

W A M P O

Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Congestion Management Process Policy



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Introduction to the Congestion Management Process Policy

Most of us encounter traffic congestion at some point, especially if we travel during morning or evening rush hours. Not only frustrating for drivers, congestion can cause us to arrive late to our destinations, cause shipments to be late, and waste our hard-earned money. WAMPO seeks to manage congestion, not eliminate it, because congestion typically follows increased growth in development and economic activity, both viewed as positive for the region.

As our region continues to grow, congestion is inevitable. We cannot simply add new roads or more lanes to reduce congestion. Limited financial resources, environmental constraints, and other limitations have changed the approach to managing congestion. WAMPO intends to optimize the use of existing and planned transportation infrastructure, which will likely include strategies to reduce demand for vehicular travel, optimize existing infrastructure, as well as adding capacity where it is deemed appropriate.

The WAMPO Congestion Management Process

WAMPO has developed a process to effectively manage congestion that meets the federal requirements as well as the unique needs of the region. This process is called the Congestion Management Process, or CMP. Managing congestion means that WAMPO will focus on mitigating delays at key locations during key travel periods. WAMPO will also focus on certain causes of congestion that have the greatest effects on regional mobility. This will be accomplished by integrating congestion management into the overall transportation planning process.

This policy is the starting point for the CMP. It identifies the process that will continually be carried out by WAMPO. It identifies the specific steps in the CMP and the purpose of those steps. This process will provide decision makers with useful information when determining which projects and strategies should be implemented to best manage congestion in the region. Outlining the congestion management process sets the stage to collect critical data, report on system performance, identify issues with the current system, suggest strategies to mitigate issues, implement recommended strategies, and report on the performance of implemented strategies.

Many of the steps of the CMP have already been carried out. This policy identifies the outcomes of those steps and how each step will be updated. This policy also identifies how the steps in the process are, or will be, integrated into WAMPO activities, such as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and other programs and processes.

The purpose of the CMP is to manage congestion through a process. This process will take into account all modes of transportation. The process will focus on safety of all modes, as well as efficiency in managing and operating all modes. An important consideration is the integration of managing all modes, so the CMP will be looking at how all modes work together to safely and efficiently move people and goods throughout the region. The CMP is based on cooperatively developed regional goals and objectives, which are outlined in the MTP 2035 and the CMP Policy. The CMP should be implemented through region-wide strategies to manage congestion on new and existing transportation facilities.

The intent of the WAMPO CMP is to enable the region to select projects that demonstrate improvement to system performance. This builds on an objective of the MTP 2035; 'select projects that demonstrate the greatest overall improvement of the system.' The CMP is a performance-based planning approach that defines what a congestion



problem is, identifies congested location and causes, identifies strategies to mitigate congestion, and monitors progress in reducing congestion problems.

When identifying projects and strategies to manage congestion, WAMPO will look at ways to ensure the public is involved in accordance with the Public Participation Plan. Specifically, WAMPO will provide the public the opportunity to identify congestion-related concerns and have those concerns heard by decision makers during the decision making process. An important consideration when the public is involved is to provide information that is easy to understand. Educational efforts surrounding congestion-related issues will be considered when involving the public.



10 Step Congestion Management Process

To carry out the CMP, WAMPO has developed a ten step process. The processes for carrying out the ten steps are included in the explanation of the steps. The current outcomes of each step, as well as the process for updating each step are also included. Figure 1 provides a general overview of the WAMPO 10 Step CMP as well as the federal requirements for each step.

Figure 1: 10 Step Congestion Management Process



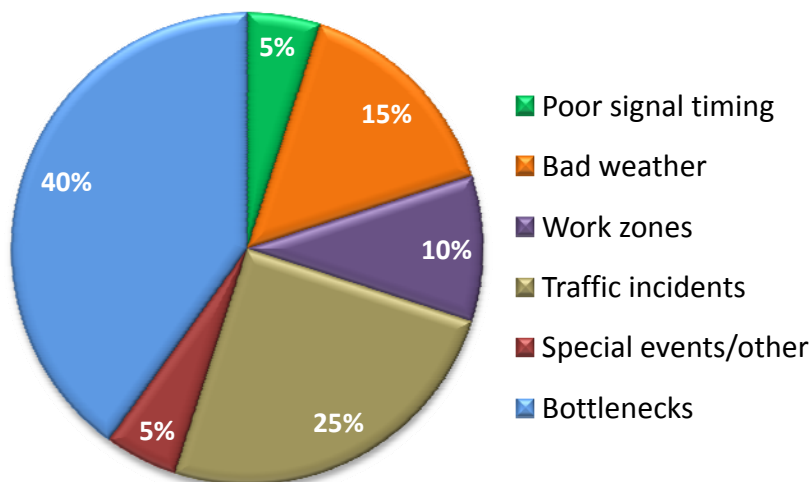
1. Define Level of Acceptable System Conditions

The first step in the WAMPO CMP is to define an acceptable level of system performance. From a congestion standpoint, an acceptable level of system performance is synonymous with an acceptable level of congestion. This step defines the point at which a congestion problem occurs.

There are two major factors that impact the performance of the transportation system. The first factor is recurring congestion, or congestion that regularly occurs during peak travel times. For the WAMPO region, these peak travel times are typically between 7-8am and 5-6pm. Often referred to as bottlenecks, a certain degree of recurring congestion is usually tolerated by users because it is expected and users can plan for the delay.

The second factor is non-recurring congestion, or irregular congestion. This type of congestion results from crashes, construction, weather, special events, roadside distractions, and other incidents. Non-recurring congestion decreases reliability, which negatively impacts users due to unpredicted and unplanned delay. Nationally, non-recurring congestion accounts for more delay than recurring congestion, as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Sources of Congestion: National Summary



Source: <http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/aboutus/opstory.htm>; these estimates are a composite of many past and ongoing congestion research studies and are rough approximations.

Current Acceptable Level of Congestion

In carrying out Step 1, WAMPO decided to use level of service (LOS) to determine the amount of congestion. LOS is a measure of how well a roadway is functioning at a given time based on its designed capacity. LOS is similar to the A-F grading scale used in school; LOS A means a roadway is operating very well (free flow travel) and LOS F means a roadway is failing (extremely congested). LOS A and B are typical of nighttime driving where there are not many cars on the road. A high LOS (A or B) is not what WAMPO is striving for because this usually means that a roadway is overbuilt and not the best use of limited financial resources.

After consultation with transportation system operators, WAMPO determined that an acceptable level of congestion during peak hours of travel is a LOS C. This means that once a road starts operating at LOS D or lower,



WAMPO will identify that particular location as having a potential problem. WAMPO is focusing on peak hour congestion at this point, rather than peak period or daily congestion, because the region does not have sustained congestion throughout the day. WAMPO is not focusing on LOS for non-recurring congestion due to a lack of data availability.

Process for Updating

As WAMPO updates its Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the level of acceptable system conditions will be reviewed and potentially updated.

2. Develop Congestion Management Objectives

Determining specific and measureable objectives is crucial to the CMP. Using the broad goals and objectives of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), measurable congestion management objectives are defined. These objectives describe what must happen to achieve the goals. The congestion management objectives state what the region plans to accomplish with the performance of the transportation system.

Current Congestion Management Objectives

Building on the goals and objectives of the MTP and keeping the purpose of the CMP in the forefront of the thought process, WAMPO developed congestion management objectives.

- Reduce recurring delay on the CMP Network.
- Reduce non-recurring delay on the CMP Network.
- Increase the use of alternative modes of transportation.

By achieving the objectives listed above, WAMPO will move towards achieving the objectives and the goals of the MTP. The objectives directly lead to Step 5, developing performance measures. The performance measures help to determine progress towards achieving the objectives.

Process for Updating

As WAMPO updates its MTP, the objectives to manage congestion will be reviewed and potentially updated.

3. Identify CMP Coverage Area

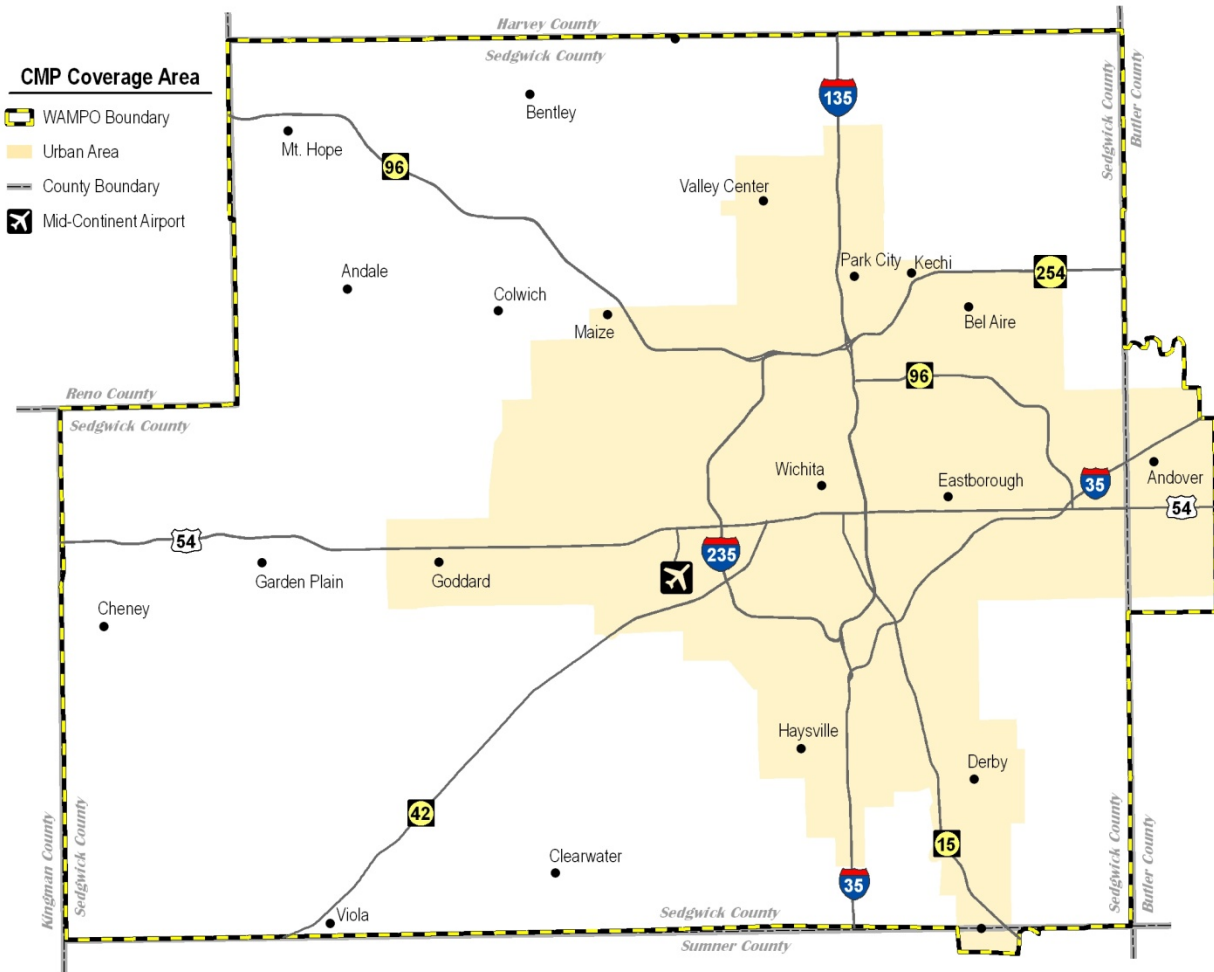
A CMP must be applied to a specific geographical area. When identifying the CMP Coverage Area, it is important to consider the area covered by the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Regional Architecture (RA). ITS is the integration of technology into the transportation system, such as traffic cameras and variable message boards. The RA provides a regional blueprint of how ITS technologies will be identified, deployed, and interconnected to improve the movement of people and goods. The CMP Coverage Area should be consistent with the ITS-RA because many congestion management strategies identified through a CMP include ITS components.

Current CMP Coverage Area

The CMP Coverage Area is the WAMPO Planning Area, which coincides with the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Regional Architecture (RA). Figure 3 identifies the CMP Coverage Area, which is the same as the WAMPO Planning Area and the ITS-RA coverage area.



Figure 3: CMP Coverage Area



Process for Updating

As the WAMPO Planning Area or ITS-RA coverage area change, the CMP Coverage Area is likely to be updated to coincide with the update(s). This is likely to occur after the United States Census Bureau releases new geography for the region’s Urban Area Boundary.

4. Define CMP Network

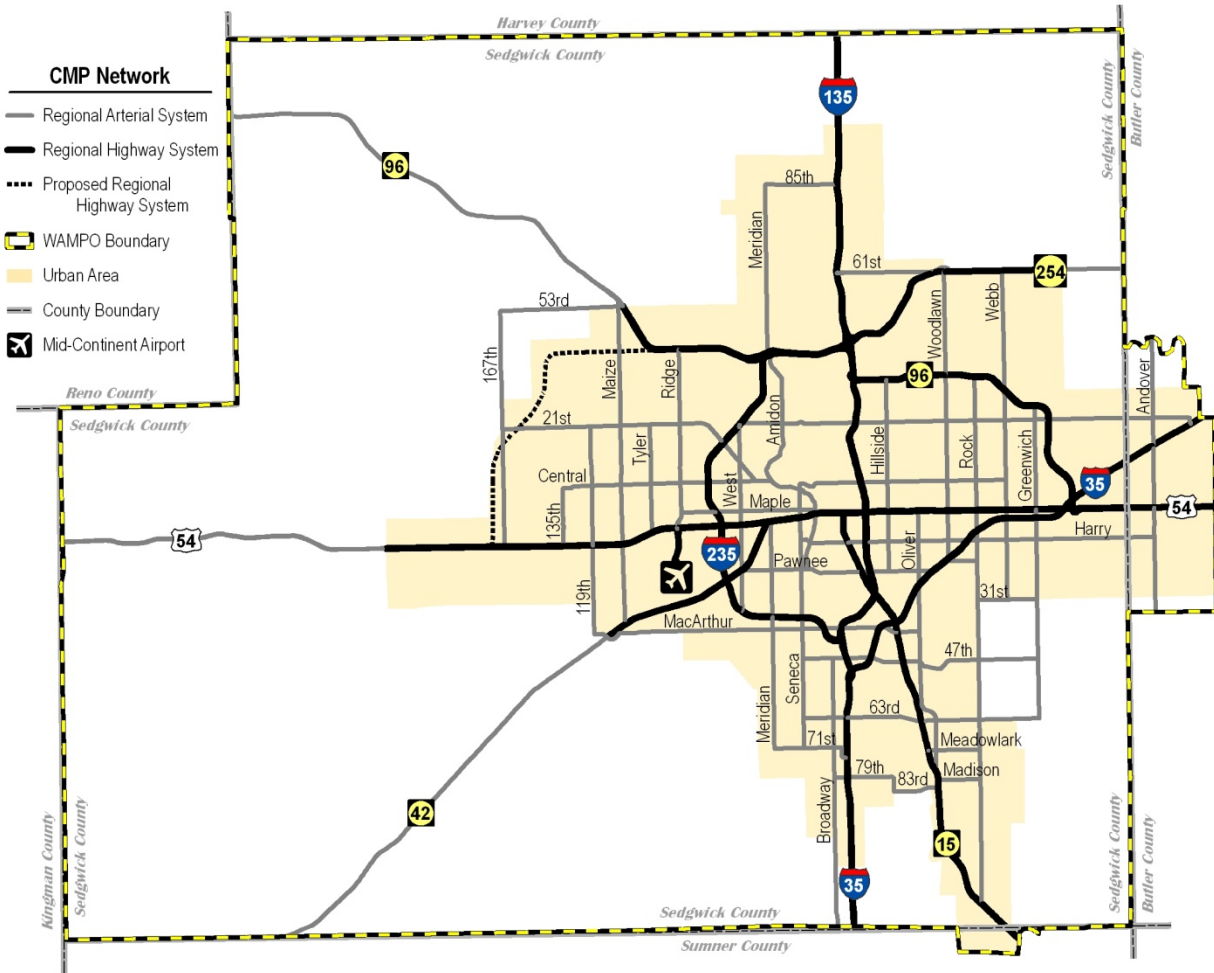
A CMP must define a roadway network to be monitored for congestion. This network should include facilities that, if congested, would hinder national and regional mobility of people and goods.

The Current CMP Network

The CMP Network was originally defined in 2008 through review of existing and projected traffic conditions as well as stakeholder input. The CMP Network is made up of the Regional Highway System (RHS) and the Regional Arterial System (RAS). The RHS includes the National Highway System and other federal and state roadways that are important to national, state, and regional travel. The RAS includes other arterial roadways that are important to regional mobility and economic vitality. Figure 4 identifies the CMP Network.



Figure 4: CMP Network



The MTP 2035 was developed using the 2008 CMP Network. The current CMP Network is consistent with the MTP 2035.

Process for Updating

The CMP Network will be reviewed during updates to the MTP. This will involve review of transportation system data from a variety of sources, such as the Household Travel Survey, Travel Time Study, Travel Demand Model, as well as stakeholder input.

5. Develop Congestion Management Performance Measures

WAMPO desires to know if the region is achieving the congestion management objectives set forth by the CMP. To determine the success of achieving the objectives set forth in Step 2, WAMPO develops at least one performance measure for each objective. Data will be gathered on these performance measures and reported to decision makers and the public. The performance measures will be reflected in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).



Data availability is a key issue when developing and selecting performance measures. Data that is readily available and easily obtained will likely be the focus when developing performance measures to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

Current Congestion Management Performance Measures

WAMPO has developed four congestion management performance measures. These performance measures are identified below.

Percent of CMP Network Operating Below Level of Service C

Objective 1 of the CMP states that WAMPO desires to 'reduce recurring delay on the CMP Network.' To measure how well the region is achieving Objective 1, WAMPO developed one performance measure. This performance measure will identify the percent of the CMP Network that operates below a Level of Service (LOS) C during peak hours. This allows WAMPO to identify the extent of recurring congestion. It will also provide locations where recurring congestion occurs.

Crash Location Mapping

Objective 2 of the CMP states that WAMPO desires to 'reduce non-recurring delay on the CMP Network.' Non-recurring delay is caused by irregular events such as crashes, construction, weather, special events, roadside distractions, and other incidents. To measure how well the region is achieving Objective 2, WAMPO has developed two performance measures. The first performance measure is crash location mapping. Crash location mapping will identify high crash locations that are likely to cause non-recurring congestion.

Transit On-Time Performance

The second performance measure for Objective 2 is transit on-time performance. Transit on-time performance measures the percent of buses arriving at certain stops when they are scheduled, or 'on-time.' This provides a good measure of system reliability. Buses are representative of the overall travel and are used because data on the on-time performance is readily available. Delays in bus arrival time are usually caused by non-recurring congestion because recurring congestion is planned for, where non-recurring delays are not.

Transit Ridership

Objective 3 of the CMP states that WAMPO desires to 'increase the use of alternative modes of transportation.' To measure the success in achieving Objective 3, WAMPO developed a performance measure to monitor transit ridership. This will provide information about how much the transit system is used. Typically, congestion management strategies focus on reducing single occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel. Carpooling, using transit, or using alternative modes of travel reduce the amount of vehicles on the roadways, therefore reducing congestion. By increasing transit ridership, the hope is to reduce SOV travel.

Process for Updating

Setting up a process that allows WAMPO to make refinements to the CMP performance measures is crucial. Many things may cause the region to update the performance measures; priorities change, issues emerge, data becomes available, and funding fluctuates. However, it is beneficial to keep performance measures consistent over a period of time. Keeping them consistent allows for trends to be developed. WAMPO hopes that the trends will help point out which strategies were successful in achieving the objectives as well as show progress over time. As WAMPO updates the MTP, performance measures will be reviewed and potentially updated.

6. Establish and Implement Performance Monitoring Plan

Monitoring system performance based on the aforementioned performance measures is vital to the CMP. Data must be collected to report on the performance measures identified in Step 4. Step 6 sets the parameters for collecting data to be reported. It sets the sources of data and when it will be collected.



Current Performance Monitoring Plan

WAMPO will monitor and report on the four performance measures identified in Step 5. WAMPO will include appropriate staff time and funding in the annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to allow data to be collected, analyzed, and reported.

Monitoring Plan for Percent of the CMP Network Operating Below LOS C

WAMPO conducted a Travel Time Study in 2010, which provides peak hour Level of Service (LOS) data for much of the CMP Network. WAMPO will also use traffic count data and information from the travel demand model to determine LOS for the rest of the CMP Network. WAMPO will look at future opportunities to conduct travel time studies to provide future LOS data on the CMP Network.

Monitoring Plan for Crash Location Mapping

WAMPO will collect data from the Kansas Crash Analysis and Reporting System (KCARS) database. This information is available on an annual basis. WAMPO will map the crashes to show locations where crashes likely cause congestion.

Monitoring Plan for Transit On-Time Performance

WAMPO will collect data from Wichita Transit on bus on-time performance. This information will be collected on an annual basis. WAMPO will look at how congestion may be impacting the on-time performance of the transit system.

Monitoring Plan for Transit Ridership

WAMPO will collect data from Wichita Transit and Coordinated Transit District 12 on transit ridership. This information will be collected on an annual basis. WAMPO will look at how transit ridership may reduce single occupancy vehicles, which are a major cause of congestion.

Monitoring Other Data

In an effort to provide the most comprehensive congestion reports, WAMPO will review other data source information beyond those listed above. This will include such data sources as the Texas Transportation Institute's Urban Mobility Report, stakeholder input, public input

Process for Updating

WAMPO will review and potentially update the performance monitoring plan if new performance measures are developed. If new data sources become available, data sources become unavailable, or data is deemed inappropriate for use in the CMP, the performance monitoring plan will likely be updated.

7. Identify Congested Areas and Causes

After data is collected on the performance measures, it can be analyzed and reported. This 'state of the system' type report on congestion will be made available to decision makers and the public during the project selection process for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and, when appropriate, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). It will identify overall system performance based on the performance measures, congested locations, and likely causes of congestion.

Process for Updating

The way WAMPO analyzes and reports on congested areas and causes may change over time based on stakeholder input, development of data sources, or changes in analytical tools. WAMPO will review and potentially update Step 7 after reporting is complete to ensure the best and most accurate information is available to stakeholders and the public during the project selection process.



8. Identify and Evaluate Congestion Management Strategies

WAMPO will identify transportation system management and operational strategies for the region to manage congestion. The strategies identified will focus on improving system performance based on the performance measures set in Step 5. Many of the strategies will be directly tied to the report that comes from Step 7. This will allow effective strategies to be targeted to specific areas and causes of congestion.

These strategies will be considered during development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In the MTP, WAMPO will identify the anticipated system performance and expected benefits of implemented strategies. Focusing on the management and operation of the multimodal transportation system during the short-term and long-term will allow WAMPO to improve system performance now and as demand changes over time.

Process for Updating

Strategies will likely become more feasible and accepted in the region over time. This will be due to many variables, such as the region's acceptance of certain ideas, improvements to transportation systems allowing new strategies to be implemented, and general progress in technologies. WAMPO will review, evaluate, and potentially update congestion management strategies during updates to the MTP.

9. Implement Congestion Management Strategies

Strategies identified through the CMP will be considered during the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). WAMPO will facilitate, as appropriate, strategies to move from the long range MTP into short range TIP, then to construction/implementation. The MTP will outline general timelines for strategy implementation and the TIP will identify implementation responsibilities and potential funding sources. WAMPO will also provide information supporting the implementation of congestion management strategies. When adding lanes to manage congestion, WAMPO will explicitly consider the incorporation of appropriate features to facilitate future demand management strategies and operational improvements that will maintain the functional integrity and safety of the lanes.

Process for Updating

Step 9 is a fairly straight forward process, identifying congestion management strategies in the planning process and actually implementing the strategies. However, there is a lot of coordination required to ensure strategies are implemented. WAMPO coordinate with project sponsors and update this process to achieve a continuous progression of strategies as deemed appropriate.

10. Monitor and Evaluate Congestion Management Strategies

WAMPO will monitor and evaluate the impacts of congestion management strategies after implementation. This requires a before and after look at how the system, corridor, link, or intersection is operating. Data collected and reported will provide this before and after look at system performance. By providing this information, the success of strategies (or groups of strategies) can be evaluated. This information will be used when updating the CMP.

Process for Updating

Step 10 is another straight forward process that will allow a before and after look at congestion management strategies. WAMPO will continue to look at ways to monitor and evaluate strategies. WAMPO will also look for appropriate ways to document this evaluation process.



Integration into the Metropolitan Planning Process

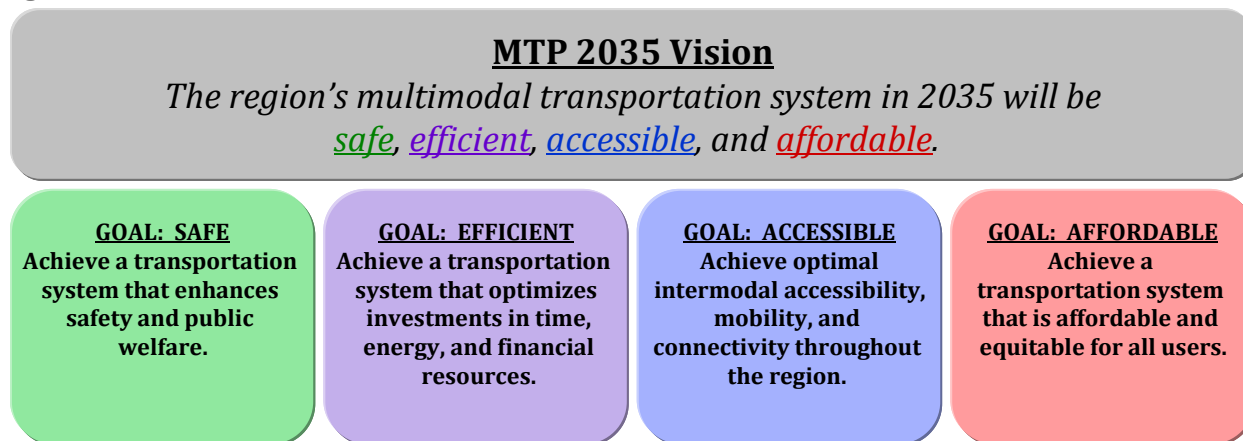
The previous section outlines a few points where the CMP is integrated into the overall metropolitan transportation planning process. To provide a clear view of how the CMP is integrated with specific planning items, WAMPO has taken this opportunity to highlight how the CMP is, or will be, integrated with the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and other plans and programs. It is important to emphasize that the CMP is truly a process that is incorporated into the many transportation planning activities.

The CMP is intended to be another tool to help determine which projects and strategies are included in the MTP and ultimately carried out in the TIP and UPWP. The CMP is integrated into the overall metropolitan transportation planning process, meaning it is integrated in some way into all WAMPO plans, programs, and processes. This is done by identifying a process to use data on system performance to develop a performance report. The report will then feed into actual selection of projects and strategies to implement.

Integration with the Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The guiding force behind WAMPO plans, programs, and processes is the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) 2035. It is the blueprint for transportation improvements through the year 2035. This long range plan identifies a regional vision, goals, objectives, strategies, and projects. The projects and strategies of the MTP 2035 are intended to achieve the goals and objectives. Figure 5 identifies the MTP 2035 vision and goals.

Figure 5: MTP 2035 Vision and Goals



Congestion is a barrier to achieving the goals of the MTP 2035. Congestion decreases the safety of users, decreases the efficiency of the transportation system, hinders individuals from easily accessing locations in the region, and makes it less affordable to travel.

The MTP includes congestion management objectives that are intended to be carried out over the planning horizon of the MTP. The MTP also uses congestion information provided by the CMP to evaluate scenarios, or packages of projects.

Integration with the Transportation Improvement Program

WAMPO also produces two programs that play a vital role in carrying out the projects and strategies of the MTP 2035. The first is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). It is a short-range program of projects that have



been selected for implementation. These projects originate from the MTP then are selected for implementation by being included in the TIP. The TIP will reflect the performance measures of the CMP. This can be done through the project selection process used to select TIP projects.

Prior to projects being submitted for potential inclusion in the TIP, project sponsor can use congestion information provided by the CMP to aid in determining which projects to submit. The project selection process for the TIP uses information provided by the CMP.

Integration with the Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is an annual list of work activities and products that will be completed by WAMPO staff. These activities and tasks are undertaken to move the region closer to achieving the goals and objectives of the MTP 2035. Strategies identified through the CMP can be included in the UPWP to ensure they are developed in the planning process.

Integration with Other Plans and Programs

WAMPO has plans and programs that take the high-level MTP and make it implementable. There are many plans and programs that aid in determining which projects and strategies from the MTP 2035 are implemented. WAMPO develops plans that have specific focus areas, such as the Safety Plan, Freight Plan, Regional Pathway System Plan (RPSP), and the Railroad Crossing Plan (RRCP). These plans use the MTP 2035 framework as a backbone, using the same vision and goals. The plans go further in depth and develop more detailed recommendations of how to achieve the goals and objectives of the MTP 2035.

Of specific importance to the CMP, as mentioned earlier, is the Regional Intelligent Transportation System Architecture (ITS-RA). ITS is the integration of technology into the transportation system. The ITS-RA is a document that ensures that all of the technology in the system are collaborative and work together. ITS strategies identified through the CMP will be consistent with the ITS-RA.

Integration with the National Environmental Policy Act

When projects in the WAMPO region are required to do an environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS), reasonable alternative strategies identified by the CMP shall be considered. The EA or EIS is not required to use strategies identified by the CMP as the preferred strategy; the EA or EIS must include discussion of how the CMP strategies were considered. In essence, the CMP provides a good foundation for developing alternative strategies required for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation.

Stakeholder Involvement during CMP Development

WAMPO needs involvement from various stakeholders to develop a functional CMP. The information below outlines the stakeholder involvement process used, or what will be used, in developing the update to the CMP. WAMPO will use a similar stakeholder involvement approach for future updates to the CMP. It is important to note that the management and operations working group includes operations staff for the largest transportation providers in the region: Wichita Transit, the Kansas Department of Transportation, the City of Wichita, and Sedgwick County. Also, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan Project Advisory Committee (MTP-PAC) is comprised of representatives of 19 agencies involved in transportation planning and operations in the region. The diversity of interests and knowledge of individuals on the MTP-PAC provides for a very comprehensive view of the mobility needs of people and goods in the region.



Step 1

WAMPO consulted and coordinated with stakeholders that operate the regional transportation system. WAMPO coordinated with the Kansas Department of Transportation, Wichita Transit, and local engineers and planners that deal with the planning and daily operations of the multimodal transportation system. WAMPO consulted with a management and operations working group to identify what each agency uses as thresholds for congestion. The MTP-PAC recommended the acceptable level of system conditions, which was then endorsed by the Transportation Policy Body (TPB).

Step 2

WAMPO coordinated with a management and operations working group to develop congestion management objectives. The MTP-PAC filtered through the menu of options and recommended three objectives for the CMP, which were then endorsed by the TPB.

Step 3

WAMPO used the CMP Coverage Area from the 2008 CMP. This was presented to the MTP-PAC and there were no objections to using the existing CMP Coverage Area, which is the current WAMPO Planning Boundary.

Step 4

WAMPO used the CMP Network from the 2008 CMP. The Network was presented to the MTP-PAC and there were no objections to using the existing CMP Network. In 2008, the CMP Network was developed through review of travel demand model information, traffic counts, volume to capacity ratios, and stakeholder input.

Step 5

WAMPO coordinated with a management and operations working group to develop congestion management performance measures that were tied to the congestion management objectives developed for Step 2. These performance measures were then taken to the MTP-PAC for input. The MTP-PAC selected four performance measures, which were then endorsed by the TPB.

Step 6

WAMPO coordinated with many different stakeholders to develop a performance monitoring plan. WAMPO and the stakeholders first identified data requirements and potential sources of data for the performance measures. After the performance measures were finalized, WAMPO coordinated with stakeholders to get more specific information on the data, including when it was available, what the format was, who to get the information from, and other specifics about obtaining the information on a regular basis. Stakeholders are extremely important to this step since most of the information is from sources outside of WAMPO.

Step 7

WAMPO will coordinate with stakeholders when identifying areas and causes of congestion. This will include meetings and interviews to get local knowledge of the circumstances surrounding congested, or potentially congested, areas. This information will provide a more accurate view as to the specifics of why congestion occurs at a specific location. Congestion management strategies can then be tailored to the specific causes of congestion at certain locations.



Step 8

WAMPO will coordinate with stakeholders to identify appropriate congestion management strategies that can actually be implemented. Knowledge of what strategies have been, or will likely be, successful will be vital when identifying strategies to be implemented.

Step 9

WAMPO will coordinate with stakeholders and project sponsors to identify timeframes, responsibilities, and possible funding sources for congestion management strategies. Project sponsors will also be asked to provide information supporting the implementation of specific congestion management strategies.

Step 10

WAMPO will coordinate with stakeholders and project sponsors to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of congestion reduction and mobility enhancement strategies.

