

Chapter 2: Plan Background

PACTS – Organizational Overview

Since 1975, PACTS has served as the regional transportation planning and federal funding organization for the Portland area MPO. MPOs are federally mandated "metropolitan planning organizations" formed for all urbanized areas with a core population of at least 50,000 people. PACTS is composed of municipal and state officials, and representatives of regional planning and transit agencies. PACTS oversees transportation studies, identifies needs and sets priorities for certain federal transportation funds available to the area.

PACTS Functions

1. Provides a continuous, coordinated and comprehensive transportation planning process for the greater Portland area.
2. Recommends to the MaineDOT the use of federal funding for priority road improvements, for public transportation operating subsidies and capital improvements, for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and for other important transportation purposes in the PACTS area.
3. Performs and oversees transportation studies and policy analysis, and prepares a regional transportation plan.
4. Evaluates and approves proposed transportation improvement projects.
5. Provides a forum for interagency cooperation and collaborative decision-making, public input, the exchange of ideas and the exploration of innovative transportation concepts.
6. Monitors compliance with national air quality goals.

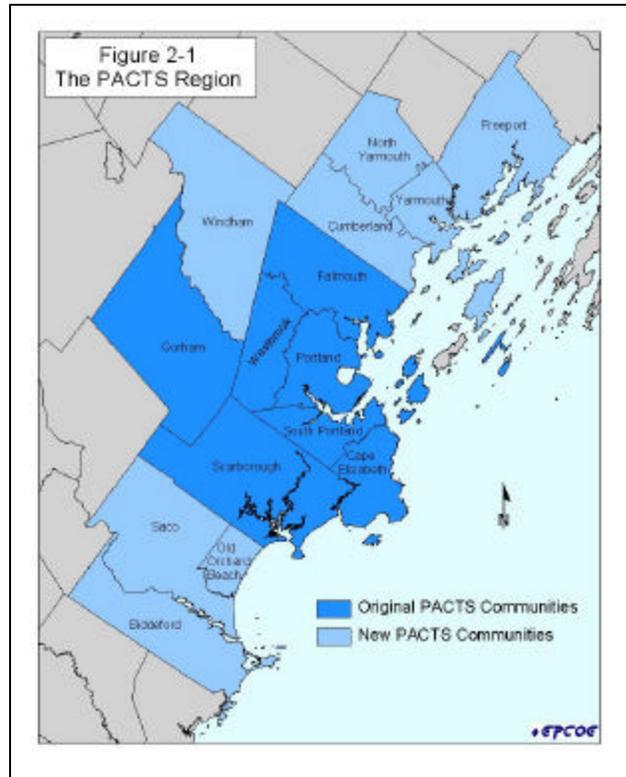
PACTS Members and Their Roles

MaineDOT is, and always has been, the key player in the PACTS planning and funding processes. The two agencies have always shared a close working relationship. MaineDOT provides technical and policy analysis for consideration by PACTS committee members and staff. MaineDOT also provides matching funds for the annual PACTS operating budget. MaineDOT support is required to implement any PACTS funding proposal.

Municipalities play a central role in transportation planning in the PACTS area. Most PACTS studies are conceived by municipal staff in response to public concerns. Local officials also propose the majority of projects for funding via PACTS. (Public transportation organizations typically propose studies and capital/operating funding options related to public transportation.) Through the fall of 2002, the municipal members of PACTS were Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, Gorham, Portland, Scarborough, South Portland and Westbrook. In response to federal regulations, PACTS expanded in November 2002 to include eight new municipalities: Biddeford, Cumberland, Freeport, North Yarmouth, Old Orchard Beach, Saco, Windham and Yarmouth. (Figure 2-1 on the next page shows the original municipal membership and the newly expanded

membership.) *Destination Tomorrow* was adopted for the area covering the original seven members, and will be updated over the next 18 months to reflect the new communities (see the PACTS expansion box below).

The Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) provides considerable staff support to PACTS staff and committees. The GPCOG is the federally designated transit-planning agency for PACTS. (In November 2002, the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission (SMRPC) joined PACTS. SMRPC will provide staff support to PACTS for York County communities in much the same manner as GPCOG.)



**PACTS Expansion and
*Destination Tomorrow***

Work on *Destination Tomorrow* began in the fall of 1999. In November 2002, as a result of the 2000 Census and as required by federal law, the PACTS region expanded to a 15-municipality region from its former size of seven municipalities, and from four to six transit providers.

Due to the advanced stage of work on *Destination Tomorrow*, there was a consensual decision to complete this Plan based on the former size of a seven-municipality region. Immediately following adoption of this Plan, work will commence on an expanded *Destination Tomorrow*. This expanded version will include the visions and traffic issues of these new communities and will encompass management of the enlarged travel-shed.

Upon completion in the early part of 2004, the expanded version of *Destination Tomorrow* will supercede this document and will be the official PACTS Regional Transportation Plan.

The Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA), the Region 6 Regional Transportation Advisory Committee, and six transit providers also are members of PACTS. (Prior to the November 2002 expansion, four transit providers were PACTS members.) The six transit providers appoint a representative to each of the PACTS committees. Interested citizens and business representatives are appointed to the Planning and Technical Committees. The Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration are non-voting members of each PACTS committee. Though not a member, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection has worked with PACTS on air quality conformity for a number of years.



FACTS REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

FACTS has three standing committees: the Policy, Technical and Planning Committees. The latter two advise the Policy Committee which is the decision-making board of FACTS. Member agencies designate representatives to each committee. Municipalities also designate committee representatives; the municipality's population is used to determine the number of representatives.

FACTS Membership

Municipalities

Biddeford*	Cape Elizabeth	Cumberland*	Falmouth
Freeport*	Gorham	North Yarmouth*	Old Orchard Beach*
Portland	Saco*	Scarborough	South Portland
Westbrook	Windham*	Yarmouth*	

Agencies and Others

Maine Department of Transportation
 Maine Turnpike Authority
 Greater Portland Transit District (METRO)
 South Portland Bus Service
 Regional Transportation Program
 Casco Bay Island Transit District
 York County Community Action Corporation
 ShuttleBus
 Greater Portland Council of Governments@
 Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission* @
 Federal Highway Administration#
 Federal Transit Administration#
 Citizen and business representatives@
 Regional Transportation Advisory Committee 6#

* Joined in 2002

Non-voting member on all committees

@ Vote only on Planning and Technical Committees



Destination Tomorrow – The New Regional Transportation Plan

PACTS has prepared and updated its regional transportation plans as required by the federal government for more than 20 years. In 1999, the PACTS Policy Committee decided to significantly and substantively revise its approach to the regional transportation plan. This decision was based on the following four major areas that were considered to be deficient in prior plans:

- addressing the projected growth in travel demand;
- a need for an increased regional approach;
- better coordination between transportation and land use policies and decisions; and
- a need for a tighter link between PACTS studies and plans and its funding decisions.

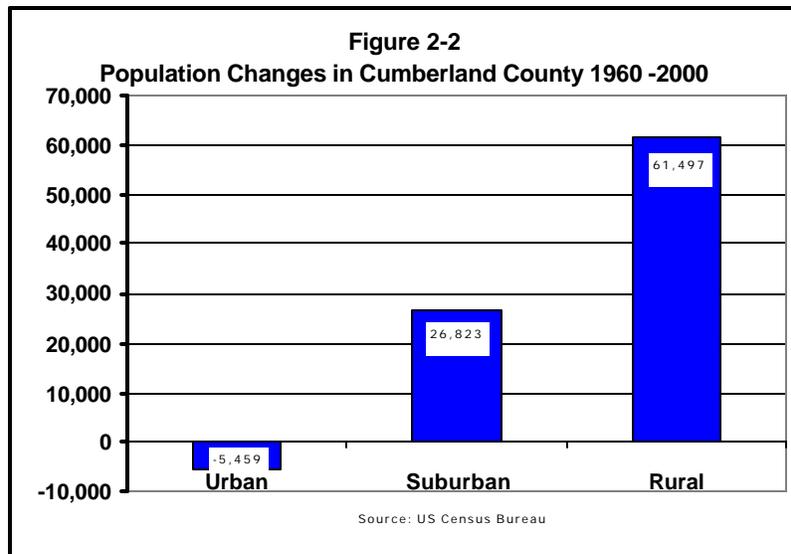
The PACTS Regional Trends Analysis (1999) – completed as one of the initial steps in the development of *Destination Tomorrow* – looked at trends out to the Year 2040 and highlighted the pressing transportation problems looming for the region. A survey of 2,000 area residents in 1999 documented the regional nature of travel, the desire of the region’s solutions” to transportation problems, and supported the decision of the Policy Committee’s approach to *Destination Tomorrow*. (Transportation issues affecting the greater Portland region: Survey of Portland area residents, 1999.)

Growth in Travel Demand

Today, daily congestion occurs on 10 miles of roads inside the PACTS area. . Most of this congestion is on the region’s primary roads where significant delays are regularly experienced during the morning and evening peak-travel hours. Forecasted increases in travel demand by the Year 2025 are anticipated to result in daily congestion on 25 miles of roads in the PACTS area. . Two indicators of increasing travel demand are Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Vehicle Hours Traveled (VHT). These two indicators are forecast to increase 41 percent and 62 percent, respectively, between 2000 and 2025.

Regional Approach

The increasingly regional nature of travel requires that future transportation investments address long-term regional needs. The shifts in population shown in Figure 2-2 are one measure of how we have moved out from the urban centers in Cumberland County during the past 40 years – thereby creating longer driving distances and



more traffic. Analysis shows that this spreading out will continue even with the projected population gain in urban centers.

In light of these development and travel patterns and trends, the PACTS members concluded that a broadened approach to setting regional priorities should be part of *Destination Tomorrow*. While PACTS has performed many multi-jurisdictional corridor studies in the past and has used a respectable process for setting regional funding priorities, its members believed there was a need to look at both the PACTS region and the towns beyond as a single area for which to assess the needs of the true “travel-shed” of greater Portland. While this is a major challenge for an advisory agency like PACTS, its members concluded that MaineDOT, municipalities, businesses and the region’s residents would all benefit from such an enhanced regional priority-setting process.

Coordination Between Transportation and Land Use

In southern Maine, and throughout the country, there is consensus that a significant disconnect exists between transportation and land use development policies, responsibilities and funding. This disconnect occurs despite our understanding that: (1) how we travel is affected by where we choose to live, work and shop, (2) that these choices are, in turn, shaped to some degree by our transportation system, and (3) that these choices also shape, to some degree, the transportation system. This lack of coordination exacerbates congestion problems and contributes to the development pattern of sprawl.

Link Between Studies and Plans and PACTS Decision-making

The PACTS members want to use their studies and plans more effectively in the decisions they make. This will be a challenge due to the political nature of many decisions, the complexity and number of federal funding programs, the many parties involved in the PACTS process, and the scarcity of funds relative to transportation needs. While a review of the linkage between past funding decisions made by the PACTS members and the PACTS plans and studies showed an effective connection, members wanted to further strengthen these linkages.

Growing gap between identified needs and anticipated funding

Early in the development process of *Destination Tomorrow*, the PACTS members and staff began to develop the Plan’s short and long-term investment framework. In accordance with federal regulations, this framework was limited to identified system needs and did not include projects that might be better defined as a “wish-list.” PACTS members soon realized that the identified transportation needs would exceed the anticipated levels of available funding. This financial probability presented a challenge to PACTS members and staff. Chapter 6 includes a discussion of the funding aspects of *Destination Tomorrow*.



***Destination Tomorrow* Goals and Objectives**

The *Destination Tomorrow* Vision Statement, seen in the box to the right, was crafted early in the *Destination Tomorrow* process and has acted as a guide in the Plan’s development. The six goals and objectives described on the following pages translate the Vision Statement into actions items – broad and concrete measures that the region can collectively take to implement the Plan. The 86 recommendations and strategies developed from these goals and objectives are listed beginning on page 5-10.

***Destination Tomorrow* Vision Statement**

The PACTS Regional Transportation System will:

- Provide efficient and cost-effective travel for the region’s citizens and goods;
- Provide access to the entire PACTS region through a fully developed and well maintained multi-modal transportation system;
- Promote public safety;
- Protect environmental quality and quality of life;
- Actively complement land use decisions that promote compact development, preserve community character and retain open space; and
- Reflect the policies and values of the PACTS communities.

Goals & Objectives

Each of *Destination Tomorrow*’s six goals have a number of objectives. Many of these objectives are inter-related reflecting the symbiotic relation between the transportation system, the economy, land use and the environment. To stress the importance of this relationship, PACTS members included similar objectives under multiple goals.

Goal #1. Economic Development – PACTS will plan for, fund, maintain and operate a transportation system that: Enhances regional prosperity through support for the economic vitality of existing business and for economic development opportunities encouraged by local and regional plans.

Objectives: Economic Development

- To provide transport linkages and modal alternatives to centers of employment, business and retail activity, and other traffic generators.
- To provide gateway connections into and out of the Portland region through highways, airports, seaports, rail, public transportation, and multi-use trails.
- To provide access to air, sea, and rail stations accounting for the needs of passengers, expedited freight and goods movement, and other demand.
- To maintain the balance between accessibility and mobility in heavily traveled corridors feeding regionally significant employment and activity centers.

Goal #2. Mobility, Safety & Accessibility – PACTS will plan for, fund, maintain and operate a transportation system that: Improves the mobility, safety and accessibility of people throughout the region, and the movement of goods.

Objectives: Mobility, Safety & Accessibility

- To reduce congestion and delay on main travel arteries throughout the region.
- To improve highway safety by reducing the number and severity of crashes involving vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians, and others.
- To manage incidents along or within transportation facilities minimizing loss of life, injuries, property damage, and disruption to the operation of transportation services.
- To direct through-traffic to use higher functionally classified roadways.
- To provide physical connections among modes that are convenient, safe, and affordable.
- To create a seamless passenger transportation system coordinating service, fares, and operations.
- To improve truck circulation and movement within the region.
- To provide transportation alternatives and choices for those with special needs - elderly, young, disabled, low-income, and others.

Goal #3. Energy Conservation – PACTS will plan for, fund, maintain and operate a transportation system that: Conserves and efficiently uses non-renewable energy resources.

Objectives: Energy Conservation

- To reduce the number of trips by single-occupant vehicles.
- To encourage trips by pedestrian and bicycle modes of travel.
- To increase the use of ridesharing through high occupancy vehicles – carpools, vanpools, and transit.
- To minimize energy consumption in the movement of people and goods, and total energy consumption by transportation.
- To facilitate the availability and use of alternative fuels and alternative fuel vehicles (AFV) in public and private fleets.



Goal #4. Land Use – PACTS will plan for, fund, maintain and operate a transportation system that: Supports land use plans and development patterns that promote efficient transportation services and systems.

Objectives: Land Use

- To encourage the creation of and conformance to regional and local land use plans that provide regional connectivity and mobility in support of development patterns.
- To foster compact development patterns such as mixed use and transit-oriented development that promote efficient transportation services and systems that reduce sprawl.
- To promote site development and infrastructure that provides the opportunity for access and on-site circulation by pedestrian, bicycle, and transit modes.
- To protect neighborhoods and community integrity, preserving local ties and relationships.
- To manage access along major arteries to reduce delay and crashes while protecting accessibility of adjoining property.
- To balance the needs for increased network connectivity and reduced cut-through traffic on lower classified roads such as residential streets.
- To create transportation facilities that are community sensitive – responding to the needs of the community, neighborhoods, and adjoining properties.
- To formulate a planning and design process that effectively coordinates land use and transportation decisions and that spans jurisdictional boundaries.

Goal #5. Environmental Quality – PACTS will plan for, fund, maintain and operate a transportation system that: Protects and improves quality of life and the human and natural environments including natural and cultural resources, air and water quality.

Objectives: Environmental Quality

- To minimize impact on environmental resources – wetlands, wildlife, historical, water quality.
- To reduce vehicle-related emissions both regionwide and at specific locations.
- To minimize and avoid noise impacts of transportation facilities on neighborhoods, schools and people.
- To construct visually attractive transportation infrastructure that complements surrounding land uses and is contextually appropriate.
- To increase accessibility to recreation and natural areas through alternative modes of transportation.

Goal #6. Regional Focus – PACTS will plan for, fund, maintain and operate a transportation system that: Reflects a regional approach to transportation and land use planning and decision-making founded on effective communication and management of regional resources.

Objectives: Regional Focus

- To establish priorities for implementation of transportation improvements that are tied to regional transportation need and funding availability.
- To clearly assign roles, responsibilities, and schedules for implementation of plan elements.
- To monitor transportation system performance and Plan implementation on a region-wide basis.
- To provide information on a real-time basis to elected officials, interested parties and the general public.
- To establish a means for the continuous involvement of citizens in the implementation of transportation improvements.

Plan Process and Public Outreach

Throughout the development of *Destination Tomorrow*, a continuous public outreach process was conducted. Appendix A contains the public comments received. Key elements of this process are listed below.

- A Regional Residents Survey in 1999;
- Publication and distribution of the Regional Trends Analysis in 1999;
- A series of public forums and listening sessions before town and city councils in 2000 and 2001;
- Monthly meetings of the Planning Committee and monthly updates of the Plan’s progress to the Policy Committee;
- The establishment of a Plan website (www.pactsplan.org) to document the Plan’s progress, post significant products and seek public input;
- Distribution of *Destination Tomorrow* planning documents, upon request; E-mail updates to interested parties;
- Publication and distribution of a Plan Summary and nine issue papers in the fall of 2002 to seek additional public input into the Plan; and
- A second series of public forums and presentations to town and city councils and other interested parties in the winter of 2002-2003.

The public outreach was one part of the performance-based transportation planning process used in *Destination Tomorrow*. The cornerstones of this process were:

- Identifying a desired end state – a vision – and goals.
- Identifying needs and potential alternatives to meet the needs.



- Evaluating the alternatives through a set of performance measures.
- Selecting courses of action that best meet the needs in conformance with the established vision and goals.

State and Federal Regulatory Context

The Federal Highway and Transit Administrations require that seven planning factors be incorporated into the development and updating of regional transportation plans. Each of these factors is reflected in the goals of *Destination Tomorrow* and is incorporated into the Plan's Recommendations and Strategies.

Seven FHWA/FTA Planning Factors

1. Support the economic vitality of metropolitan areas by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.
4. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.
5. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes for people and freight.
6. Promote efficient system management and operation.
7. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

The National Environmental Policy Act (1969) resulted in significant changes to transportation planning. In 1990 and 1991, four other pieces of legislation were enacted (and reauthorized in 1998) that brought additional, major changes to how federal and state transportation funds are used. *Destination Tomorrow* has responded to the requirements of each of these five laws.

A. The National Environmental Policy Act

The 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is the basic national charter for the protection of the environment. The Act establishes policy, sets goal and provides a process for carrying out its requirements.

For the PACTS region, NEPA requires that all major projects that use federal funds:

- assess the project's environmental impacts;
- consider the project's environmental impacts in the decision-making process; and
- disclose the environmental impacts to the public.

There are three types of assessments required under the Act:

- Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for projects with significant impacts.
- Environmental Assessments (EA) for projects with no significant impacts.

- Categorical Exclusions (CE) for “small” routine projects with insignificant environmental impacts.

The MaineDOT and FACTS work together closely on all major projects adhering to the NEPA requirements.

B. The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments

In 1990, Congress passed additional amendments to the Clean Air Act (CAAA). The amendments set new target dates for attainment of air quality standards and required state and local governments, metropolitan planning agencies and businesses to develop an implementation plan to reduce the levels of emissions. The CAAA requires that this Plan, and the FACTS Transportation Improvement Program, help the region move toward reducing the production of mobile source ozone precursors.

Maine’s three southernmost counties – including the FACTS region – continue to fail to meet the federal ambient air quality standard for ozone. The airborne transport of ozone precursors from outside of Maine significantly contributes to the southern part of the state falling short of the federal standards. Mitigation of this contribution to Maine’s shortfall is beyond the scope of this Plan.

Three *Destination Tomorrow* objectives (see page 2-9) and nine strategies (see page 5-11) promote the conservation and efficient use of nonrenewable energy resources; the increased use of cleaner fuels, zero-emission fuels such as hydrogen, and low or zero-emission vehicles; and support the development of improved technology, such as better catalytic converters to reduce or eliminate harmful vehicle emissions. However, FACTS members are aware that growth in VMT and vehicle emissions could outstrip the gains from implementing these strategies.

C. The Maine Sensible Transportation Policy Act

The 1991 Sensible Transportation Policy Act was enacted in response to the importance of the transportation system to Maine’s economic vitality and to the well-being and quality of life of its citizens. Additional factors included the need for transportation improvements to meet the diverse need of the State’s residents; the state of disrepair of the transportation system; the heavy dependence of the system on foreign oil; and the long-lasting and widespread impacts of transportation investments. The Act requires a process for transportation planning, capital investment and project decisions that will:

1. Minimize harmful environmental impacts of transportation.
2. Evaluate the full range of reasonable transportation alternatives for all significant highway construction or reconstruction projects.



3. Give preference to transportation system management, transportation demand management, and improvements to the existing system and other modes before increasing highway capacity through road building activities.
4. Repair and improve roads and bridges to provide a safe, efficient and adequate transportation network.
5. Reduce reliance on foreign oil.
6. Increase reliance on energy-efficient forms of transportation.
7. Meet the mobility needs of rural and urban residents and the unique needs of the elderly and disabled.
8. Be consistent with the purposes, goals and policies of the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act.
9. Incorporate a participation process for local government and the public.

The Act further requires that FACTS take the following actions:

1. Develop a long-range plan that responds to MaineDOT's planning rules.
2. Respond to the Act's goals in its selection of projects for the Transportation Improvement Program.
3. Administer the MaineDOT "significant highway project" analysis process.
4. Coordinate plans and programs with the Region 6 Regional Transportation Advisory Committee.
5. Provide opportunities for participation by local government and the public.

D. The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act

The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) set new accessibility standards for persons with disabilities. ADA's impacts on transportation have been significant, most notably the new standards and deadlines for accessibility to transit services, streets and sidewalks.

E. The 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and subsequently the 1997 Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21)

ISTEA, passed by the Congress in 1991, fostered at least as much change in transportation decision-making as the three laws described above. The added flexibility and increased resources promised in ISTEA (and subsequently TEA-21) supported efforts in the Portland area and throughout Maine to meet the objectives enumerated in Maine's Sensible Transportation Policy Act. Reauthorization of TEA-21 is expected in 2003.

ISTEA and TEA-21 granted states more flexibility in determining transportation solutions, made highway funds available to enhance the environment, promoted new technologies and removed some restrictions on the use of federal funds for toll roads. The Acts also shifted more Federal funds to the National Highway System. Key features of ISTEA/TEA-21 included:

PACTS REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

1. Funds traditionally set aside for highways and bridges are now also available to support capital transit (and certain operating) projects under the Surface Transportation Program.
2. Increased levels of highway, bridge and transit funding to respond to deteriorating conditions.
3. The Surface Transportation Program includes set-asides for safety construction activities, and for transportation enhancements encompassing a broad range of non-motorized transportation and environmental-related activities.
4. The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program directs funds toward projects that improve air quality.
5. Providing start-up costs for traffic management and traffic control actions.