

1.0 Introduction

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1.1 Regional Transportation Plan

The greater Nashville area is growing fast; some say too fast, while others work hard to attract more jobs and investment. What most agree on is that traffic congestion is getting worse. More people, more vehicles, and more construction make it a difficult journey for even the most experienced commuter. Today, Nashville and its surrounding counties is home to 1.8 million people who travel on average 33 miles and 48 minutes per day over 1,600 bridges and more than 13,000 miles of roadway. Between now and 2045, the region is projected to see an additional one million residents. That 76 percent increase in population is expected to translate into 86 percent more volume on area roadways, 26 percent slower travel speeds, and 162 percent increase in the share of miles traveled in congested conditions.

Finding the right solutions is critical to quality of life and continued economic prosperity. But what are the right solutions? What is the right mix of investments that will address the challenges that many Middle Tennesseans face with respect to transportation? Transportation planning is a complex process that involves many organizations charged with making coordinated decisions that will have a lasting impact on quality of life in Middle Tennessee.

Shared Priorities among TDOT, Cities, Counties, and Transit Agencies

Prepared by the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC), the Regional Transportation Plan (Plan or RTP) spans the next quarter century and represents the collective transportation goals of municipal and county governments, public transit agencies, county highway departments, and the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT). Its purpose is to identify how those partners intend to improve mobility across Davidson, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson counties with recurring federal grants. In addition, the Plan also represents the region's top priorities for state funding as the Tennessee Governor and TDOT prepare the annual work programs for the Tennessee General Assembly. Projects identified in this Plan were proposed by city and county governments, public transit agencies, and TDOT in response to a call-for-projects issued by GNRC in 2019.

A Federally Required Document

Since the 1960s, federal law has required that all metropolitan regions across the United States develop a regional transportation plan in order to maintain eligibility for federal programs. These plans are updated every four or five years to account for shifts in national policy as well as local community issues and concerns, growth and development patterns, travel behaviors, advancements in technologies, and fluctuations in funding availability.

This Plan serves to satisfy federal regulations outlined in Title 23, Part 450 of the Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR 450) and ensures that TDOT, transit agencies, and local governments are eligible to use federal transportation funds to construct or implement improvements to roadways and transit routes.

Driven by Broader Community Goals

The Plan is guided by a policy framework adopted by local and regional leaders that recognizes their role in helping Middle Tennessee achieve a broader set of community goals and objectives.

- **Livability** - Enhance quality of life by prioritizing initiatives that increase opportunities for housing, learning, employment, recreation, and civic involvement while maintaining affordability.
- **Prosperity** - Contribute to the region's economic productivity by prioritizing solutions that connect workforce with jobs, improve access to markets, and leverage additional investment.
- **Sustainability** - Encourage growth without sacrificing the health, natural or historical assets, or financial stability of this or future generations.
- **Diversity** - Find solutions that balance the variety of perspectives across Middle Tennessee and ensure local context, community character, and cultural identity are respected in the process.

Fiscal Constraints and Continued Funding Shortfalls

The RTP includes a balanced budget. It presents a list of transportation improvements that can be constructed or implemented over the next 25 years with more than \$10 billion in anticipated funding, based on a 2 percent annual increase in current appropriations. While there are more than 100 individual projects scheduled for implementation throughout the life of the Plan, there are another 200 projects submitted by local jurisdictions that cannot be implemented at current levels of funding during the next quarter century. In order to speed up project delivery and to address more of our transportation challenges, legislators at all levels of government should consider their options to plug the gap between revenue and costs.

Over recent years, the call for Congress to address the nation's transportation funding crisis has continued to grow. The current funding issues are due in part to the declining purchasing power of the federal gas tax, which has not been increased since 1993. Declining gas tax revenues and buying power means fewer projects, slower progress, and less benefit to communities and economies—thus forcing local governments to find other means to meet funding needs.

Ongoing Impacts of COVID-19

The COVID-19 public health crisis has led to dramatic changes in travel decisions and traffic patterns as a result of widespread telecommuting, increased demand for home delivery services, and a surge in walking and bicycling. The pandemic has caused financial strain on households, businesses, and public agencies, but it also has spurred new ideas and innovation. While the long-term impacts of COVID-19 are not yet known, transportation planners are paying close attention to the economic rebound and shifts in travel behavior that may lead to new trends. Community leaders must be willing to adapt to a future shaped by the long-term impacts of the global pandemic.

Given the ongoing uncertainty associated with the pandemic, it is not yet clear which emerging trends are likely to remain into the future. Although the adoption of this RTP helps ensure continued eligibility for federal transportation grants, **GNRC recommends that transportation planning partners reconvene with community leaders in the coming year to reassess transportation needs and strategies for a post-pandemic world.**

1.2 Federal Requirements

Since the 1960s, federal law has required local and state officials to work together to make collaborative decisions for the use of federal transportation funds within America's metropolitan areas through a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process. This process requires coordination among the Tennessee Governor, local elected officials of municipal and county governments, and transportation agencies that are responsible for maintaining and improving area roadways and public transit systems.

This federal requirement for urban or metropolitan transportation planning emerged, in part, as a response to the controversies stemming from the construction of the U.S. Interstate Highway System and the broader issue of race and urban renewal across the nation's larger cities. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962, passed by Congress during the John F. Kennedy administration, created the first federal requirement for urban transportation planning.

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act (ISTEA) of 1991, and subsequent acts, strengthened the metropolitan planning process, further empowered local decision-making, increased requirements for public and stakeholder involvement, and encouraged movement away from a highway construction-emphasis toward a more integrated multi-modal transportation system to improve efficiency, mobility, and access.

Federal legislation, such as the current law created through the *Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act* of 2015 (FAST Act), is codified in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and published in the Federal Register by executive departments and agencies of the federal government. Title 23 of the United States Code (U.S.C.) contains rules and regulations for the regional transportation planning carried out by GNRC on behalf of the Nashville Area MPO (23 CFR Part 450, subpart C) with additional provisions provided in Title 49.

Figure 1-1 Major Milestones in Federal Transportation Legislation (Selected)

Landmark Legislation	U.S. President	Key Initiative(s)	Enacted
Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 (Bankhead-Shackelford Act)	Woodrow Wilson	First federal act to provide funding to states to improve roadway conditions across the nation.	1916
Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944	Franklin D. Roosevelt	Created a national system of Interstate highways; Expanded federal funding assistance to secondary roads; Established construction and operational standards	1944
Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 (National Interstate and Defense Highways Act)	Dwight D. Eisenhower	Authorized construction of 41,000 miles of Interstate Highway System; Largest public works project in American history at the time; Established the Highway Trust Fund.	1956
Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962	John F. Kennedy	Established the first requirements for a “continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative” transportation planning process in America’s metropolitan areas to address the controversies and dislocation caused by Interstate construction.	1962
Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act of 1991 (ISTEA)	George H.W. Bush	Created a new intermodal approach to transportation and established new requirements for collaborative planning; Provided authority to Metropolitan Planning Organizations to coordinated decisions among state and local governments; Authorized the rails to trails program.	1991
Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)	Bill Clinton	Expanded requirements for regional transportation plans developed by Metropolitan Planning Organizations.	1998
Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)	George W. Bush	Expanded funding opportunities for transit and other multimodal solutions; Provided additional flexibility in the use of federal funding according to state and local priorities.	2005
Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)	Barack Obama	Consolidated the number of federal transportation grant programs by two-thirds; Reformed the environmental review process to speed up projects; Provided more flexibility to toll highways; Established performance-based planning requirements.	2012
Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act	Barack Obama	Expanded the number of planning factors to be considered by Metropolitan Planning Organizations from eight to ten in order to provide increased alignment with the economic goals; Strengthened Buy America requirements; Required USDOT to designate national electric vehicle charging corridors.	2015

Metropolitan Planning Requirements

In carrying out the federal urban transportation planning process, federal law prescribes the designation of a formal Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to manage transportation planning activities. An MPO is the organization of policymakers collectively empowered to facilitate the programming of federal grants to improve transportation within the respective region. MPOs are required to represent localities in all urbanized areas (UZAs) with populations over 50,000, as determined by the U.S. Census. MPOs are designated by agreement between the governor and local governments that together represent at least 75 percent of the affected population (including

the largest incorporated city, based on population) or in accordance with procedures established by applicable state or local law.

There are more than 300 designated MPOs in the United States with 11 within the State of Tennessee. Each is responsible for the following activities in their respective metropolitan planning areas:

- Monitor the conditions of the existing transportation network;
- Identify existing capacity or safety problems through detailed planning studies to develop candidate transportation improvements;
- Forecast future population and employment growth for the region;
- Evaluate the effects that future land use plans will have on transportation infrastructure within major growth corridors throughout the region;
- Develop alternative growth scenarios to evaluate the affects that land use and transportation choices made today will have on the region's future;
- Estimate the impact that an expanding transportation system will have on air quality;
- Develop a financial plan that identifies the costs and revenues associated with the continued operation and maintenance, and future expansion of the region's transportation system;
- Work with the public and stakeholders to determine the region's priorities for improving the transportation system with the anticipated revenue; and
- Track progress through performance-based planning.

Federal regulations require that the FHWA and FTA of the U.S. DOT jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process carried out by MPOs in areas with an urbanized area population of 200,000 or more people, no less than every four years. The FHWA and FTA last certified the region's metropolitan planning process in August 2018.

Major Planning Products

Metropolitan Planning Organizations are required to produce a Regional Transportation Plan (also known as a metropolitan transportation plan or long-range transportation plan), a Transportation Improvement Program, and a Unified Planning Work Program. In addition, federal law requires a locally adopted Public Participation Plan be in place to communicate to members of the public and interested stakeholders the opportunities for involvement in the planning process.

- **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP):** a long-range multimodal strategy and capital improvement program developed to guide the effective investment of public funds in transportation facilities to help manage congestion, increase regional mobility options, and conform to national air quality standards. The RTP is updated every five years and may be amended as a result of changes in anticipated federal, state, and local funding; as well as major investment studies, congestion management systems plans, interstate interchange justification studies, and environmental impact studies.
- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):** a four-year work program that lists all regionally-significant and federally funded transportation projects and services in the metropolitan planning area. This includes highway and street projects, public transit projects, as well as bicycle and pedestrian projects that are implemented by TDOT or local governments, or transit agencies. All projects included in the TIP must be consistent with, or selected from, the adopted regional transportation plan. Additionally, the TIP must be fiscally constrained by federal appropriations or estimated revenues.
- **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP):** updated every one or two years, the UPWP provides citizens and stakeholders the necessary transparency to understand how federal transportation planning funds are being used by the MPO, local governments, transit agencies, and TDOT in order to meet federal metropolitan planning requirements. The UPWP is developed by MPO staff in consultation with partner agencies and input from local citizens and stakeholders. It may be amended to account for changes in funding or project needs.

- **Public Participation Plan (PPP):** provides the general public and interested parties with an overview of the public involvement process for the transportation planning program. This includes information about the strategies deployed to engage the public and stakeholders, and the specific timelines and requirements for public comment during the development and adoption of transportation plans and programs.

Regional Transportation Plan Requirements

The federal requirements for the development of a “Metropolitan Transportation Plan” are listed in Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations Section 450.324 (23 CFR 450.324). GNRC uses the terms “Regional Transportation Plan” to refer synonymously to the “Metropolitan Transportation Plan.” Some metropolitan areas refer to their plan as the “Long Range Transportation Plan.”

Figure 1-2 List of Transportation Plan Requirements

Requirement	Description
Effective Date	The effective date of the Plan shall be its date of adoption by the Transportation Policy Board.
Periodic Update	The Plan shall be updated every 5 years to confirm validity and consistency with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends and to extend the forecast period to at least a 20-year planning horizon.
State and Federal Copies	Though approval from the state and Federal government is not necessary, copies shall be submitted for information purposes to the Governor and the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.
Online Access	The Plan shall be made available for public review in electronically accessible format and means on the Internet.
Data & Assumptions	GNRC, TDOT, and public transit agencies shall validate data used in preparing other plans for use in the development of the Plan; GNRC shall base the Plan on the latest available estimates and assumptions for population, land use, travel, employment, congestion, and economic activity.
Interagency Consultation	GNRC shall consult with State and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation in the development of the Plan.
Community & Stakeholder Involvement	Members of the public, affected agencies, transportation related organizations, and other interested parties must be provided reasonable opportunity to comment on the Plan according to the adopted Public Participation Plan.
Highway and Transit Safety Planning	The Plan should integrate the priorities, goals, countermeasures, strategies, or projects for the metropolitan area contained in the Highway Safety Improvement Program, the State Highway Strategic Plan, and the safety plans of public transit agencies.
Transportation Demand	The Plan shall include current and projected transportation demand of persons and goods in the metropolitan planning area over the period of the transportation plan.
Existing and Proposed Facilities	The Plan shall include an overview of the existing and proposed transportation facilities that should function as an integrated transportation system, giving emphasis to the facilities that serve important national and regional functions.
Performance Measures and Targets	The Plan shall include a description of the measures and targets used in assessing the performance of the transportation system in accordance with 450.306(d).
System Performance Report	The Plan shall evaluate the condition and performance of the transportation system with respect to the targets described in 450.306(d) including progress achieved in comparison to previous reports.
Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities	The Plan shall include walkway and bicycle transportation facilities in accordance with 23 USC 217(g).
Operational & Management Strategies	The Plan shall include strategies to improve the performance of existing transportation facilities to relieve vehicular congestion and maximize the safety and mobility of people and goods.

Congestion Management Process	The Plan shall consider the results of the region’s congestion management process.
Assessment of Capital Investment	The Plan shall assess strategies to preserve the existing and projected future transportation infrastructure, provide for multimodal capacity increases, and reduce the vulnerability of the existing transportation infrastructure to natural disasters.
Transportation and Transit Enhancement Activities	The Plan shall consider the role that intercity buses, public transit, and other transportation alternatives may play in achieving various goals.
Project Design/Scope	The Plan shall provide design concepts and project scope descriptions sufficient enough to develop cost estimates.
Environmental Mitigation	The Plan shall consult with applicable agencies to include a discussion of the potential environmental mitigation activities and areas with potential to be affected.
Financial Plan	The Plan must include a financial plan that includes system-level estimates of costs and revenue that are reasonably expected to be available and recommendations for any additional financing strategies. Cost estimates must use an inflation rate to reflect “year of expenditure dollars” based on reasonable financial principles.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

The section of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in programs that receive federal financial assistance, including transportation projects (42 U.S. Code §2000d).

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, State and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications. Title II of Act requires all public agencies – regardless of size – to ensure that their services, programs and activities are accessible to persons with disabilities. Compliance includes conducting a self-evaluation of building facilities, rights-of-way facilities and communications to identify any accessibility obstacles or issues that need to be addressed. In addition, public entities that employ 50 or more persons are required to:

- Designate an ADA Coordinator,
- Establish a grievance procedure to allow for prompt resolution of accessibility concerns,
- Establish a transition plan for taking the steps necessary to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and
- Monitor implementation of the transition plan, and update the plan periodically as needed.

Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990

Federal law passed in 1970 that prescribes the national air pollution control program. The 1990 Clean Air Act amendments are the most far-reaching revisions of the original law. The Clean Air Act is administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Act requires the EPA to set limits on how much of a particular pollutant can be in the air anywhere in the United States by establishing National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). EPA sets these standards then designates areas as either in attainment of the NAAQS or as nonattainment of the NAAQS. Since 2009, the Nashville metropolitan area has been designated as attainment for the 1997 8-hr. ozone NAAQS and the 2008 8-hr. ozone NAAQS and is not required to produce emissions analysis associated the proposed improvements.

Executive Orders

Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations,” was issued in 1994 to reinforce Title VI. The Executive Order states that “each Federal agency shall

make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”

Issued in 2000, Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency,” requires Federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. The Executive Order also requires that the Federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries.

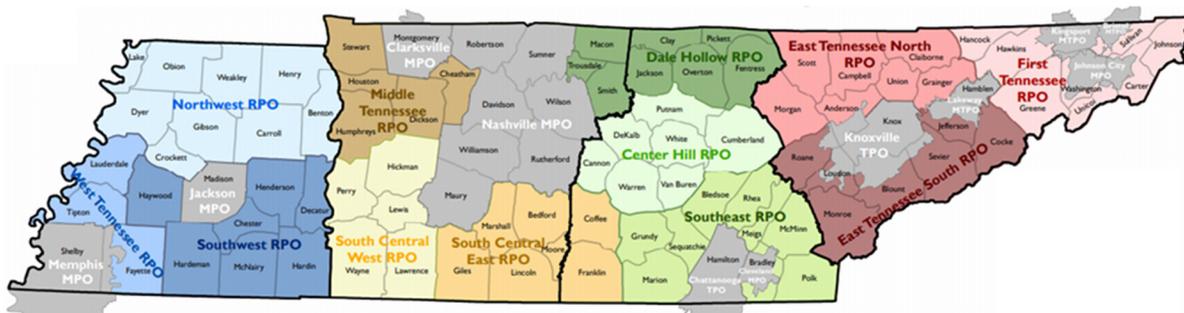
1.3 Role of the GNRC

The Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC or Regional Council) was established in 1965 by the TN General Assembly as not for profit government agency. GNRC is a council of governments empowered by State law to convene local and state leaders for the purposes of planning and programming state and federal investments into a range of social services and public infrastructure across a thirteen county region. The 93-member governing body of the Regional Council includes 13 county mayors, 52 municipal mayors, 2 state legislators, a private citizen from each county representing issues of business and commerce, and a private citizen from each county representing issues of social equity and inclusion.

GNRC carries several designations as it works on behalf of State and local governmental partners. GNRC is designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Community Living and the TN Commission on Aging and Disability as the region’s Area Agency on Aging and Disability (AAAD). The U.S. Dept of Commerce has designated GNRC as a regional Economic Development District (EDD) for the purposes of convening officials to develop the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The U.S. Small Business Administration has designated the Mid-Cumberland Area Development Corporation, GNRC’s non-profit small business lending entity, as a Certified Development Company authorized to administer federal small business loans.

Since October 2017, GNRC has served as the administrator of the MPO program for the seven-county Nashville metropolitan area to include Davidson, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson counties and has coordinated with TDOT and adjacent planning organizations to ensure a seamless planning process across the State of Tennessee.

Figure 1-3 Map of Tennessee Regional Transportation Planning Organizations



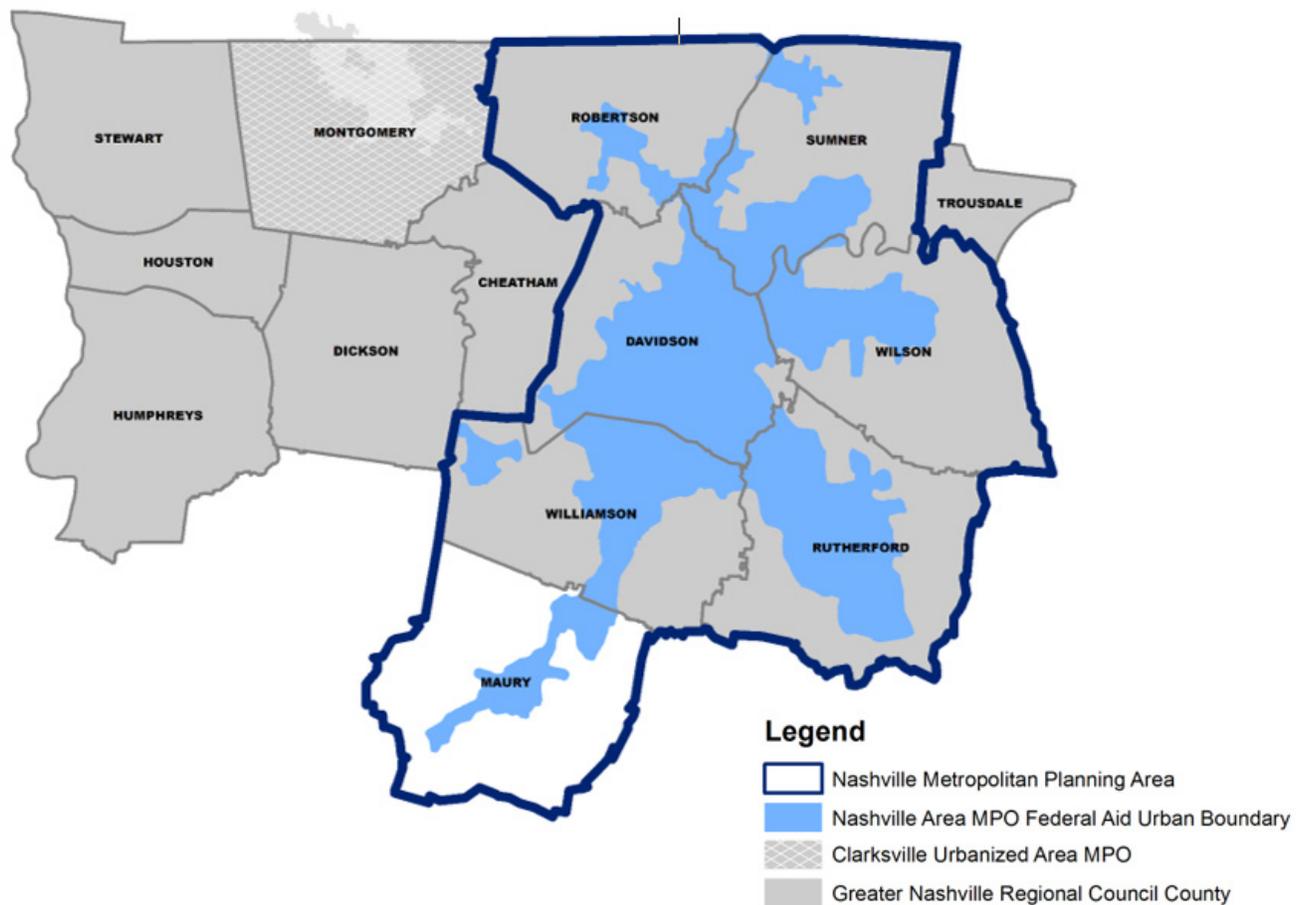
The GNRC region is served by the three additional regional planning organizations. GNRC participates on the technical committees and policy boards these organizations in order to represent a land use and economic development perspective and to assist TDOT with coordination of transportation-related initiatives across Middle Tennessee.

- **Clarksville Urbanized Area MPO** - the federally designated regional planning organization for Montgomery County, Tennessee and the portion of Christian County, Kentucky including and adjacent to the U.S. Census Clarksville Urbanized Area. Staffing and administrative support is provided by the Clarksville/Montgomery County Regional Planning Commission.

- **Middle Tennessee Rural Planning Organization** – the regional transportation planning organization for Stewart, Houston, Humphreys, Dickson, and Cheatham counties. Staffing and administrative support is provided by the Mid-Cumberland Human Resource Agency.
- **Dale Hollow Rural Planning Organization** – the regional transportation planning organization for GNRC-member Trousdale County along with Macon, Smith, Clay, Jackson, Overton, Pickett, and Fentress counties in the Upper Cumberland Development District.

Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) serve a similar function as MPOs for the rural areas of the state. The purpose of an RPO is to involve local officials in multimodal transportation planning, through a structured process, to ensure quality, competence, and fairness in the transportation decision-making process. RPOs consider multimodal transportation needs on a local and regional basis, review long-term needs as well as short-term funding priorities, and make recommendations to TDOT. RPOs are advisory in nature and lack the programming authority of MPOs.

Figure 1-4 Map of GNRC Planning Areas



1.4 Document Organization

The RTP document is divided into six chapters and accompanied by technical appendices. The following describes the contents as provided through chapters two through seven and the appendices. An executive summary and interactive map of projects can be found online at GNRC.org/Transportation.

- **Chapter 2. Regional Collaboration:** Provides an overview of the planning process, public involvement, intergovernmental coordination, and stakeholder engagement.
- **Chapter 3. Issues, Trends, and Forecasts:** Presents projections of future population and employment, land development patterns, and trends in transportation system performance.
- **Chapter 4. Policy Guidance:** Describes key regional issues and concerns, the policy making authority of the Transportation Policy Board, and shared regional goals, objectives, and measures of performance.
- **Chapter 5. Transportation Needs and Funding Priorities:** Presents a forecast of anticipated funding sources and revenue levels to improve the transportation system over the next 25-years, along with a list of projects that represent the region's top priority for the limited funding.
- **Chapter 6. Implementation and Monitoring:** Describes the general project delivery process, how proposed transportation projects are positioned to advance regional goals, and the potential for adverse impacts on vulnerable populations and the natural environment.
- **Technical Appendices:** Provides documentation related to regional planning models, GNRC's call-for-projects and project evaluation process, projects proposed on congested corridors, projects with potential social or environmental impacts, public comments documented during the development of the plan, and key terms and acronyms commonly used in the transportation planning process.