CHAPTER 1 – OVERVIEW & INTRODUCTION

2035 BACKGROUND AND REGIONAL INFORMATION

The Cache Valley Area Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the long-range transportation plan for the Logan Urbanized Area and the Utah portion of the greater Cache Valley area. The plan identifies specific projects that will be needed to meet the transportation demands of the region. At present, most travel in the region is by automobile. However, other modes such as public transit (buses), pedestrian, and bicycle transportation are becoming increasingly important. The RTP identifies future transportation investments for all modes.

Not unlike many communities across the nation, anticipated revenues are not sufficient to fund all the needed transportation improvements in Cache County. Therefore, this plan prioritizes projects for implementation to respond to financial constraints.

CACHE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

The Cache Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMPO) works with Cache County and ten of the nineteen incorporated cities in Cache County to oversee transportation planning activities for the Logan Urbanized Area (See Figure 1). Since transportation needs and problems do not end at the CMPO planning boundary, this plan includes all of Cache County. However, communities outside the CMPO planning area had less official involvement in the plan and are included only by way of general recommendations. However, for meeting the legal requirements of air quality analysis as part of transportation conformity required by the Federal Government, data for all of Cache County and a portion of Franklin County Idaho were used.

The oversight and planning/operational direction for the CMPO is provided by its Executive Council. This board is made up of elected officials from the 10 participating communities (in addition to the Cache County Executive). UDOT and CVTD also have one voting member on the board.

PLANNING PROCESS

This RTP attempts to build on and incorporate concepts and recommendations from previous efforts. Federal law requires the plan to be updated every five years. However the plan can be amended at any time.

The CMPO utilized a simple approach to completing this plan. This plan was developed in the following steps:

1) REGIONAL VISIONING/GOALS AND OBJECTIVES-
The CMPO partnered with the Envision Utah organization to complete a nearly year-long planning and public involvement effort. This effort engaged citizens from all 25 cities and towns in the greater Cache Valley area (including southern Idaho) through the use of interactive comprehensive growth alternative development workshops. Ultimately 53 alternative exploration maps were created by
workshop participants. This public input as well as results from a wider public opinion survey eventually led to the development of four alternative growth scenarios. These scenarios included detailed land use and transportation possible futures. The four scenarios were then evaluated as to their relative impacts in regard to various environmental, transportation and social impacts as well as cost of public service delivery. This information was again taken to the public in a series of 14 town hall meetings or via an online survey. This round of public input lead to the development of the “Cache Valley Vision” preferred land use and transportation scenario as well as a series of guiding Cache Valley Quality Growth Principles. Ultimately, this vision was endorsed by the Envision Cache Valley Steering Committee and the Cache Valley Regional Council.

2) NEEDS ASSESSMENT- Using the specific recommendations from the preferred alternative identified by the Envision Cache Valley process, various transportation projects and solutions were evaluated. To aid in this effort a computer based Travel Demand Model was used to analyze future travel demand and attempt to identify when and where new travel capacity might be most needed.

3) TRANSPORTATION VISION PLAN- This phase of the planning effort developed distinctive sets of transportation improvement recommendations.

a) 2035 Roadway, Transit and Non-motorized Vision Plans- The transportation system improvements suggested as needed to provide levels of transportation service at reasonable levels with anticipated population growth in the year 2035. This also identifies the portion of the 2035 Vision Plans that we can afford to build given a reasonable set of financial revenue assumptions.

b) Ultimate “Buildout” Roadway Vision Plan- Suggested roadway network improvements are needed to support the anticipated rough “buildout” of the known land use plans even beyond the year 2035.

REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The socioeconomic and land use characteristics of the greater Cache County area provide insight into the region’s transportation requirements. County level data provided by the State of Utah Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB) was used for this plan.

POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS

In 2010 Cache County is estimated to have a population of about 113,000 in about 37,000 households. Based on GOPB projections, over the course of the planning horizon of this document, in the year 2035 the population is expected to increase to about 197,000 in about 72,000 households. This is an annual population growth rate of about 2.2%.

Out of roughly 3,000 counties in the United States, Cache County ranked 168 in terms of the rate of population growth from 2000 to 2009 (Source: US Census Bureau)

EMPLOYMENT

In 2010 Cache County’s total employment is estimated at just over 70,000. This is expected to increase to about 119,000 in the year 2035 broken down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Type</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2035</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>12,605</td>
<td>18,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>12,389</td>
<td>21,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>45,292</td>
<td>79,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70,287</td>
<td>119,452</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Cache Valley is served by a roadway network that makes up the backbone of the transportation system. The roadway network is made up of a variety of road types. Cache County has some state highways that serve higher speed and typically longer distance
mobility needs and the majority of freight truck traffic. Local minor arterial, collector and residential roads typically serve at lower speeds for shorter trip lengths. Cache County is thought to be one of the largest metro areas in the United States that is not directly associated with an interstate freeway system.

Transit buses use the road network to serve 11 fixed routes in greater Logan area and two commuter routes serving a number of outlying north and south valley communities. The Cache Valley Transit District also serves a commuter route to southern Idaho in Franklin County (see Figure 2).

Bicyclist often travel directly on roads. To accommodate this use, a number of roads in Logan City and surrounding communities have bicycle lane striping or share use markings (called sharrows). A number of roads have been designated as bike routes. A portion of these routes have been signed with bike route markings (see Figure 3).

Most of the roadways in the more urbanized communities in Cache County are served by pedestrian sidewalks. However, in many of the older neighborhoods sidewalks are often in need of maintenance or repair and frequently significant gaps exist in the system.

Many communities in Cache County are also served by an expanding network of shared use paths and trails. Often these are in separate rights-of-ways from roadways. While many of these facilities have a purely recreation function, many also serve the mobility needs of commuters or other types of users.

Cache County is also served by a rail “spur” of the Union Pacific Railroad main trunk line. Currently about one train a day uses the rail line in Cache Valley.

The Cache Valley Airport serves mostly personal and private commercial aviation needs and some commercial freight service. Ongoing efforts have been directed to position the airport in the future to resume commercial passenger air service.

AIR QUALITY

Portions of Cache County, Utah and Franklin County, Idaho were designated by the Environmental Protection Agency as “non-attainment” for fine particulate matter (PM$_{2.5}$) on December 14, 2009. This means Cache County was found to have particulate matter air pollution levels in excess of the parameters established by the federal Clean Air Act Amendments. Emissions from on-road mobile sources (trucks and automobiles) are certainly a significant contributor to the county’s air quality problem. According to federal regulations, a plan must be developed to demonstrate how this non-attainment area will reduce pollution levels to acceptable levels within a specified timeframe. Sometime in 2012 the Utah State Department of Environmental Quality will complete the State Implementation Plan (SIP) that will detail this strategy. This plan will include a on-road mobile source emissions budget by which all future transportation plans must then document compliance. This process is called transportation “conformity”.

Since the SIP and the associated mobile source emissions budget will not be completed when this plan is scheduled for adoption, a federally approved “interim” conformity analysis was completed.

This conformity test requires that future targeted emissions are lower than 2008 levels. This includes emissions that are a result of future growth in vehicles miles traveled (including that derived from any planned regionally significant highway or transit projects). The projects contained in the Financially Constrained Vision Plans comply with the requirements of interim PM$_{2.5}$ transportation conformity.

All regionally significant projects, regardless of funding source (federal, state, or local) are included in the CMPO RTP. Regionally significant projects are identified as those projects functionally classified as principal arterial or higher, or certain minor arterials as identified through the interagency consultation process. At the time of this document preparation, Cache County has not designated any minor arterials as regionally significant. This action will be considered as needed in the future and in accordance with interagency consultation procedures. Any amendments to this plan that add or substantially change the scope of any regionally significant project will require a new air quality conformity analysis.
Figure 2: Existing Roadway Network & Transit (Bus) Routes

Legend
- CVTD Bus Routes
- UDOT State Highways
- Local Roads
- Municipal Boundaries
Figure 3: Existing Bicycle, Trails and Pedestrian Pathways
TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

Transportation and land use patterns are inextricably linked. Roadway construction can have a great influence on patterns of land development.

Construction of roadways provides new access to land. Ideally, land use planning policy is mindful of the transportation system needed to support the resulting development. However, this is made difficult because often local communities must blend new development with already developed neighborhoods with a long ago established system of roads. Today in Cache Valley, land use policy makers are often left to deal the result of land development decisions that date back, in some cases, over 100 years when walking or horse buggies were the main form of transportation. In some of the more rapidly urbanizing communities, these historic development patterns often conflict with the modern transportation system needed to support current and future population growth.

The Envision Cache Valley process succeeded in linking long-term development decision making in Cache Valley with the general type and form of the transportation system that will likely be needed. This was done by exploring various tradeoffs and gauging the relative acceptance on the part of the public. However, implementation of this vision at a community level will be the ongoing challenge.

Policy makers and decision makers should be mindful of the rather complex interaction between transportation and land use. For example:

- Will building another “by-pass” road in Cache Valley to relieve Main Street traffic congestion also encourage new sprawling development?
- What is the cumulative impact on the transportation system of typically lower density, incremental development in the unincorporated portions of Cache County?
- What is the most cost effective way to serve the transportation mobility needs of current and future development?
- Who should pay the cost of the future transportation system?

DEVELOPMENT INTENSITY

While increased development density may create higher travel demand in a specific area, overall it generally encourages shorter auto trips and also a higher percentage of pedestrian, transit and bicycle use.

The density and location of residential and employment development is particularly important for the cost-effectiveness of providing public transit service. Transit service operates most effectively when there is a concentration of activity, particularly for residential and employment locations.

Envision Cache Valley’s preferred or “Vision” alternative contemplates a more compact growth pattern than in the past. The Cache Valley Vision
recommends that most of the new growth be accommodated in, and around already established towns and cities. This recommendation suggests that much of the new growth to 2035 can be accommodated by appropriately situated (and well designed) mixed-use neighborhoods, and a combination of various neighborhood, town and city centers.

It also encourages land to be more effectively used through redevelopment or increased infill development in already established communities.

The willingness of individual communities to implement the “Cache Valley Vision” will have a significant impact on the future transportation system for Cache County.

UTAH’S UNIFIED PLAN

As with the previous 2030 Regional Transportation Plan effort, the CMPO participated in a coordinated planning effort with UDOT and the four other Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the State of Utah as well as the Utah Transit Authority and Cache Valley Transit District and the Federal Highway Administration for the completion of this plan. This coordination effort will eventually result in the production of a combined plan document (Utah’s Unified Plan) that summarizes the priorities of all transportation planning agencies in the state of Utah. In addition, this effort has also worked to manage a common completion schedule and provide for consistency with core financial assumptions and other planning approaches.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

With regard to the front end development of this plan, the CMPO partnered with the Envision Utah Organization and participated in the Envision Cache Valley process for public involvement. Alone, the CMPO would have a very difficult time generating the interest and public involvement achieved through the Envision Cache Valley Process. In addition, the Envision Cache Valley approach gave considerable focus to gaining informed public comment related to various transportation options and how they interact with land use. The CMPO worked with the Envision Utah staff to provide transportation data and travel model support. This very extensive and interactive public involvement effort is well documented in the final report that can be found at: https://www.envisioncachevalley.com/

STAKEHOLDER GROUP INVOLVEMENT

On October 26, 2010, along with the other transportation planning agencies in the state, the CMPO met with federal and state resource agencies to provide information, answer questions and receive input.

The CMPO’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee provided input and recommendation for the draft plan as did a number of other community and civic stakeholder groups.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND AGENCY PARTICIPATION

The CMPO coordinated and received input from participating local jurisdictions through direct involvement and the Cache Technical Advisory Committee (CTAC). This group is made up of city staff (planning and/or public works) from participating communities as well as CVTD and UDOT.

DRAFT PLAN PUBLIC COMMENT

The draft plan will be opened for written public comment for thirty days early in 2011. These comments will be considered in the preparation of the final draft that is anticipated for adoption by the CMPO Executive Council in June 2011.