



The Planning Process

In Section 3: Connecting Nevada Planning Process,
Keeping it Going

The Connecting Nevada Plan is really about the process of planning, and how we engage stakeholders in the process and move ideas forward.



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Connecting Nevada Implementation Plan

Overview

The Connecting Nevada Plan (Plan) serves as the long-range transportation plan for the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) in partnership with stakeholders across the state. The Plan looks at a 50-year time horizon. The Plan is not required by any federal or state regulation but instead is a policy decision by NDOT. The Plan allows transportation leaders across the state to consider future transportation projects without the constraints of the existing regulated planning processes. The Plan creates the opportunity to discuss statewide transportation challenges and solutions on an ongoing basis with statewide stakeholders. It provides a forum for discussion of transportation as an enhancement to quality of life, economics, and community connection. It is not subject to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) oversight or audit but seeks to have FHWA and other U.S. DOT administrative involvement in an advisory capacity. The Plan is multimodal in scope and is committed to the goal of sustainable growth and improvements in livability in the State of Nevada.

In order to implement the Plan and continue the process, it is important to understand the current statewide planning processes, and how the structure and objectives of the Connecting Nevada Plan differ from current processes. The implementation must consider how Connecting Nevada might interface within those processes and what resources are necessary to maintain the Plan.

Current Planning Processes and Requirements

Currently the Department's project development process follows well established federal guidelines governed by Federal Regulation 23CFR450. Subpart B of the regulation covers Statewide Transportation Planning and states that: The purpose of this subpart is to implement 23 U.S.C. 135, which requires each State to:

Carry out a continuing, comprehensive, and intermodal statewide transportation planning process, including the development of a statewide transportation plan and transportation improvement program, that facilitates the efficient, economic movement of people and goods in all areas of the State, including those areas subject to the requirements of 23 U.S.C. 134.

In addition, Nevada Revised Statute 408.203 provides guidance on the Department's reporting responsibilities to the Nevada State Legislature. NRS 408.203 details the duties of Director regarding reports to Legislature and states that, The Director shall:

1. *Compile a comprehensive report outlining the requirements for the construction and maintenance of highways for the next 10 years, including anticipated revenues and expenditures of the Department, and submit it to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau for transmittal to the Chairs of the Senate and Assembly Standing Committees on Transportation.*
2. *Compile a comprehensive report of the requirements for the construction and maintenance of highways for the next 3 years, including anticipated revenues and expenditures of the Department, no later than October 1 of each even-numbered year, and submit it to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau for transmittal to the Chairs of the Senate and Assembly Standing Committees on Transportation.*
3. *Report to the Legislature by February 1 of odd-numbered years the progress being made in the Department's 12-year plan for the resurfacing of state highways. The report must include an accounting of revenues and expenditures in the preceding 2 fiscal years, a list of the projects which have been completed, including mileage and cost, and an estimate of the adequacy of projected revenues for timely completion of the plan.*

Nevada Revised Statutes Section 408.203

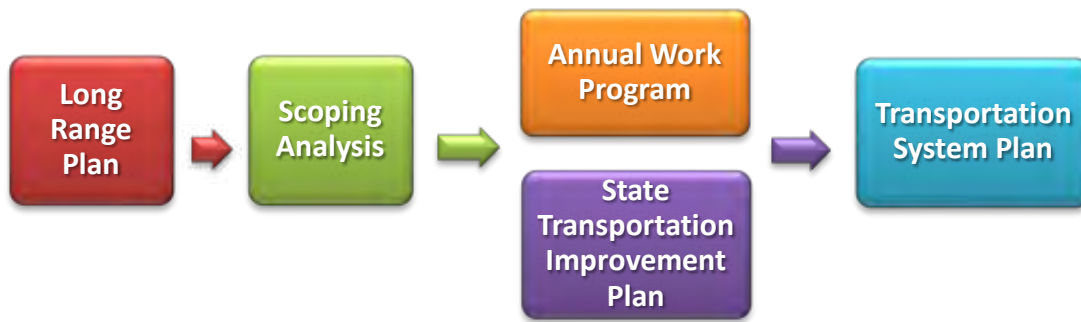
There are two basic elements of the planning process, the Long Range Plan and the Short Range Plan. Per regulations, the short range plan or STIP must be 4 to 5 years in length and is required to be fiscally constrained. In addition, the plan must demonstrate air quality conformity for non-attainment areas. The STIP only deals with roadways that are on the federal eligible functional classification system. Also the MPO's TIPs are adopted or rejected in whole and cannot be accepted on a piecemeal basis.

The state's Long Range Plan must cover at least 10 years, and is also required to be fiscally constrained. The local urbanized areas are governed by similar requirements under these same regulations.

MPO Long Range Plans are required to be fiscally constrained, and cover a period of 20 years. The projects identified in the STIP and MPO Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) must be identical.

Nevada Revised Statute requires NDOT to produce an annual work program as well as the short and long range plans mentioned above. The basic flow of the planning process (Figure 29) is to have projects needed within the next 20 years, identified by NDOT or other stakeholders incorporated into the State Long Range Plan, the projects then undergo a Scoping Analysis, as well as approvals by local MPO's if necessary, and then flow into the 4-year STIP. NDOT incorporates the MPO long range plan into the TSP.

Figure 29. Current NDOT State Planning Process



Plan Structure

The Connecting Nevada Plan establishes broad based goals for long term transportation development in Nevada and includes specific projects that should be considered as the state continues to grow. The Plan includes projects that are also included in the State Long Range Plans, and the STIP. In addition, the Plan includes projects that have been offered by Stakeholders as future needs. The project list includes projects at various stages of development, some that have already been analyzed in detail and others that are new “ideas” and are in the beginning stages of development. The Plan is structured to be inclusive and not to limit the number of potential beneficial transportation improvements. The Plan is meant to enhance connections between communities and foster discussion among stakeholders. The Plan utilizes the State 10 year plan and the MPO’s 20 year plans and discusses needs that can connect the plans together. The Plan is multimodal and considers the future modes that may be necessary to meet the goals of the Plan. Finally tools that have been created as part of the Plan can be utilized by NDOT and stakeholders to complete high-level evaluation of the various connections and scenarios.

Objective of the Implementation Process

NDOT desires to ensure that the Connecting Nevada Plan is dynamic and is updated on a regular basis. Over time it is envisioned that new projects suggested by stakeholders through the Plan outreach efforts and needs analysis will flow down into the State Long Range Plan (LRP). A project may also eventually flow down into the STIP and the MPOs’ TIPs. In addition, the Plan must foster and enhance communication among stakeholders to consider issues and concerns and respond to changes as necessary to meet the transportation needs of the state.

It is also important that the Connecting Nevada Plan be consistent with current stakeholder outreach efforts for the STIP and LRP update process. NDOT’s current efforts are an ongoing proactive outreach effort. Each federal fiscal year the Department

reaches out to the four state MPO's, all counties and the recognized Native American Communities.

The start of this outreach process includes workshops in January and February that are held to educate the public and agencies about programs that provide funding for transportation improvement projects and to assist participants in completing applications for these programs. Following the workshops NDOT conducts County consultation (tours) with each county and meets with their representatives to discuss available funds and desired projects. Prior to these tours the STIP and AWP is delivered to all participants to allow the opportunity for review and comment on the work proposed in their area.

All consultation meetings are agendaized and open to the public in accordance with the State of Nevada's Open Meeting Law (NRS Chapter 241). NDOT staff also meet with Nevada's Congressional Delegation to obtain input on the desires of the State's national elected officials. The Department in cooperation with the entities establishes the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

As part of the consultation process, NDOT presents the draft document to the Statewide Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (STTAC). The STTAC serves as an advisory board to NDOT's Director and the State Transportation Board, and members include representatives of federal, local, tribal and state agencies/entities, along with interest groups such as motor carriers, and aviation, transit and bicycle interests.

A notice is published in local newspapers statewide, announcing a draft document is available for public comment. The STIP is a public process and includes placing copies of the STIP and the Annual Work Program at various libraries throughout the State. In addition NDOT presents the documents in open meetings to the governing boards of each entity.

Approved projects then proceed through extensive design, environmental and other reviews before being constructed, depending upon funding. Public meetings are often used within this process to gather further public feedback and to share information with project stakeholders. The Connecting Nevada process is coordinated and consistent with these and other NDOT outreach and planning efforts.

Connecting Nevada Update Process

There are three parts to the updating process that require consideration.

1. Project updates

Each project in the plan must be kept up to date and provide relevant information on where the project is in the implementation process.

2. Stakeholder outreach

The stakeholder outreach activities for requesting new plan input must be continued on appropriate level to maintain good communication between agencies and stakeholders that are key to planning the transportation future in the State.

3. Maintain planning tools

The tools that were developed during the Connecting Nevada Initial Plan Phase must be updated periodically to determine any necessary changes or additional elements that should be considered to maintain their relevant data analysis capabilities. These tools include the Nevada Statewide Travel Demand Model, the Connecting Nevada website and webmap (and the datasets inherent in each of these). The Connecting Nevada Planning Tools are described in more detail in Section 2: Planning Tools.

Project Updates

Each project on the Connecting Nevada Project list will be assigned a project sponsor (either internal or external to NDOT). The sponsor may be the person/entity that originated the project or another person/entity that is willing to sponsor the project. The project sponsor will initially complete a Project Initiation Form (PIF) for the project. The PIF will be similar to the draft PIF being developed by NDOT's Scoping Section or as is being developed by NDOT on a statewide basis. Each year at a set time the Department will contact the project sponsor and request an update to the PIF. The project sponsor will update the PIF and return to NDOT. NDOT will review and comment on the updated PIF as appropriate. Once accepted the revised PIF will be placed in the Planning Portal database (the repository for planning information being developed by NDOT).

At a minimum, every 3 years the Plan project list will be updated, projects can be added or removed from the list at this time.

Projects will be evaluated based on adherence to the Connecting Nevada Plan's five key priorities, as identified through the project's stakeholder involvement.

- Safety
- Economic Development
- Partnership Development
- Improved Access
- Environmental Issues

Project Criteria

Specific criteria that may be considered in evaluating projects relative to each criteria follow.

Safety Evaluation

In order to meet this evaluation criteria the project should improve an unsafe condition, reduce potential for accidents for cars, pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles, improve safety of truck operations, and not adversely affect bicycle or pedestrian movement. Nevada has seen a 41% decrease in roadway fatalities since 2006, due in large part to the “four Es” of engineering, enforcement, education and emergency response that contributes to the reduction in fatalities (see zerofatalitiesnv.com). The Nevada Strategic Highway Safety Plan identifies key areas of focus on the types of roadway improvements being made to improve safety.

Economic Development

The project should encourage economic development through better access to businesses, improve access to jobs, and increase capacity for freight and goods movement or other types of improvements that will enhance the economy of the local area and the state. *The evaluation criteria should encourage discussion of public private partnerships to develop projects.*

Partnership Development

The project should encourage or engage partners such as federal agencies, county, city and business officials to work together to cooperatively develop transportation improvements.

Improved Access

The project adds access to any mode (including vehicular, rail, aviation, transit, pedestrian or bicycle) to improve the transportation system. The project may add a link between roadways, add a safer path for pedestrians and bicycles, remove an existing or projected bottleneck, significantly improve travel time or speed, improve connectivity to regional intermodal facilities or emergency facilities, decrease delay, improve mobility and accessibility for low-income travel markets, promote alternative modes.

Environmental Issues

The project should be evaluated for the impacts on the environment, including habitat connectivity.

Levels of Projects

The Connecting Nevada Plan’s project list includes three different levels of projects:

1. Priority Planned Projects [Projects with NEPA clearance or are currently included in the STIP]
2. Future Needs [Projects that have undergone planning analysis, including planning and environmental linkages]
3. Stakeholder Comments [Projects that have been identified by project stakeholders but have not been subject to any formal analysis]

An optional feature related to project information would be for the database to be web based. Details for each plan element would be linked to a summary table or map graphic. Interested parties could activate a link from the table/map to access the project PIF, or the linkages could be hyperlinks or GIS based. A follow-up activity for Connecting Nevada would be to make the Plan consistent with the departments overall GIS strategy.

Plan Updates Through Stakeholder Outreach

Every 3 years NDOT will update the Connecting Nevada Plan. The exact timing of the request will be determined in cooperation with NDOT's existing Statewide Transportation Technical Advisory Committees (STTAC) committee and staff. It is recommended that the Department time the request to be at a time that does not conflict with the RTP/TIP update process. NDOT will send an e-mail request for participation to:

- Any person/entity that already is listed as a project sponsor
- MPO's within the State of Nevada
- County and City Public Works Departments
- Departments of Aviation
- Railroad operators
- Private/business interests
- Federal agencies (including the FHWA, FTA, FRA, BLM, and others)
- Existing Connecting Nevada stakeholders
- Other persons/entities that the Department wants to include in the process

The Department will evaluate each project based on the Plan's current five key priorities. The Department can then add or reject a project to the plan. One option would be to form a review committee comprised of department staff and outside representatives to review update submissions. This committee would have a similar representation as the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Steering Committee (SC) committees that were developed to guide the initial Connecting Nevada Plan.

Projects could move from the Stakeholder Comment group to the next group through a number of avenues. The project sponsor may secure funding for a planning study that analyses feasibility, costs, needs, etc. This study would then recommend further study or determine the project is not feasible. The sponsor would then update the PIF and the plan may move into a Future Need or be removed if not feasible. Each of the Future Needs must be brought forward by the Sponsor to the next level by completing further study, developing a funding approach, meeting priority status requirements and may be placed in the STIP. This process would follow the normal State and local processes currently in place.

Projects may also be removed from the Connecting Nevada Plan by the Sponsor if the needs change, the project is determined to be infeasible, or does not meet the criteria of the Connecting Nevada Plan. This process would be completed in cooperation and coordination with the the Sponsor and the NDOT Connecting Nevada TAC.

The review committee may also add projects that they believe meet the criteria of the plan, or remove projects that they feel do not meet the criteria. Any changes will be coordinated with project sponsors or stakeholders to provide appropriate outreach.

The premise of Connecting Nevada is to develop an inclusive list of projects and not to exclude projects. Whether the projects advance or not, and the timing is what may differentiate projects ultimately. This list does not guarantee that projects will be constructed; the list is a place to start the discussion.

Table 13 summarizes the resources and effort necessary to sustain Connecting Nevada.

Table 13. Connecting Nevada Update Process Resources

Update Element	Personnel Resource Estimate			Other Resources
	Duration	Low	High	
Yearly Updates				
Project Update	intermittent during the year	0.1 FTE (200 hours)	0.1 FTE (200 hours)	Excel, Word
Stakeholder Involvement	attend periodic board and committee meetings	0.1 FTE (200 hours)	0.2 FTE (400 hours)	PowerPoint presentation, travel for meetings across state
	Yearly update total	0.2 FTE (400 hours)	0.3 FTE (600 hours)	
3-year update				
Call for project update	six weeks	.1 FTE (200 hours)	.1 FTE (200 hours)	Excel, e-mail, mailings
Update manager		.3 FTE (700 hours)	.3 FTE (700 hours)	
Prepare update Plan	four to six months	3 FTE (2,000 hours)	3 FTE (3,000 hours)	Graphics, needs analysis, travel demand modeling, update maps
Stakeholder involvement	six to eight meetings across state and a TAC/SC group	2 FTE (800 hours)	4 FTE (1,600 hours)	Meeting boards, handouts, press releases, travel budget
Update Travel Demand Model	two months	2 FTE (600 hours)	2 FTE (600 hours)	Computer time and software expense
Update GIS Maps	two months	2 FTE (400 hours)	2 FTE (400 hours)	GIS computer and software expense, updates for data
	3-year update total	2.5 FTE (5,100 hours)	3.5 FTE (7,100 hours)	

In addition to updating the project list, stakeholders would be requested to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Connecting Nevada Plan. Items that would be used as a basis for evaluating the Plan include:

- Are the five key priorities that were established in the initial Connecting Nevada Plan still appropriate?
- Are there any major changes such as additional MPO's or other jurisdictional elements?
- Any new regulations/ statutes that affect the plan and the priorities?
- Is the stakeholder involvement providing good communication and cooperation among the entities across the state?
- How is the Plan working, is it beneficial to the state's overall transportation planning process?

Developing a simple questionnaire for stakeholders to consider during the outreach process will allow NDOT to maintain and enhance the Connecting Nevada Plan over time so that it remains an integral part of the transportation planning process in Nevada. Sample questions to consider are as follows:

- Is the outreach process effectively allowing a reasonable vision of future transportation needs?
- Is there increased cooperation and communication statewide in the transportation planning process?
- Do projects that are identified have a path to advance over time?
- Does the plan track project progress effectively?
- Is the information within the Planning Tools and website up to date and useful to stakeholders?
- Are there any improvements to process or tools that need to take place over next update cycle?
- Is the Statewide Model an effective tool for scenario planning and other big picture needs analysis efforts?

Tools Update

The study website will be reviewed and updated to reflect changes and updates as they occur.

As part of the Connecting Nevada Plan tools such as the Travel Demand Model, the web based mapping and the PEL Document were prepared for use by NDOT and stakeholders. As part of the periodic updating process, NDOT and stakeholders will evaluate the effectiveness of these tools and make recommendations for any improvements or refinements.

Travel Demand Model

In addition, on a less frequent basis, but at least every 3 years (consistent with the Plan update), the Travel Demand Model should be evaluated for compatible socioeconomic information, population and traffic analysis zones to maintain a relevant and accurate

model. This effort will need to reach out to the MPO's statewide and also neighboring states, to incorporate their forecasts.

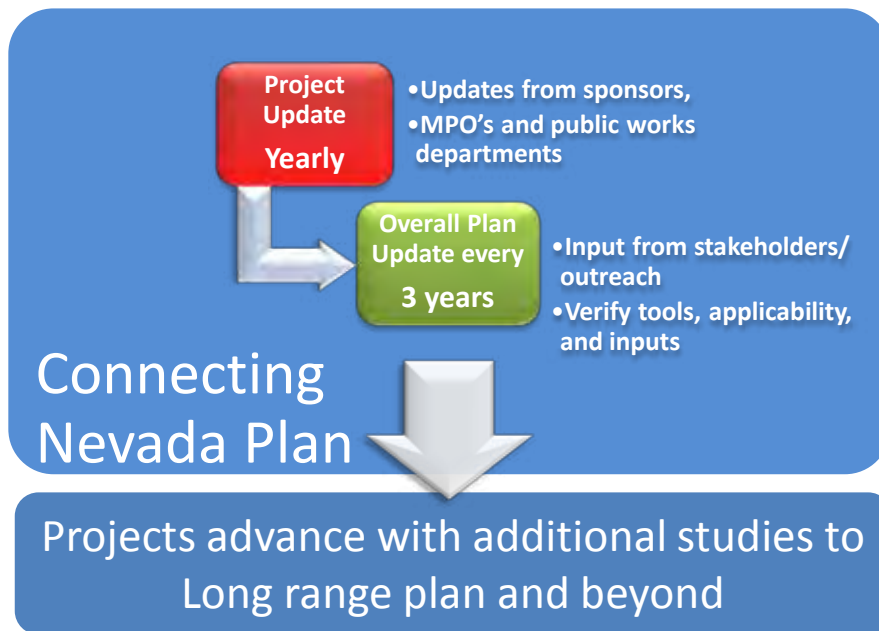
Planning and Environmental Linkages

Environmental regulations and environmental issues are continually being refined and updated. Therefore, the PEL document should be updated for any changes in regulations and processes for environmental work as time passes. Need for update would be reviewed every 3 years to determine any required changes to the PEL document and these would be updated as part of the update of the Plan. In addition, comments from stakeholders as they use the tools and will be reviewed and improvements made in response to these comments.

Webmap

The webmaps, in particular those related to traffic volumes, and various habitat or other sensitive areas should be updated to reflect current information. The GIS group will need to update the information on a periodic basis. It is recommended that every 3 years these maps be reviewed and updated to show current information.

Figure 30. Connecting Nevada Process and Interface with Current State Planning Process



Department Resource/Processes Assessment

The current Connecting Nevada Plan effort is being administered by the Transportation/Multimodal Planning Section as a planning study. It has an assigned NDOT Project Manager, who is overseeing a consultant team that is preparing the Plan on NDOT's behalf. The Department's current processes do not include provisions for updating the Plan on an ongoing basis. Currently, no personnel are assigned or committees in place for updating the Connecting Nevada Plan. Therefore as part of this implementation plan, a gap assessment related to resources and processes has been completed as well as recommendations for appropriate resources and process improvements to consider in order to implement the Connecting Nevada Plan over time.

Gap Analysis

In order to update the Connecting Nevada Plan project list on an annual basis and to update the Plan itself on a 3-year basis the Department will need to dedicate personnel resources, most likely on a part time basis. A single individual would be needed as the Connecting Nevada Plan update manager. In addition a technical advisory committee will need to be assembled. It was initially imagined that the Steering Committee, assembled to provide NDOT guidance for Connecting Nevada Phase II, would provide ongoing guidance to Connecting Nevada as a technical advisory committee (refer to Appendix A for a listing of Connecting Nevada Phase II Steering Committee members). The committee could be made up of Department and outside agency personnel. They would review the overall plan, comment and guide the process in a similar manner to the Phase II Process.

The initial plan includes a webmap and data layers, however the project list is in a spreadsheet database. In the future NDOT may wish to add projects to the webmap and if the plan is placed into a GIS based database then additional Information Technology support will be needed to support the initial plan conversion and subsequent plan update efforts.

At times when the plan requires a major update the Department may need to dedicate additional financial and personnel resources for a specific time frame. There is also the possibility that the department could supplement their own personnel resources and use consultant help for all or part of a major update, including the stakeholder outreach which was an extensive effort during Connecting Nevada Phase II.

In addition to the actual Connecting Nevada Plan the current project deliverable includes NDOT's first Statewide Travel Demand Forecast Model. The initial model development has been the responsibility of the consultant team however the maintenance and update of the model will be the Department's responsibility. The Department may need to dedicate specific personnel resources for this effort. There may also be the need to purchase software updates for TransCad, the modeling program.

The stakeholder involvement needs to be continued on a regular basis both for project updates and for the more significant plan update effort. This stakeholder involvement will require maintenance of the stakeholder and sponsor database, presentations at various board and committee meetings as well as consideration of a separate public meeting series similar to that done for the Initial Plan when a major update occurs. The stakeholder outreach may be accomplished by current NDOT staff or with staff supplemented with consultants. Resources for stakeholder involvement would include travel time, display boards and presentation materials, video materials, handouts and other meeting materials and news release publications.

Recommendations

The Connecting Nevada goal of expanding the Department's planning horizon from 20 years to over 50 years is a worthwhile effort and should have specific resources dedicated to the effort. It is recommended to:

- Assign a specific NDOT Update Manager for Connecting Nevada. The position can be part time however it will require significant effort. The Update Manager needs to have the ability to dedicate the appropriate amount of time to manage the maintenance and update of the Connecting Nevada Plan.
- Complete yearly project updates and 3-year Plan updates to maintain the Plan as a dynamic process and vision for the state transportation system in the future.
- Establish an Advisory Committee to review the annual Connecting Nevada project updates and the 3-year overall plan update. The Advisory Committee could be composed of the same members as the current project Technical Advisory and Steering Committees.
- Convert the Connecting Nevada project database to a GIS database and included in the Department's overall GIS database effort. Also, the webmap tools should be integrated into the Departments GIS system and maintained by the GIS group at NDOT.
- Apply the Statewide Travel Demand Forecast model to assist in evaluating regionally significant projects during the Connecting Nevada annual project and 3-year plan update process.
- Review every 3 years to ensure that the Plan is compliant with new federal regulations.
- Develop website process and update procedures to keep the site up to date and relevant.
- Continue to identify public outreach opportunities (for example, speaking engagements, op-ed pieces in media]
- Review other documents associated with project (for example Transit Propensity) to ensure continuing relevancy.
- Further classify projects as short-, medium-, or long-range in the Connecting Nevada Plan List of Projects. (Projects identified as such would still need to move through the appropriate NDOT process for advancement)

A successful implementation of Connecting Nevada will result in an expanded process that creates a 50-year vision for the State's transportation infrastructure needs.