

# 1.2 Purpose and Vision

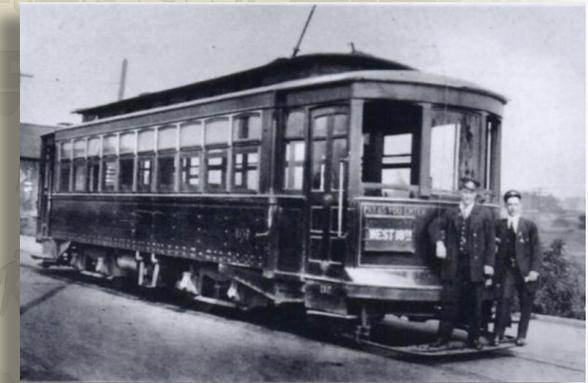
## History of Transportation in Erie County

Erie County is Pennsylvania’s northwestern-most county and the Commonwealth’s only link to the Great Lakes. Erie County was established on March 12, 1800 from part of Allegheny County, which absorbed the lands of the disputed Erie Triangle in 1792. Prior to 1792, the region was claimed by both New York and Pennsylvania. The county is bordered on the north by Lake Erie and the province of Ontario, Canada, on the north-east by Chautauqua County, New York, on the east by Warren County, on the south by Crawford County, and on the west by Ashtabula County, Ohio. Erie County is divided into 38 municipalities. These include two cities, 14 boroughs, and 22 townships.

The unique geographic location of Erie County is responsible for its relatively rapid growth and present status as the largest metropolitan area and dominant economic center in northwestern PA and the tri-state region. The only natural harbor on the south shore of Lake Erie, created by the Presque Isle peninsula, stimulated the growth of the City of Erie and Erie County from the early 1800’s to today. Erie’s location along Lake Erie, and its proximity to Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo has afforded strategic transportation advantages; and is the primary reason that Erie continues to serve as the transportation hub for the region. The county is served by an efficient multi-modal transportation system, including three interstate highways, mass transit facilities, an extensive railroad network, two airports, and a commercial port.

The economy of Erie remains strong and it is known for its resilient industrial heritage and wealth of natural resources. Over the years, Erie County has become a popular tourist destination and is known for its wineries, its world-class Steel Head fishing, and the pristine beaches of Presque Isle.

Historically, transportation systems have influenced the formation of Erie County and contributed to its economic well-being. Being situated on the Great Lakes contributed to the County’s growing as a major economic center in our nation’s formative years. The first roads were built to facilitate travel between military forts of the French in the mid-1700s. The Erie Canal helped move goods from the Hudson River to the west and, when Pennsylvania built the Erie Canal extension, it became a major economic lifeline connecting to the industrial hub of Pittsburgh. Canals lost their appeal with the advent of the railroad, which not only transformed the county but also the country. The most



significant transportation event following the railroad is most likely the Interstate Act of 1956, which led to the construction of I-90 and then I-79.

Throughout the evolution of Erie County, transportation systems helped create communities and build wealth. In 1962, the Federal Highway Act established the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) concept to direct federal funding to preserve, maintain, and build transportation systems. Today, the Erie MPO is responsible for developing policy directives to direct funding for over 2,500 miles of road, transit services, two airports, the Port of Erie, two Class 1 railroads, and numerous bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Erie MPO has a host of responsibilities of which the creation of three policy documents direct millions of dollars of funding every year: the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The LRTP has a 20-year planning horizon and is the official guide for the expenditure of federal and state transportation funds. The TIP has a four-year planning life and includes programmed projects. The UPWP is a specific, short-term planning tool directing annual activities for the MPO.



## ***Erie County Transportation in 2040 and Beyond***

The vision for the transportation system in Erie County was derived from the federal mandates, and involved input from a variety of people and agencies with interest in transportation issues. The Erie MPO vision statement crafted in 1993 forms the framework for the plan goals and objectives:

*To improve the quality of life for all residents and visitors of Erie county by developing, operating and maintaining a safe, efficient, user friendly, intermodal transportation system that enhances mobility, economic vitality, and is innovative, affordable, and environmentally responsible.*

The Erie MPO vision statement was amended in 2011 as follows:

*The diversity, unique needs, and valuable characteristics inherent to Erie County communities will be enhanced through a safe and efficient multimodal transportation system. Residents and visitors will have access to a safe and secure transportation system that is well-managed, user friendly, affordable, and sustainable. The transportation system will build upon an intermodal network to offer access and mobility for all through the application of innovative techniques and intergovernmental and interagency partnerships. The transportation plan and future projects will support economic development for residents, workers, and industries within Erie County and will support strong, livable communities.*

The 2040 LRTP was prepared to reflect the Commonwealth's guidance for long range transportation plans. Notably, this plan update includes concepts of:

- Incorporation of the Keystone Principles and Criteria
- Incorporation of Livability Principles and Themes
- Consideration of Pennsylvania Mobility Plan
- Linking Planning and NEPA
- Performance Measures