

Bi-State Regional Commission

Commission in Review

March/April 2021

Connect 2050 – QC Long Range Planning

Gena McCullough, Planning Director/Assistant Executive Director, provided an update on the status of *Connect QC 2050: Quad Cities Long Range Transportation Plan* (LRTP) before consideration of adoption of the plan by the Bi-State Regional Commission. The plan fulfills federal requirements to examine development and its transportation impacts on future travel demand in the Quad Cities. It also provides a pathway for identifying transportation needs and desires to move goods and people safely, efficiently, and in ways that minimize environmental and social impacts, and translate these into projects for the future.

The plan is updated every five years to address changing conditions and course corrections. As an example, COVID has impacted passenger transportation, but has had less impact on movement of freight. Some travel is beginning to rebound and will continue to be monitored for its longer term impacts on the transportation system..

Multimodal System. The plan addresses multiple modes of transportation, including:

- 800 miles of federally eligible roads of 2,000 miles total
- 214 miles of bikeways & 19 *Complete Streets* corridors

- 25 fixed routes – 3 public transit systems
- 2 regional transit systems
- 104 transit vehicles + 3 vessels
- 11 transit priority corridors
- ~30% streets w/ sidewalks one or both sides (excludes local roads)
- 9 *Safe Routes to Schools* plans
- QC-Chicago Passenger Rail Service Preliminary Engineering + Moline Q Station
- Airport improvements
- MRPEIWI Ports Statistical Area designation

Multimodal Investment

The plan represents a total investment of \$5 billion dollars by the year 2050. Operations and maintenance represents 73% of this investment to preserve the existing system and its assets. Capital projects that will enhance the system by adding capacity, connectivity, and accessibility accounts for 27% of the investment. By mode, roads account for 54% of the future investment, transit 41%, and other enhancements at 5%.

NEXT COMMISSION MEETING:

Wed., May. 26, 2021

3:30 p.m.

The meeting will be held via Zoom.

General public can submit questions or comments by calling (309) 793-6300

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2050 (continued)

Public Involvement. A media release notifying the public of the availability of the plan was sent 2/24/21. The draft plan was available on the Bi-State website, and virtual public input meetings were held in March. The original citizen survey secured 179 responses, and subsequent input since January 2021 totalled 114 responses. A public hearing was part of the March 23 Transportation Policy Committee meeting. No public comments were received, and the Policy Committee recommended approval of the plan. Following adoption, staff will prepare the final plan for publication and it will be available at www.bistateonline.org.

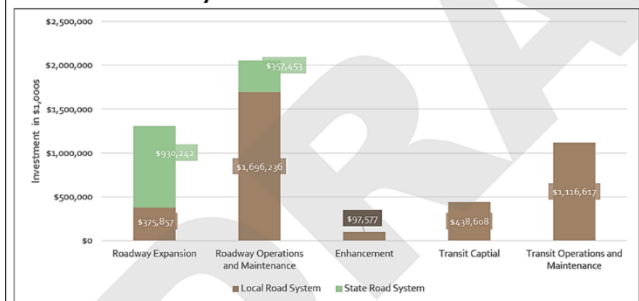
Bi-State Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2021

Denise Bulat, Executive Director, presented a full draft of the *Bi-State Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2021*, highlighting economic trends in the Quad Cities. Besides the Bi-State Regions Goals and Strategies, which were presented previously, components of the CEDS include a detailed demographic overview of the people, economy, and place of the Bi-State Region; a description of the strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats; and a list of performance measures to access the progress toward the region's goals.

In the summary of regional data and demographics, Ms. Bulat noted most data lags and is 2019 information that won't fully reflect the pandemic. There is a projected steady slow population growth aligning to the recently completed long range transportation plan population projections. Median age for the region increased from 39.2 to 40.5 and is projected to continue to increase.

The cost of living is lower than the national average and compares favorably to regional counterparts. After spring 2020 unemployment increases due to the pandemic, fall unemployment numbers recovered to near 2019 levels. However, lower income, Hispanic people, and African Americans experienced higher levels of job loss.

Figure 3.4 – Total Transportation Investment for State and Local Systems Network 2021-2050



Source: Bi-State Regional Commission, 2021

There has been a stable slightly increasing Gross Regional Product. Major industries in the region include defense, food processing, agriculture, logistics, and animal production. Industries hit hardest by the pandemic were travel, entertainment, personal services, and transportation.

Strengths and opportunities in the Bi-State Region include access to multiple modes of transportation including the creation of the port statistical area; the Rock Island Arsenal and its global reach; numerous economic tools such as tax credits, enterprise zones, and revolving loan funds; the I-74 Corridor Project, the largest infrastructure project in regional history; a trained educated labor force; multiple economic development partners; multiple mental health services; multi-season outdoor recreation opportunities; and major redevelopment activities.

The themes related to threats include protecting the Rock Island Arsenal from job losses; the need for improvements and completion of numerous infrastructure projects; various issues that affect fiscal matters and funding, including taxes, tariffs, and wages; the need for diverse housing throughout the region; workforce attraction and retention; the need for large scale site ready industrial parks; flooding

CEDS, Continued on Page 2

CEDS (continued)

impacts and extreme weather; and funding for commercial district/downtown revitalization. The economic development projects listed in the plan were collected from partners and member governments and are used to report progress toward goals.

Upper Mississippi River Navigation Program

Colonel Steve Sattinger, P.E. Commander and District Engineer, Rock Island District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided the Commission with an overview of the activities of the Rock Island District. Their area of responsibility is over more than 73,000 sq. miles in portions of Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Missouri and portions of the Mississippi, Illinois, Des Moines, Iowa-Cedar, and Rock River basins. He stated that in 1866 Rock Island District opened its first office in Keokuk, Iowa, and in the 1930s, the District moved to Clock Tower Building to maintain the 9-foot channel and eventually maintain the tributary rivers.

The mission of the Rock Island District's mission is to deliver vital engineering and water resource solutions in collaboration with partners to secure the nation, reduce disaster risk and enhance quality of life, providing value to the region and nation. The vision of the District is to be a premier public service and an engineering organization of trusted, talented professionals delivering innovative and sustainable solutions to the region and the nation. Their business lines include:

- Navigation
- Flood risk management
- Environmental stewardship
- Emergency preparation, response, and recovery
- Recreation
- Support to military programs

Navigation System The navigation system includes 18 Lock & Dam Sites with 582 miles of navigation channel. There is an annual \$1 billion dollar cost benefit of the system. The Rock Island District operates and maintains nearly half the lock and dam sites in the Upper Mississippi River System, which includes the Illinois Waterway. The Mississippi Valley

The CEDS was distributed for review and made public on March 23, 2021, and minor comments were received through the 30-day review regarding economic development related projects as noted in the projects list. The final plan was approved by the Commission at the April 28, 2021 meeting.

Division's backlog of maintenance for navigation is valued at more than \$1 billion, and Rock Island District's portion is nearly 40% of this amount. Maintenance projects are extremely important to sustaining the mission because aging/degrading infrastructure risks the economic value at the local, regional, and national level.

Flood Risk There are 146 levee drainage systems, over 900 miles of levees, and various reservoirs to prevent flood risk with over \$17 billion in flood damages prevented. In addition, Silver Jackets has projects in both Iowa and Illinois and is collaboratively working with federal, state, local, and tribal agencies to reduce flood risk across the Midwest.

Environmental Stewardship There are various Upper Mississippi River System Restoration (UMRS) Projects including 16 in the planning/design, 7 under construction, 56 completed to-date, and 106,000 acres restored to-date with an annual budget of \$33.17 million. One notable project is Brandon Road on the Great Lakes, which is a project involving construction of control options and technologies to prevent upstream transfer of aquatic nuisance species such as Asian carp while minimizing impacts to waterway uses and users.

Emergency Management Emergency management includes flood fighting, which in 2019, 4.2 million standard sandbags, 6,000 large (airlifted) sandbags, 6 miles of HESCO Gabion Baskets, 2 miles of polyethylene sheeting, and 84 portable pumps. The National Flood Fight Materiel Center provides reach-back emergency contracting and direct assistance to all USACE Districts to facilitate expeditious delivery of critical flood fight resources before, during, and after a flood event. The PL 84-99 Program helps state and local government prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

River, Continued on Page 4



River (continued)

Recreation The recreation business includes 1850 campsites, 97 recreation sites, 38 boat ramps, 10 swimming beaches, and 5 visitor centers with the project being located on the Mississippi River, Illinois Waterway, Coralville Lake, Saylorville Lake, and Lake Red Rock. The support to military includes overseas contingency operations contracting support for the 88th Regional Support Command, partnering w/active duty brigades, Reserve & ROTC Units, and support to Wounded Warriors.

Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability

Program (NESP) NESP is important to the nation because it provides for global market competition, infrastructure investment, protection and restoration of the environment, and job creation. It includes reliable, resilient infrastructure for faster locking times and safer operations with seven new 1,200-foot lock chambers at Peoria and LaGrange in the Illinois

Waterway and Locks 20, 21, 22, 24, and 25 on the Mississippi, and mooring cells. NESP increases capacity by 50% at the seven highest-use locks on the UMRS. The NESP ecosystem restoration will consist of over 200 projects that restore the natural river structure and function and maximize environmental benefits of the 2.7-million-acre ecosystem. With significant stakeholder and Congressional support, NESP is awaiting a Construction New Start designation.

In closing, Colonel Sattinger referenced the Inland Navigation Design Center Mandatory Center of Expertise (INDC-MCX), which is an organization that provides engineering, design, analysis, and review services for studies, new locks, new navigation dams, major rehabilitation of existing inland navigation locks and dams, and significant inland navigation lock and dam Operations & Maintenance (O&M) projects.



Rock Island Arsenal Island Aerial View

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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