

Northwest Arkansas Regional Mobility Plan Technical Scope of Services

Submitted to:

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December 16, 1999

ABSTRACT

This is to define the technical scope of services for a Regional Mobility Plan for Northwest Arkansas. The Mobility Plan will better define present and future travel patterns for people, goods, and services. The study is especially timely because of the dynamic growth environment in Northwest Arkansas, and because of the upcoming year 2000 Census. In recent years the region has seen major transportation infrastructure improvements, including a new interstate highway from I-40 to Fayetteville and a new airport with jet service to Atlanta, Dallas, Memphis and Chicago. A decision in one city may affect decisions in neighbor cities or rural areas. In addition, the failure of one city or area to act can limit the ability of the neighboring city to move forward. Only by looking at transportation issues in a regional context can problems be solved for the benefit of the area as a whole.

INTRODUCTION

This is to define the technical scope of services for a Regional Mobility Plan for Northwest Arkansas. The Mobility Plan will better define present and future travel patterns for people, goods, and services. The plan will address all transportation modes and how they affect one another.

An article in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (12/17/99) stated that the Northwest Arkansas area (including Washington and Benton counties) was the 8th fastest-growing region in the country from 1990 to 1998, with population growth of 29%. The Mayor of Springdale was quoted as saying “growth has outstripped our ability to even plan for it, let alone build for it.” He went on to say that his staff is so overwhelmed with upkeep of what they have that they are unable to think ahead. The mayor of Fayetteville is quoted as saying that when Fayetteville doubles in size (which could happen in the next 20 years) “...that’s when we will start running into problems with our water, wastewater, and transportation systems.” The Director of the NWARPC agrees that “waste disposal and transportation troubles ultimately will not allow the growth rates of the 1990s to continue long into the 2000s.” It is clear that transportation is an immediate and pressing concern for area authorities. For growth to continue, the long-term transportation needs of the area must be provided for.

The study is especially timely because of the dynamic growth environment in Northwest Arkansas, including its multiple jurisdictions with both rural and urban issues, and because of the upcoming year 2000 Census. In recent years the region has seen major transportation infrastructure improvements, including a new interstate highway from I-40 to Fayetteville (I-540) and a new airport with jet service to Atlanta, Dallas, Memphis and Chicago. The completion of I-540 from Fayetteville to I-40 has provided interstate access to port facilities in Van Buren/Fort Smith, which may affect freight movements in the area. A bypass around Bella Vista is currently in the planning stages.

Key to the success of the plan will be the participation of local stakeholders, such as MPOs, city governments, and transportation service providers and users. Stakeholders

will be contacted to get their ideas and to determine what information would be useful from their perspectives. Of course, public hearings would be necessary to obtain input from the residents of the study area.

LIMITS OF STUDY AREA

A decision in one city may affect decisions in neighbor cities or rural areas. In addition, the failure of one city or area to act can limit the ability of the neighboring city to move forward. Only by looking at transportation issues in a regional context can problems be solved for the benefit of the area as a whole. In order to fully account for the effects of I-540 (with its improved port access), the airport, and other transportation improvements in the area, the study must go beyond the confines of the traditional two-county (Benton and Washington Counties) area. The Mobility Plan should include analysis of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties.

TASKS

The following are the tasks that must be completed to develop the Northwest Arkansas Regional Mobility Plan. *It should be emphasized that the public and regional transportation stakeholders must be involved in the entire process!*

Task 1

The current system will be inventoried, including streets and highways, rail, air, water, and public transportation.

Task 2

Inventory current travel patterns in conjunction with the year 2000 Census. This will include a full-scale Origin/Destination survey, and cordon surveys at the study area boundary. This information will then be tied in with the Census information to develop an understanding of travel patterns in the Northwest Arkansas area. Information inventoried will include people, goods, and services.

Task 3

Develop a set of planning models to forecast future needs, given certain assumptions about population, growth, and where development will occur. These models will be calibrated using the information from Tasks 2 and 3 and will forecast needs for the midpoint year of 2010 and the target forecast year of 2025.

Task 4

Determine midpoint and target-year capacity needs for the study area, including

- Highway needs for both people and freight
- Public Transportation
- Pedestrian needs
- Accommodations for bicycles
- Airport capacity needs for both people and freight
- Waterborne freight transportation needs for the study area.

Task 5

Develop and analyze alternatives to address potential problems identified in Tasks 3 and 4. These should be developed for the midpoint year of 2010 and the target forecast year of 2025. Included in the analysis should be

- How technology improvements (Intelligent Transportation Systems) may improve the efficiency of transportation services.
- The best and most efficient ways to move goods and services within and through the study area.

The results will include where improvements to all modes will be necessary to handle anticipated demand, which will include the proposed I-49 corridor and Highway 412. For example, recommendations for the highway mode may include required lane additions and where they might be, where new roads should be built, and how to better coordinate traffic signals.

Task 6

A financial plan must be developed that outlines the costs for recommended alternatives from Task 5. The financial plan must accomplish the following:

- Identify sources of possible funding for Regional Mobility Plan implementation, along with the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- Prioritize recommended alternatives to maximize positive impact, considering the costs of the alternatives and available financial resources.

Task 7

Determine the best process for Regional Mobility Plan implementation, including jurisdiction, political processes and public participation. Provisions for maintenance of the improved system must be made. As development occurs, it should be addressed how these activities will be coordinated with the plan.

BUDGET

It is anticipated that the budget to accomplish the tasks outlined above will be approximately \$1,500,000.