



Nashville Area MPO

PROJECT SUMMARY SOUTHEAST CORRIDOR HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES STUDY NASHVILLE TO MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

The Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is undertaking a study of transportation improvements called the Southeast Corridor High Capacity Transit Study. The focus of this study is the Southeast Corridor that connects Nashville to Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The study area generally follows the Murfreesboro Road and Interstate 24 (I-24) corridor. The study's purpose is to examine the high capacity transit alternatives best suited for this corridor. The MPO and its consultant team will review and evaluate transportation options, possible routes or alignments, and station locations, as well as costs, funding, ridership, economic development, land use, engineering feasibility, and environmental concerns.

Southeast Corridor High Capacity Transit Study Background

The MPO is a multi-county agency responsible for transportation planning in Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson counties. Through the MPO and the Regional Transportation Authority, the region has adopted plans for a high capacity transit system to operate in the five corridors radiating outward from downtown Nashville. The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) is the agency charged with construction and operation of this system and is about to begin construction of the East Corridor between Nashville and Lebanon. A similar study of the Northeast Corridor, between Nashville and Gallatin, will begin in 2005. The other three corridors will connect Nashville with the cities of Murfreesboro, Kingston Springs, and Franklin.

Description of the Corridor

The Southeast Corridor links Nashville in Davidson County with LaVergne, Smyrna and Murfreesboro in Rutherford County. This is an active corridor with many high traffic destinations such as employment centers, commercial and retail developments, educational institutions and housing.

Nashville-Davidson County is the fastest growing metropolitan area in Tennessee, with a population of about 570,000. The central business district is home to the state capitol, numerous state offices, and the Tennessee Titans football stadium, all of which attract visitors from across the state. Murfreesboro, 30 miles south of Nashville, is the southern terminus of the corridor. Murfreesboro, with a population of approximately 75,000, is home to Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), which has an enrollment of about 21,000 students, most of them commuter students. Smyrna has a population of approximately 25,600, and LaVergne has an approximate population of 18,700. The estimated corridor population is 260,000.

Murfreesboro Road (US 41/70S) and I-24 are the primary north-south thoroughfares in the corridor. This corridor experiences heavy traffic congestion during rush hour periods, with segments of I-24 handling between 91,000 and 133,000 vehicles per day. Murfreesboro Road averages between 20,600 and 37,400 annual daily trips. A CSX rail line, the alignment of which lies primarily between I-24 and Murfreesboro Road, also supports high volumes of rail traffic, exceeding 40 trains per day.

Potential commuter destinations along the corridor include the Nashville International Airport, MTSU, major employers such as Dell Computer, and downtown Nashville, as well as regional shopping malls, commercial services, office parks, and hospitals. LaVergne and Smyrna form a major employment area known as "Interchange City," which is home to a Nissan manufacturing plant, Bridgestone and other major industries.

Currently, few options exist in the corridor to provide alternatives to driving in heavily congested conditions. Improvements are needed to address traffic volumes and congestion that are increasing every year. The study will examine transportation options, potential routes or alignments, bus or rail station locations, cost, funding, ridership, economic development, land use, engineering feasibility, and environmental concerns. The MPO will also evaluate transportation improvement options that do not involve significant capital investment.

Potential Alternatives

Alternatives will be developed based on input from the scoping meetings, other community meetings, input from the technical steering committee (made up of local transportation and planning officials) and interviews and written comments from stakeholders. Transportation alternatives will include:

1. No Action Alternative: This alternative will be based on projects included in the regional transportation improvement plan (TIP) and the financially-constrained long-range transportation plan, with no new transportation services or facilities in the area beyond already committed projects.
2. Transportation System Management Alternative: A *low-cost* alternative that would include minor improvements to intersections, traffic signals, demand management and system management programs, bus services and facilities and other modifications to the transportation system that can be made without major investments in infrastructure or equipment.
3. Build Alternatives: Three alternatives will be developed, combining various types of major investments to meet the travel needs of the corridor. These "build" alternatives most likely would include the development of busway or bus rapid transit, light rail transit, and/or commuter rail transportation options along various existing rights-of-way in the corridor.

The project began in April 2004. The study is expected to be completed, and a preferred alternative selected, by Fall 2005.

Provide Your Input

Public input is an essential part of the study process and comments are welcome at any time throughout the project. There are three ways to get your comments to us:

1. Send an e-mail to Jim McAteer - mcateer@nashvillempo.org;
2. Attend any of the public meetings which will be announced in local papers and on the website www.setransitstudy.com; or
3. Mail or fax your written comments directly to:

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A map of the study area is provided on the back of this page.

Southeast Corridor High Performance Transit Alternatives Study Area

