

3.0 PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The following section identifies the study purpose. The study has a number of objectives, many of which are detailed in the Purpose and Need Statement. Through the objectives obtained in the Purpose and Need Statement the study analyzes how well the Monorail/AGT system will help meet the MTP goals as well as answers specific questions contained in the study's Request for Proposal.

The Purpose and Need Statement outlines the issues that need to be addressed, as well as the logic behind the study. The consultant team worked closely with the project Steering Committee to develop a Purpose and Need Statement. Using the FTA New Start Evaluation criteria as a guideline, the Steering Committee generated a list of motivations behind considering Monorail/AGT in the Wilmington region. Utilizing this list, which centered on such issues as mobility/connectivity and quality of life, and previous transportation studies done in the Wilmington region, the study team created a Purpose and Need Statement, which was subsequently approved by both the project Steering Committee and Management Committee.

3.1 PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT

The purpose of exploring a monorail system in the Wilmington Region is to assess if monorails have the technical feasibility and public support to meet future transportation needs in a way that is cost effective and has minimal adverse impacts on the environment. The Wilmington Region has a growing population and employment base, a strategic location on the Northeast Corridor, a full mix of recreational and retail opportunities, and strong transportation connections to other urban centers. Our Region offers a variety of lifestyles: urban downtowns, suburban residential communities and office parks, and rural lands. Tourists visit from points throughout the eastern seaboard and beyond. The transportation system supporting all of this is truly multi-modal and includes roadways, rail, and fixed route and demand-responsive bus transit. As our Region moves into the future however, it will need a more extensive and better transportation system.

Continued economic growth, an established goal for the region, depends upon a strong, multimodal transportation network. The Region's transportation and planning agencies thoroughly understand this, and have initiated planning to expand all aspects of the system to serve future needs. Expanding the existing bus and rail transit routes, capitalizing on railroad property for passenger service, and using the Region's waterways for ferry service are all parts of the same overall plan for supplying the transportation network needed for the future.

The Region's current and future employment is located in downtown Wilmington and in the various suburban centers. Access to these employment centers varies, with some areas well served by highways, transit, or both; other areas are not so fortunate. Consequently, travel around the Region is not always direct and is frequently congested.

Central to the Region's concerns for the future is growing traffic congestion and poor air quality. Both the major highways and local arterials are experiencing increased traffic forcing motorists to deal with increasing delay. This is one factor that has resulted in the Region falling into an air quality status of "non-attainment." Unless our transportation plans work to improve our air

quality, we risk losing federal transportation funding for any roadway expansion; should this occur, only transit and HOV projects may be constructed with federal funds.

The transportation system supports a lifestyle but does not create it. Land use is an important element in creating a high quality environment in which to live. Growth has given rise to concerns over “suburban sprawl.” Increasingly, communities are being built that are entirely dependent on the automobile. Transit is limited or non-existent and walking and bicycling opportunities are infrequent. An inconvenience to many, lack of transportation choices can limit mobility for the elderly and transit-dependent in our community, who have limited access to a car.

Livable Delaware seeks to reverse this trend by encouraging development in areas where adequate infrastructure can support it. Transit can work cooperatively with this notion by encouraging and supporting development in densities sufficient to make transit operations viable. In turn, the development of transit-oriented development can offer some measure of independence from the automobile.

Automated guideway transit (AGT), including monorails, might play a role in the overall transportation system for the Wilmington Region. Its unique operating characteristics and physical features make it ideal in certain settings and for specific uses. AGT would respond to the principal transportation needs of the Region by:

- Effectively serving central city and suburban employment centers
- Encourage shift from single occupancy vehicles to higher occupancy vehicles
- Mitigating growing highway congestion
- Mitigating deteriorating air quality conditions
- Integrating with other modes of travel and transit services
- Supporting regional economic development
- Improving connectivity between the Region and Wilmington, Philadelphia and other urban centers

A future AGT system should be carefully considered to ensure it:

- Can be constructed and operated in a cost-effective manner
- Meets with general acceptance by the traveling public and the communities through which it passes
- Minimizes adverse impacts on the natural and manmade environment.

3.2 WILMAPCO’S PRINCIPAL CONCERNS

The study will answer the following questions which were specifically asked in the study’s Scope of Work:

- Where and how have monorails been implemented, and with what results? How do these locations compare with the WILMAPCO region?

- Would a monorail or other elevated fixed guideway system be effective in the WILMAPCO region? Effectiveness should be based on public acceptance, demographics, and technical feasibility.
- If deemed effective, what would be the preferred alignment and technology? Also, what issues need to be addressed through further study to advance monorail planning, i.e., what changes in land use, innovative sources of funding, and overcoming of major obstacles would be needed to make a monorail system a success?