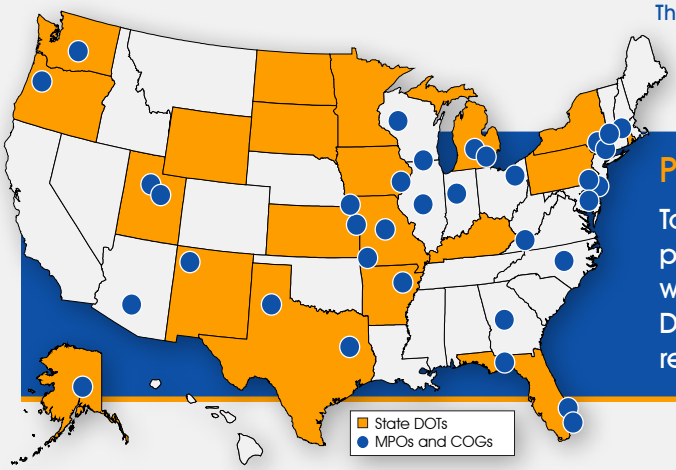
PLANNING SNAPSHOT 2:
INNOVATIONS IN LONG-RANGE PLANNING



The AASHTO Standing Committee on Planning has launched a series of planning snapshots designed to tell you a little about a lot of what is going on in the planning world today.

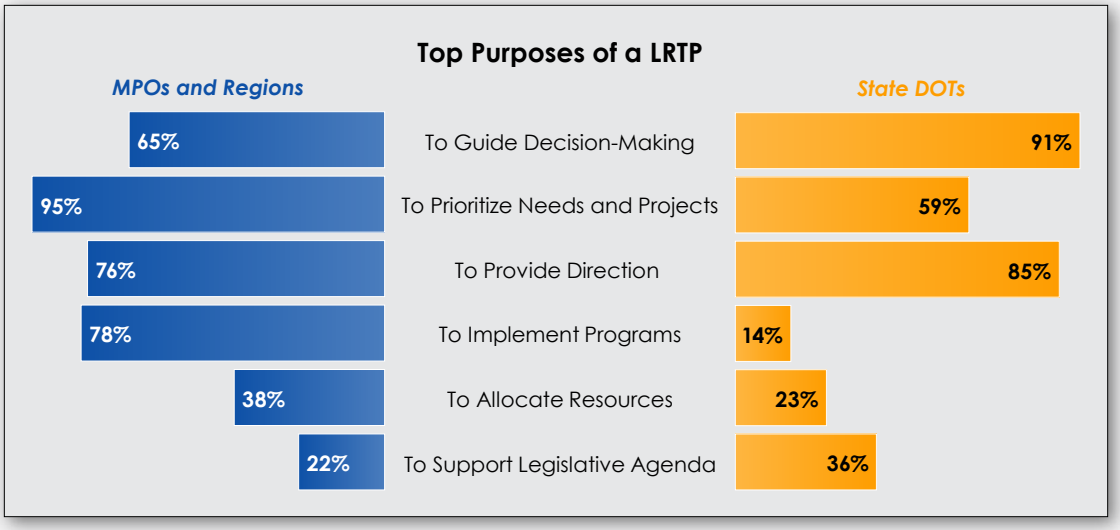
These snapshots, each focused on a specific topic, aim to share innovative ideas, highlight best practices, and provide links to resources and contacts.

Planning Is Advancing Quickly. Are You Up To Speed?

To better understand the current state of long-range transportation planning, a survey of state DOTs and regional planning organizations was distributed on behalf of SCOP, AMPO, and NARC. Twenty state DOTs, 37 MPOs, and other regional planning organizations responded – providing the insights and information shared here.

WHY DO WE PLAN?

More than 85 percent of respondents suggested that long-range plans are done simply to meet Federal requirements; however, these plans increasingly are being viewed as living documents, opportunities to innovate, and tools to get things accomplished. More and more states and regions are using plans to accomplish a variety of means.



WHAT DO WE PLAN FOR?

Today's long-range plan is a far cry from those of the ISTEA era. In the intervening years, the goals of long-range plans continue to evolve to address emerging issues. The wordcloud highlights the most common goals and priorities of state and regional plans. Safety concerns still rise to the top, but close behind are preservation, connectivity, economic development, and operations.

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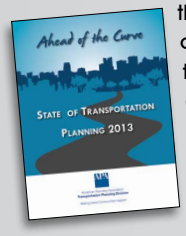
WHAT SHOULD YOU READ?

State of Transportation Planning 2013

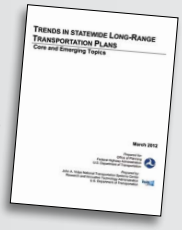
This work, authored by APA members from across the country, shows that planners are working with a variety of complex issues and concepts, and applying them in creative ways that solve problems in our communities. The unifying theme is that many planners are far-sighted and oriented toward staying ahead of the current issues that we face.



https://www.planning.org/divisions/transportation/report/

Trends in Statewide Plans: 2012

This report presents the results of a study of statewide long-range transportation plans completed for the FHWA's Office of Planning. The study also produced an on-line, searchable companion database with detailed information on important characteristics and attributes of 51 statewide plans.



http://www.planning.dot.gov/documents/state_plans_report_508_a.pdf

NCHRP 20-83

The transportation industry will face new and emerging challenges in the future that will dramatically reshape transportation priorities and needs. Trends and forces that will affect transportation in the future are examined through NCHRP 20-83 research. This series explores issues such as: economics and freight; technology; energy supplies; climate adaptation; sociodemographics; and sustainability.

http://apps.trb.org/cmsfeed/TRBNetProjectDisplay.asp?ProjectID=2628

WHAT IS TRENDING NOW?

Virtual Technologies Engage the Public

Social media, web-based tools, and other interactive technologies for engaging the public are the most common and most rapidly advancing innovations in long-range planning.

The Texas Transportation Plan 2040 is going virtual. The Texas DOT is employing interactive scenario planning and financial decision-making tools and is emphasizing web-based public engagement, including a dedicated web page, video-teleconferencing, web listening sessions, as well as Facebook and Twitter. They plan to assess the effectiveness of these outreach methods throughout the process and after the plan is adopted in the fall of 2014.

Michigan DOT formed a partnership with the Michigan library system to coordinate with libraries around the state to proactively encourage library patrons to fill out on-line surveys about the state's long-range plan at library computers.

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission launched a "Choices & Voices" web app with a crowd-sourcing component to allow users to submit scenarios and compare to others. As part of the financial plan, they also developed an awareness campaign called 'Which Way Now?' that looks at future options to fund transportation. A "Tracking Progress" indicator project was also launched on-line to enable dynamic reporting and communication of performance measures.

WHAT IS INNOVATION?

Innovation carries many meanings.

In transportation, the term is applied to "innovative financing." Some states even have divisions or offices dedicated to innovation. A web search of all state DOT web sites reveals over 100 million hits for innovation. But in practice, what does it mean? For this Snapshot on innovations in long-range planning, innovations included responding to new issues, adopting new practices, reaching new audiences, addressing new challenges, and offering new perspectives. The paraphrased quotes below offer some insights and examples of innovation in long-range plans.

"In 2005, our update was driven by emerging trends in freight and logistics. In 2010, our plan update was driven by performance metrics for state-of-good-repair. And in 2015, the plan update will be driven by a focus on sustainability."

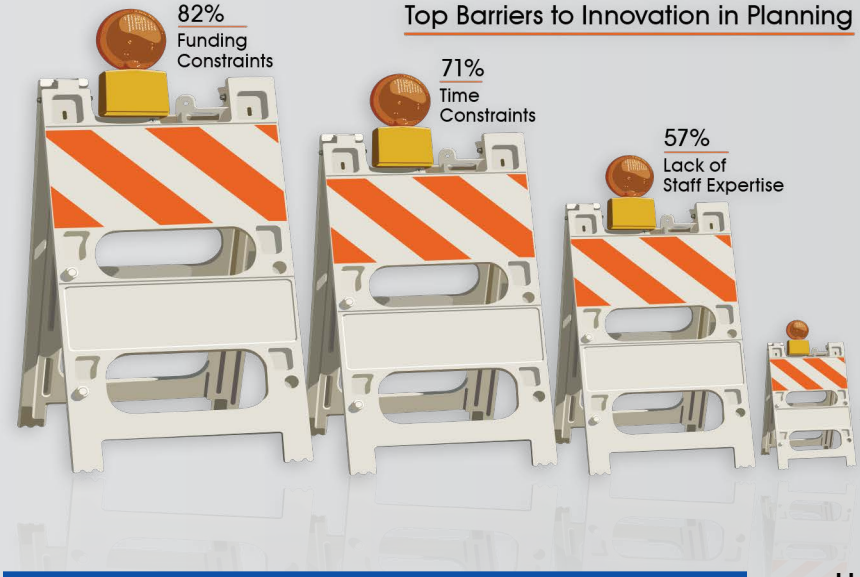
– Rockford Metropolitan Agency For Planning

"Our most recent long-range plan resulted in the complete revamping of our funding and programming process to directly align with and support the long-range plan goals."

– Mid-America Regional Council

"We are incorporating risk assessment and scenario planning in our next-generation regional transportation plan. We also may include health as a new area." – Maricopa Association of Governments

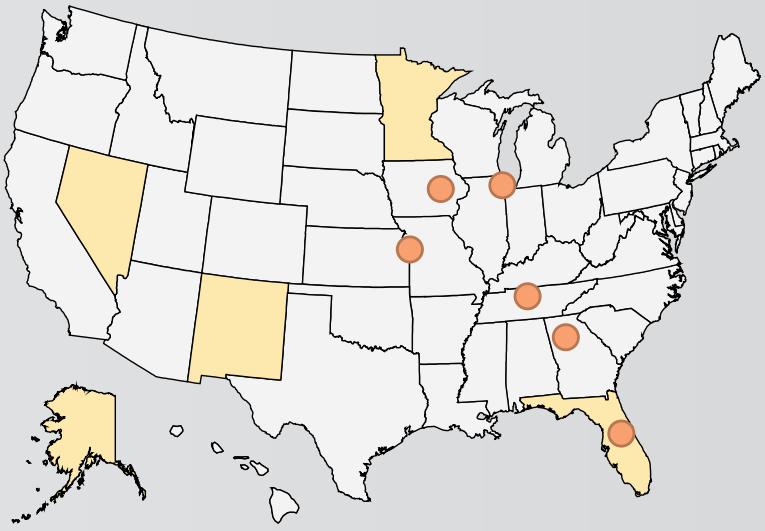
WHAT BARRIERS BLOCK INNOVATION?



Creation, experimentation, and innovation in highly prescribed long-range transportation plans may seem like an oxymoron. But the reasons states and regions say they are unable to innovate may not be what you think. Rather than internal or external resistance to change it is time and money that present the greatest barriers.

Interactive Map

Every state and region is innovating in their own way and there are too many bright ideas and creative approaches to highlight in a single snapshot. Hover your mouse over one of the states or regions highlighted in the map below to discover what some of your peers around the country are doing.



HOW ARE PLANS EVOLVING?

Estimating greenhouse gas emissions and reductions isn't as popular as it was a few years ago. Instead, more states and regions are looking at adaptation techniques and climate risk.

States and regions are adopting new analytical tools to address emerging issues and develop increasingly robust long-range plans. The sampling of tools and models listed here is in the order of the number of states and regions that are using these tools for the first time with their most recent LRTP update.

- Climate Risk and Adaptation Models
- Scenario Planning Tools
- Risk Assessment and Analysis
- Economic Impact Models
- GHG Emission Models
- Travel Demand Models
- Air Quality Models
- Benefit/Cost Analysis

HOW ARE AGENCIES COORDINATING?

Fifty years ago, collaboration may have been something to be avoided. Today it is celebrated and recognized as critical to long-range planning efforts.

Alaska DOT&PF recognizes that integrating plans is one of their central challenges. In 2012, they hosted a planners conference within the organization to help improve communication, coordination, and understanding between planners at the headquarter and regional levels.

The Ozarks Transportation Organization has found that participating in a variety of community organizations and community committees broadens their understanding of issues and creates relationships for the future. The OTO conducts an annual evaluation of public outreach activities to better understand how to communicate, how to target messages, and how to better engage the public in planning activities.

Minnesota DOT created a strong overarching brand for statewide planning: Minnesota GO. This has allowed for quick visual linkages between plans, studies, and initiatives that all connect back to the LRTP.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We asked survey respondents what was on their wish list with respect to improving long-range planning to better address emerging issues and to better foster innovation. This is what they said:

> *"Our most recent effort identified several key issues, including: shifting from system expansion to preservation and stewardship; examining the impact of biofuels and wind energy industries; and a growing emphasis on asset management and performance-based planning."*
> – Iowa DOT

- ✓ Best practices to better facilitate multistate coordination.
- ✓ Guidance on the public sector's role in preparing for a rapidly changing vehicle fleet, including autonomous, connected, and alternately fueled vehicles.
- ✓ Information on how to better integrate transportation planning with private-sector strategic planning.
- ✓ With the increasing focus on economic development in LRTPs, how can transportation expenditures be prioritized for economic development purposes?
- ✓ Currently, PennDOT is engaging the development of an Enhanced Planning Strategy. This initiative is a collaborative effort to determine how to better utilize existing resources (both internal and external) within the state to increase institutional planning capacity within PennDOT.
- ✓ Open-source software for developing interactive plans and web apps, rather than voluminous reports, and guidance on designing and writing documents with a customer focus.

WHO CAN YOU CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

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