
Nashua Regional Planning Commission System Performance Targets

Background

The Federal Highway Administration has established performance measures for the purposes of assessing the Interstate and Non-Interstate Highway System, freight movement on the Interstate System and traffic congestion and on-road mobile source emissions. In the NRPC region there is no Interstate highway mileage. Additionally, as of January 29, 2021, the carbon monoxide Limited Maintenance Plan area designations for the Cities of Manchester and Nashua expired. Therefore, the on road mobile source emissions measure is no longer applicable to the Nashua MPO. System Performance on the non-interstate National Highway System (NHS), as measured by travel time reliability, is the only applicable measure.

Travel Time Reliability Defined

In the past, traffic congestion has been communicated only in terms of simple averages. However, most travelers experience and remember something much different than a simple average throughout a year of commutes. Their travel times vary greatly from day to day, and they remember those few bad days they suffered through unexpected delays.

Travel time reliability measures the extent of this unexpected delay. A formal definition for travel time reliability is the consistency or dependability in travel times, as measured from day-to-day and/or across different times of the day.

Travel time reliability is significant to many transportation system users, whether they are vehicle drivers, transit riders, freight shippers, or even air travelers. Personal and business travelers value reliability because it allows them to make better use of their own time. Shippers and freight carriers require predictable travel times to remain competitive. Reliability is a valuable service that can be provided on privately financed or privately operated highways. Because reliability is so important for transportation system users, transportation planners and decision-makers should consider travel time reliability a key performance measure.

Travel Time Reliability Measures

For the Travel Time Reliability performance measure, there is a uniform measure defined as the ratio of the 80th percentile travel time to the 50th percentile. A ratio not exceeding 1.5 is defined as constituting "reliability". The statewide Level of Travel Time Reliability (LOTTR) of 90% was identified in the Statewide Performance Report in 2017 when targets were set, and a recent data analysis indicates reliability was over 97% in 2022. In the NRPC region, LOTTR approached 99%.

The Nashua MPO Policy Committee adopted the statewide 85% target for travel time reliability at its meeting of September 19, 2018. The Nashua MPO may consider raising targets with the next Metropolitan Plan Update in December 2023.

It should be noted that although Performance Measures and Targets are mandated by federal law for States and MPOs, there is no penalty or mandated action that would be triggered should future data

indicate targets are not being met. Prolonged periods of not meeting targets could result in States being required to target highway funds to remedy deficient performance.

