

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION/GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Introduction

We—as residents of Missouri and as Regional Planning Commissions working on behalf of our local governments—now have a real and meaningful role to play in transportation planning. The development and implementation of Missouri Department of Transportation’s (MoDOT) Transportation Planning Framework made us a partner at the decision-making table. This has been an eye-opening experience, as we recognize the vast transportation needs that Missouri has both locally and statewide with the limited amount of funds available for addressing them. We have come to realize the monumental and enormous challenges that the Missouri Department of Transportation faces, and we are now a partner in that process. As we work in partnership with the Missouri Department of Transportation, we have the opportunity to offer new and different information as well as local perspectives that should be brought to bear on transportation decisions. As local users of the systems, we are able to offer considerations previously missing from the process.

With this opportunity comes responsibility. As a partner in the decision-making process, we must also be willing to share the responsibility of the decision-making and support the final outcome. We cannot make decisions in a vacuum. We must represent the views of our local elected officials and their constituents; therefore, it is imperative that the Regional Planning Commission and the Transportation Advisory Committee have a strong connection to one another. As planners, we must be able to identify—and bring to the forefront—the information that is necessary for local elected officials, transportation advisory members and staff to make sound, prudent and defensible recommendations.

Therein lies the need for the Regional Transportation Plan. The goal of any transportation plan is the efficient and safe movement of goods, services and people from one place to another. This needs to occur with minimal impact to communities and the environment. With such limited resources for addressing needs, we must strive to spend each and every dollar wisely. To do that, we must use information and data, rather than emotion, to make those recommendations and decisions. To date, Regional Planning Commissions across Missouri, through their partnership with MoDOT, have been focusing on the state highways system and prioritization of those needs and projects. That work will continue. To better serve all transportation customers, this emphasis needs to expand to consider all modes of transportation and all systems, including those owned and maintained by counties and municipalities. It is important to consider how the different systems work together, now and in the future.

This plan will include results of all planning efforts of the Meramec Regional Planning Commission, the Meramec Transportation Advisory Committee, local plans and any information

about the region that supports formation of the plan and implementation of it. The information will be used to make recommendations and decisions that enable the wisest use of limited resources.

1.2 Study Organization

In 1966, state legislation authorized local governments to create regional councils. In 1969, Governor Warren E. Hearnes created the Meramec Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) consisting of Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Phelps and Washington counties in south-central Missouri. In 1997, Governor Mel Carnahan signed Executive Order 97-14 adding Osage County to the boundaries of MRPC. Again, in August 2005, Governor Matt Blunt signed Executive Order 05-21 amending the MRPC to include Pulaski County as a member.

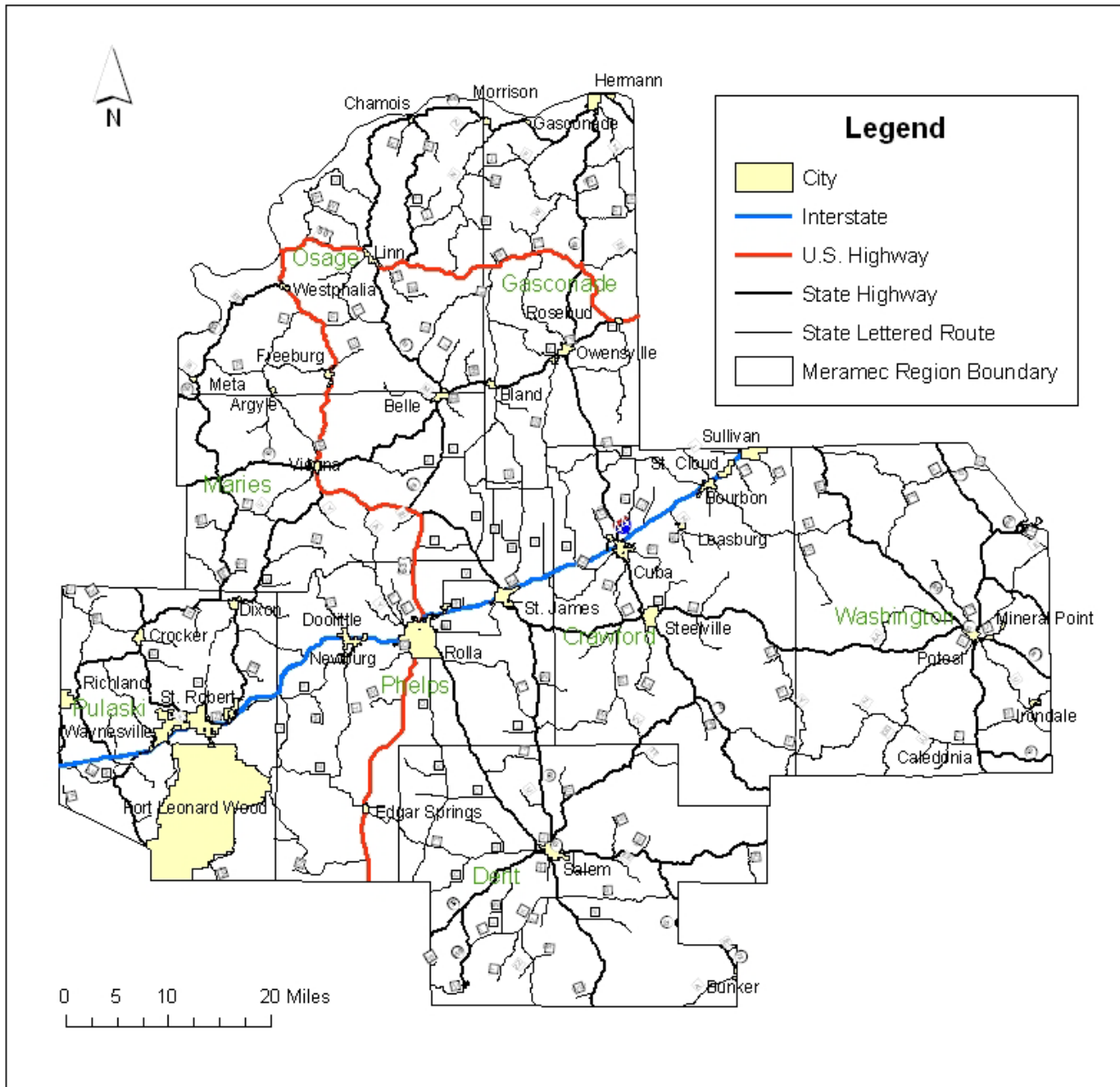
Through the passage of the Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, and its reauthorization in TEA-21, local elected officials were provided the opportunity for cooperative involvement in the transportation planning process and state DOTs were encouraged to use existing regional development organizations, when available, to assist in that process. The state of Missouri opted to contract with rural regional planning commissions to partner in transportation planning. In 1994, the MRPC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed to advise MRPC on transportation issues. The TAC is comprised of three representatives from each county, appointed by each county commission, along with ex-officio members representing public transit providers and Missouri Department of Transportation district officials.

The participation by local elected officials in the transportation planning process helps build more trust in government, results in better plans and programs, and generates more support for implementation, all of which contribute to the improved performance of the transportation system. The TAC was involved at many levels with this regional transportation plan.

1.3 Study Area

Map 1.1: Study Area, on the following page, shows the counties addressed in the Meramec Regional Transportation Plan. The planning area includes the counties of Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Osage, Phelps, Pulaski, and Washington. MoDOT's Central District serves all eight counties of the Meramec Region as well as 10 other counties in central Missouri.

Study Area



Meramec Regional Transportation Plan

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This map was created by the Meramec Regional Planning Commission Planning and Development Department. To the best of the author's knowledge, the data presented here is true and correct. However, no responsibility is assumed by the author or the Meramec Regional Planning Commission for the accuracy of the information displayed on this map.



May 2010

1.4 Goals and Objectives

The following goals were prioritized by the TAC at the April 11, 2019 meeting, and approved by both the TAC and the MRPC Board on June 13, 2019. The Meramec Regional Planning Commission has prioritized the following regional goals based on the updated goals established in MoDOT's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). New objectives will be discussed as a part of the transportation plan updates during the 2020 fiscal year:

1. Take care of the transportation system and services we enjoy to today
 - Keep elected officials aware of transportation needs that will benefit the region's transportation system.
 - Support federal initiatives that will bring additional funding to the state.
2. Keep all travelers safe, no matter the mode of transportation
 - Identify policies to make more efficient use of the existing transportation system to accommodate current and future travel demands, and specify facilities which should function as part of the integrated transportation system.
 - Maintain and improve road, bridge and highway systems.
 - Improve safety in transportation systems.
3. Invest in projects that spur economic growth and create jobs
 - Encourage development of statewide corridors serving the region.
 - Integrate local transportation plans into a regional plan, coordinating existing public land use and development plans.
4. Improve reliability and reduce congestion on Missouri's transportation system
5. Give Missourians better choices for transportation
 - Encourage alternate forms of transportation to the automobile, including bicycle, pedestrian, public transit, air travel, rail, barge and other modes.