1. Introduction

Ann Arbor has achieved recognition for its exceptional quality of life. Its planning for sustainable, comfortable, and cost-effective mobility and accessibility for its residents, visitors, and workers has contributed to that condition. Transportation plans which help achieve those mobility/accessibility objectives address more than eliminating congestion and reducing travel delay. They address the community’s vision for a future which stresses multimodal travel options.

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission is updating the plan for the Northeast Area of Ann Arbor (Figure 1-1). Once adopted, this plan will serve as a blueprint for the development of land in a manner that meets the vision of the entire community. The northeast area not only contains most of the undeveloped land in Ann Arbor, but also is adjacent to rapidly developing townships of Washtenaw County outside of the City. So, alterations in density, placement of open space, and design of employment and retail centers must be reviewed for their implications for traffic, non-motorized mobility, and transit suitability.

The Northeast Area Transportation Plan was initiated in July 2001 to evaluate the combined traffic impact of the planned, unplanned, proposed, and yet-to-be-proposed development and compare it with existing and potential infrastructure in the Northeast Area. Adding lanes of traffic is the least desirable solution in the eyes of residents.

Particular attention was paid to evaluating traffic movement and safety between M-14/U.S. 23 and the northside neighborhoods currently served by the Barton Drive/M-14 interchange. To do so, an array of alternatives have been evaluated with the public. Interaction with the community in a definition of its unique values was essential to addressing the interchange’s issue and the entire Northeast transportation planning process. It enabled the various publics to express their own views of the relative importance of the critical issues against which alternatives were measured. It applies their values to measuring the impacts of each alternative against a “do-nothing” option. It provided an opportunity for the community to establish the basis of the choice of a preferred alternative.

In the end, both the Northeast Area Land Use Plan and this study, the Northeast Ann Arbor Transportation Plan (NEATP), encourage the use of non-auto trips. This means placing additional emphasis on public mass transit and ride sharing, non-motorized transportation and additional Travel Demand Management (TDM) techniques. For the plan to be effective, it must meet community goals and have widespread community support. This Final Report of the Northeast Ann Arbor Transportation Plan Study demonstrates the steps taken to accomplish those objectives.
1.1 Planning Process

This project, comprised of four phases, began in the summer of 2001 (Figure 1-2). (The Phase/Tasks in the Scope of Work are listed in the leftmost column of Figure 1-2. The Scope of Work is available upon request at the City of Ann Arbor Planning Department.) It addressed the framework for community involvement (Phase I) and the evaluation of how to address changes to the M-14/Barton Drive interchange (Phase II). Because of the time required to establish the new TransCAD transportation modeling system, the project schedule was extended. Awaiting the new modeling platform allowed an extensive amount of time to be dedicated to establishing goals, objectives, and evaluation factors. Also, regional socioeconomic data were reviewed and updated by the City of Ann Arbor to focus on the city, particularly the northeast area.

To maintain the momentum of the project while waiting on the new model, a decision was made to develop in “layers” the future transportation system for northeast Ann Arbor. The first layer was that of the non-motorized component. This was especially important to ensure that this component of the plan was not overshadowed by the highway and transit components which often dominate an urban area transportation plan. When the new model was available, it included the first interactive modal split model to address transit’s dynamic role in the overall transportation system. With the modal split model and new socioeconomic data in place, the transit and roadway “layers” were then established. All components of this future transportation system were developed with significant public input.

This document presents the content and results of each of the analysis phases of the project. The NEATP Final Report is the product of Phase IV. The first part of Sections 3 through 6 summarizes the results of the work presented there. They are the “yellow” sheets. A standalone summary is also available.