

Georgia's Rural Transportation Planning Tool: Something Old, Something New...

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Abstract

Since the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), excitement about multimodal planning continues to grow. However, evaluation tools to undertake multimodal planning are still in development, with capabilities for full economic analysis, common performance evaluation, and cross-modal prioritization still several years away. Multimodal planning tools are particularly lacking in rural areas where systematic data collection efforts, forecasting capabilities, planning resources, and even non-auto travel options are typically quite limited.

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) recognized this lack of systematic, multimodal planning capabilities outside of MPOs and undertook a research effort to develop a computerized transportation planning tool for rural and small urban areas. This tool has capabilities to evaluate and prioritize systemwide needs within six different modes, evaluate specific enhancements on roadway projects, and increase the quality of information available to decision makers.

Tool development is proceeding in incremental fashion, with the first phase relying on existing GDOT planning procedures, and other sketch planning techniques which use existing data. The second phase will incorporate a GIS interface and planning platform, relational database structure and enhanced data collection to improve project-level planning, allow additional planning routines, and allow enhanced environmental screening. The third phase is planned to incorporate consistent economic evaluation routines to eventually facilitate cross modal prioritization.

This presentation and paper will focus on the capabilities provided by the first phase of model development. A demonstration of analysis capabilities and information output will be provided. The planned approach for subsequent phases of model development, and the capabilities to be provided by model enhancements will be discussed. Finally, resource commitments and departmental modifications which are accompanying tool implementation will be highlighted. It is planned for this presentation to occur in an "informal manner", allowing for an open exchange of ideas and experiences between the presenters and the audience.