided their input into the key elements to be contained in the goals and objectives. These were further refined and synthesized, and presented again to these groups for their comments and ultimate approval.

The overall goal of the plan is to develop a transportation system that will accommodate present and future needs for mobility of all people and goods traveling within and through the area, which is safe, efficient and economically feasible. The following guiding principles, which were contained in the Transportation Section of the City of Georgetown Future Land Use Plan, were also adopted to ensure that the recommended Overall Transportation Plan for the City of Georgetown meets the desires of the area:

1. Provide an efficient, safe and connective transportation system that is coordinated with projected and existing needs and with plans for future growth;
2. This system should be economical and responsive to environmental concerns; and,
3. Provide for alternative modes of transportation, including pedestrian connectivity, bicycle accommodation, and a transit system, in order to ensure that transportation needs are met in ways other than the roadway system itself.

The following goals and objectives were further refined to guide the OTP development:

1. Provide for a high degree of safety for motorists, transit users, pedestrians and bicyclists. This will include considerations of the use of the system and goods movement.

2. The transportation system should be a total system approach, incorporating the various modes of transportation in appropriate combination, based on analysis of travel demand and consideration of community costs and benefits:
 - Roadway facilities should be planned and classified based on function and relative importance, providing a proper balance of freeways, tollways, expressways, major and minor arterials, collectors and local streets;
 - Encourage and accommodate through traffic on the classified roadway network and discourage it on collectors and local neighborhood streets; and,
 - Encourage the most efficient use of existing and future highway and street facilities to maximize the benefits of capital investments.
3. The transportation system should consider planned development patterns, accessibility and mobility needs:
 - Improve overall accessibility to employment, education, public facilities, downtown and other activity centers;
 - The transportation system should provide access between all developed areas of the region and connections to other cities in region;
 - Minimize disruption of existing and planned developments and established community patterns; and,
 - Consider development potentials within and beyond the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) for the design years and provide tools to assess the impacts of growth to assist decision making.
4. Meet the area's long range transportation needs:
 - Establish the procedures for monitoring the Overall Transportation Plan and provide for periodic updating and revision. It should provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate changes in land use planning for the City of Georgetown and other unforeseen changes and conditions;
 - Preserve right-of-way for future roadway development and expansion;
 - Transportation planning should be performed within the framework of comprehensive regional planning and should support regional growth and development goals; and,
 - Provide for an orderly improvement and expansion of the roadway system at minimum cost as the need for improvement arises.
5. Consideration should be given to social and environmental impacts:
 - Minimize air and water pollution, noise and other environmental impacts of transportation improvements and new facility construction and reduce negative impacts when possible; and,

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF A TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Transportation planning is the process used by municipalities and other governmental entities to provide for the development of an efficient and appropriate transportation system to meet existing and future travel needs. The primary purpose is to ensure the orderly and progressive development of the urban and rural street system to serve the mobility and access needs of the public. Transportation planning is interrelated with other components of the urban planning and development process.

The Overall Transportation Plan is the City's adopted general plan for guiding transportation system improvements, including the existing and planned extension of major highways, and becomes an element of the City's Comprehensive Plan. The transportation system is comprised of existing and planned freeways/tollways, arterial highways and boulevards, collector and local streets, which could require wider or new rights-of-way for needed improvements. The primary objective of the Overall Transportation Plan is to ensure the preservation of adequate right-of-way (ROW) on appropriate alignments and of sufficient width to allow the orderly and efficient expansion and improvement of the transportation system to serve existing and future transportation needs.

The benefits provided by effective transportation planning are realized by achieving the following:

- § Preservation of adequate rights-of-way for future long-range transportation improvements;
- § Making efficient use of available resources by designating and recognizing the major streets that will likely require improvements;
- § Minimizing the amount of land required for street and highway purposes;
- § Identifying the functional role that each street should be designed to serve in order to promote and maintain the stability of traffic and land use patterns;
- § Informing citizens of the streets that are intended to be developed as arterial and collector streets, so that private land use decisions can anticipate which streets will become major traffic facilities in the future;
- § Providing information on thoroughfare improvement needs, which can be used to determine priorities and schedules in the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and GTEC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP);
- § Minimizing the negative impacts of street widening and construction on neighborhood areas and the overall community by recognizing where future improvements may be needed and incorporating thoroughfare needs; and,

- § Providing an implementation program to prioritize improvements and identify funding sources.

ELEMENTS OF A TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Georgetown Overall Transportation Plan includes an analysis of existing transportation conditions within the study area; a detailed traffic analysis model to replicate current traffic conditions and forecast future traffic conditions; and recommendations for transportation improvements through the Year 2030.

The OTP delineates a system of thoroughfare classes, representing the general location, alignment, and functional relationship for different types of roadways, including freeways and tollways, arterial streets, collectors and local streets. It consists of an officially adopted thoroughfare system map, along with supporting design criteria (such as required right-of-way, roadway classification and number of lanes and widths) and implementation policies. Typically, thoroughfare system maps indicate whether existing rights-of-way for thoroughfares have sufficient existing width or need to be widened, and show the planned extensions of thoroughfares on new alignments where right-of-way needs to be acquired in the future. The OTP also includes typical roadway cross sections, indicating the desired number of travel lanes, right-of-way and pavement widths, and other dimensional criteria for these roadways.

An implementation program was also developed, which prioritizes improvements for short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term projects. Order-of-magnitude construction costs were developed for the improvements, along with a listing of potential funding sources and responsible agencies.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

An important aspect of the Overall Transportation Plan is ensuring that land use regulations and tools are in sync with transportation elements. Recommended future roadway alignments, street cross sections, and the location and design of major intersections will influence future development patterns across the City and potentially benefit or adversely impact existing neighborhoods and developed areas. This Plan, along with the tools that the City currently has at its disposal in the Unified Development Code (UDC), will help the City effectively coordinate land use and transportation decisions.

The coordination of future land use planning with long-range transportation and thoroughfare planning helps to ensure orderly growth, effective tax base stewardship, and forward-looking infrastructure maintenance and extension. These urban plans also require consideration of transportation system impacts on neighborhood quality and integrity, pedestrian and bicycle mobility and safety, community aesthetics and corridor quality, accessibility of shopping and entertainment districts plus major public facilities, and linear park and trail opportunities coordinated with the roadway network.

For instance, the basic aim of thoroughfare planning is to ensure the orderly and progressive development of roadways to serve mobility and access needs. But such planning is also critical to future land use, housing, environmental protection, public utilities management, and other key components of urban and regional planning. Roadway functional classifications, design, and access management strategies must all be geared toward the prospective development (and associated development regulations) for the area to be served. This ranges from high-capacity, controlled access facilities for long-distance through traffic to local streets – with associated sidewalks, trails and bikeways – to accommodate limited vehicular traffic and encourage safe, enjoyable short-distance trips close to home or work.

The OTP includes an analysis of the City's UDC for consistency with the OTP recommendations, and will identify tools within the UDC that will maximize the OTP's effectiveness.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A critical component of this study was input from key stakeholders in the study area. The public involvement plan created for the Georgetown Overall Transportation Plan consists of a variety of activities and components, all centered on obtaining meaningful input from the public concerning transportation issues in the City.

Newsletter

Communication with elected officials and members of the community is an essential part of the public involvement process. A newsletter was produced and distributed to the public and other interested parties in June 2003. The newsletter introduced and explained the study process and provided information on how citizens can be involved throughout the planning process. The newsletter was also posted on the Overall Transportation Plan's website. A copy of the newsletter is contained in **Appendix A**.

Website

Throughout the plan development process, stakeholders and interested parties had access to a project website containing background about the project and the latest news. Accessible at the address www.wilbursmith.com/GeorgetownOTP, this interactive tool allowed interested parties to provide input and feedback as well as learn about the Plan. The site was accessible via a link from the City of Georgetown's website.

Public Meetings

A total of two public meetings were held for this project, with the first meeting on March 26, 2003. A total of 43 persons attended the first meeting to learn about the study, and discuss issues and concerns relating to the Georgetown transportation system. As part of a questionnaire provided to all meeting attendees – the majority of respondents

ranked Roadway Construction/Improvements as their number one priority, and Traffic Signal Improvements number two. A second public meeting was held on October 21, 2003, with the purpose of this public meeting to present the evaluation of recommended alternative improvements and receive input regarding the recommended Overall Transportation Plan. Seventy-two (72) people attended the second meeting.

The public provided important guidance that helped to shape the Overall Transportation Plan. This document reflects the issues of importance to the community, and provides solutions that address their issues and concerns.