SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

This document, the 2004 Grand Forks/East Grand Forks Alterative Transportation Mode Plan, is concerned with the recent, current, and future state of transportation in the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks region. The purpose of the plan is to use a comprehensive, objective approach to examine the alternative transportation needs of this region for the next 20 or more years, and to propose a course of action that will maintain the high level of service currently provided by the alternative transportation system. To this end, a set of goals have been established which more precisely define the desired result of this plan. As an alternative modal plan, we will examine modes such as transit, bicycle and walking.

The federal government, through both the 1991 ISTEA, and the 1998 TEA21, requires Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) update their plan every five years. The most recent transit plan was adopted in 2000; the most recent bicycle plan was adopted in 2001; and the most recent pedestrian plan was adopted in 2000. This document will update and combine those plans into one plan, in light of changes that have taken place since that time.

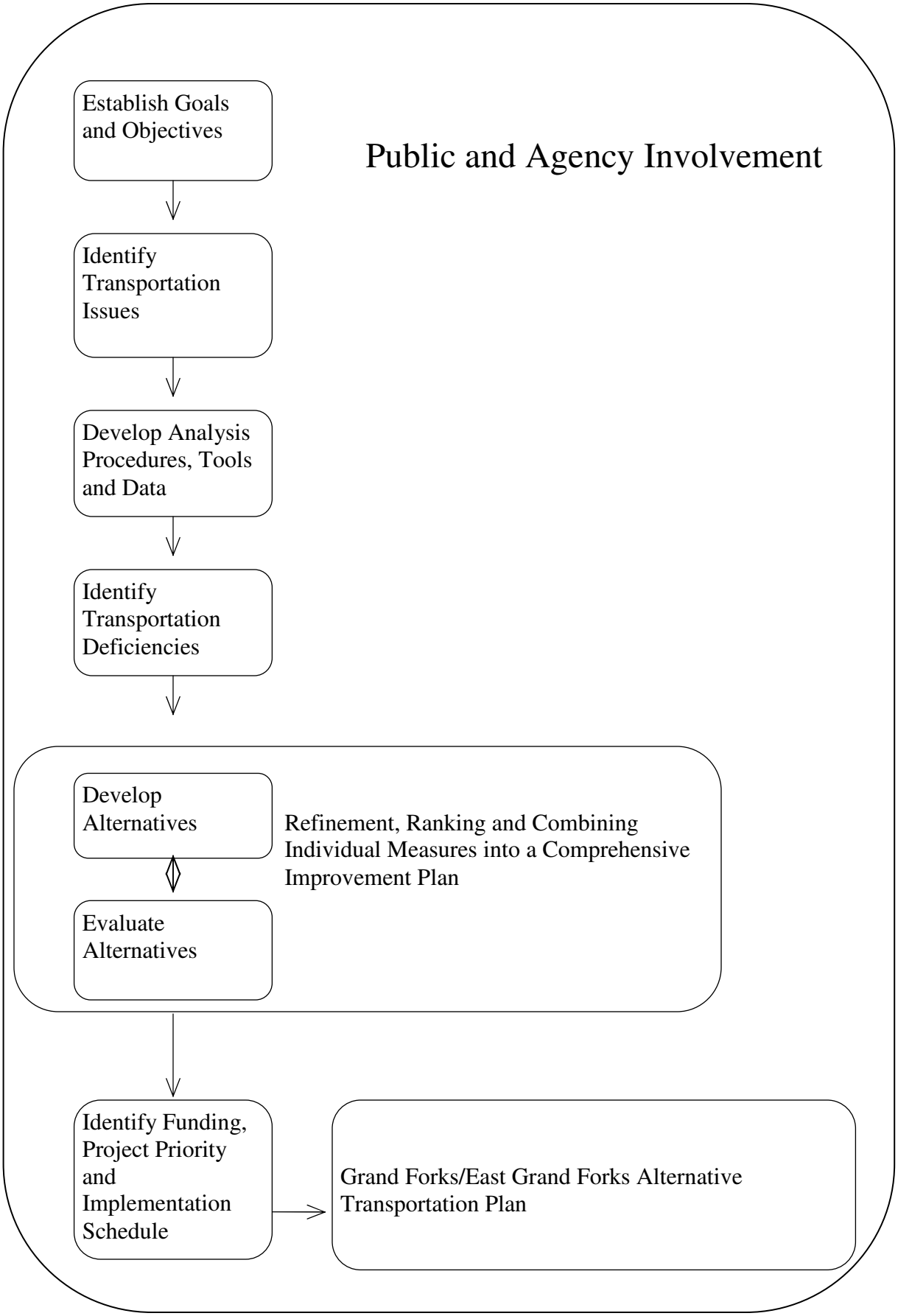
1.2 THE PLANNING PROCESS

The development of this plan has followed a specific series of steps designed to produce a plan that is best for the region, as a whole, and retains the support of the residents and decision-makers in the region. Figure 1.1 shows this process. The analytical aspects of this process center around the development and use of the regional travel demand forecast model to test and evaluate proposed system improvements. The model provides quantitative data that may be used to compare various alternatives, and contributes to the selection of the final alternatives. Other analytical tools, including cost estimation and preliminary engineering evaluations are also used to evaluate the effectiveness of improvement options against the established goals and objectives. The second major aspect of this process is the involvement of public and agencies at each critical point in the process. This involvement helps to strengthen the acceptance of the plan, and ultimately enhances its authority and power. Briefly, the steps shown in Figure 1.1 are described below:

Establish Goals and Objectives:

The planning process begins with the creation of agreed-upon goals and objectives that describe the kind of community we wish to promote.

Figure 1.1: Transportation Planning Process



Identify Transportation Issues:

In this step, all potential issues relating to transportation in the community are identified. This helps insure that the plan addresses relevant topics, and potential problems are not missed.

Develop Analysis Procedures, Tools and Data:

In this step, data requirements are established for the study, and all necessary data is obtained, including forecasts of future conditions. This step is also used to clarify how the analysis will take place, and what measures will be used to evaluate alternatives, i.e., the analytical methodology.

Identify Transportation Deficiencies:

With the help of the tools and procedures established in the preceding step, the future network, which includes only those projects that are existing or committed to be built, transportation system deficiencies are identified. Deficiencies may be in terms of delay, level of service, network connectivity, or other aspects of the system.

Development and Evaluation of Alternatives:

Solutions are developed that address system deficiencies, and are tested to determine their effectiveness. This is an iterative process that begins with evaluation of isolated improvements, and then progresses to combining these improvements to form comprehensive improvement plans – the core of the transportation plan.

Identify Funding, Project Priority, and Implementation Schedule:

Once a plan has been defined in terms of the types of projects, those projects are classified according to their potential funding sources, priority, and construction schedule. In terms of schedule, projects will be classified as short term (1-5 years), mid term (6-10 years) or long term (10+ years).

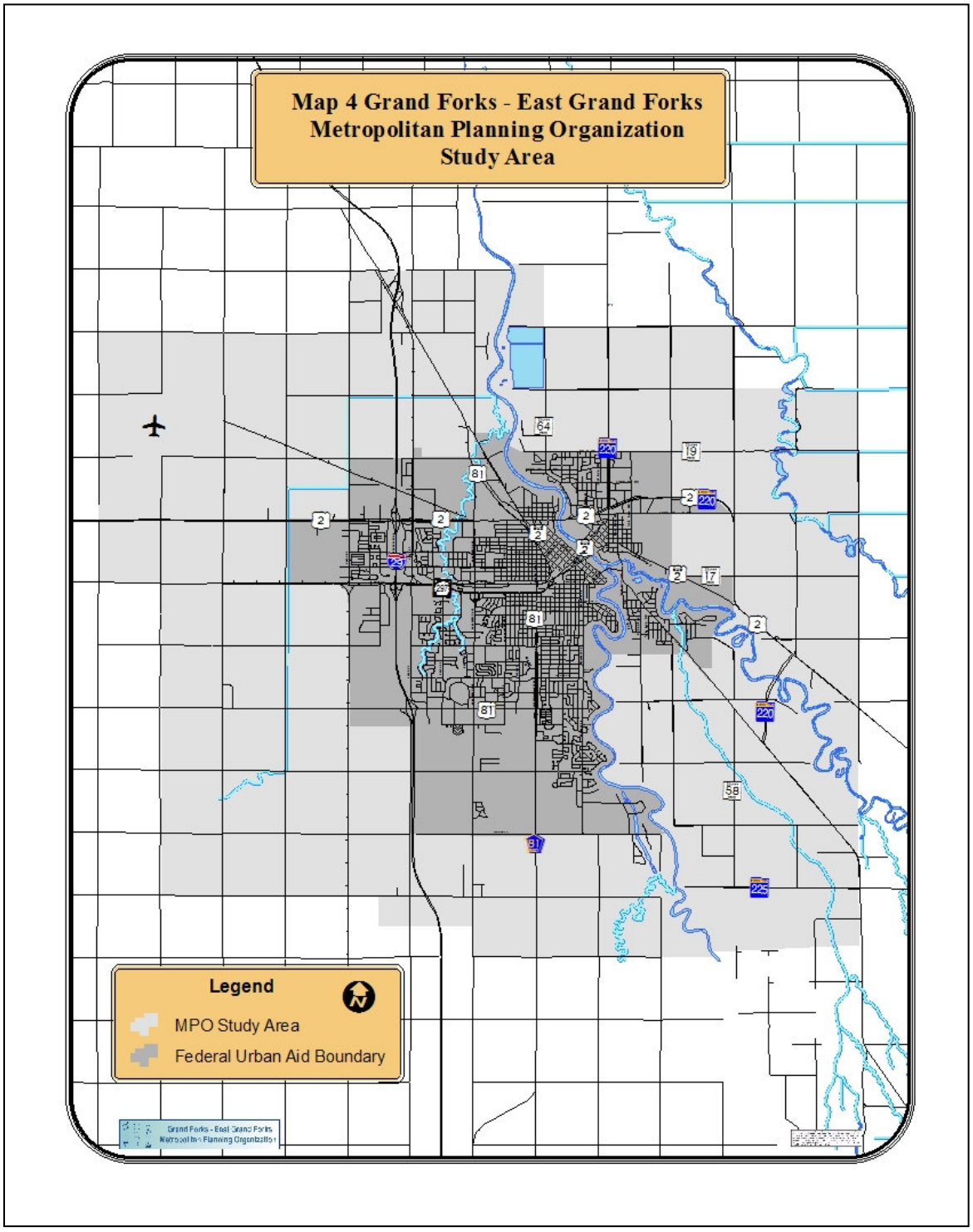
The culmination of this process is a regional transportation plan, which provides a comprehensive guide to transportation planners for a 20-year time frame.

1.3 STUDY AREA

This transportation plan update included the entire Grand Forks/East Grand Forks Metropolitan Area. This area includes the incorporated city limits of both communities, as well as an approximate 2-mile planning jurisdiction outside of the incorporated areas.

Figure 1.2 provides an illustration of the study area.

FIGURE 1.2



1.4 COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

The study area is composed of the urbanized portion of two counties: Grand Forks County, North Dakota; and Polk County, Minnesota. The two counties are separated by the Red River of the North, and combined, constitute a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The study also includes the municipalities of Grand Forks in North Dakota, and East Grand Forks in Minnesota.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks metropolitan area had a population of 56,867 residing within the urbanized boundaries. Subsequent population estimates have been conducted by the MPO to monitor population trends between censuses. The metropolitan estimate for January 1, 2004 is 58,798, showing an annual population increase of 0.82 %.

The Grand Forks/East Grand Forks MSA is located in the center of the Red River Valley. The valley, which is quite flat, is nearly 80 miles wide. The mean elevation above sea level at Grand Forks is roughly 839 feet.

The average annual temperature for the region is 41.3 degrees (F), with an average January temperature of 4.2 degrees, and an average July temperature of 69.2 degrees. Precipitation averages about 20-inches per year, with an average of .53-inches in January, and an average of 3.47-inches in July. Owing to the flatness of the terrain, the wind figures prominently in the State's weather. Consequently, the mean daily wind velocity of 9-miles per hour is significant.

The Grand Forks/East Grand Forks MSA is an attractive metropolitan service center, which serves northeastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. It is situated 75-miles north of Fargo, North Dakota, and 150-miles south of Winnipeg, Canada. The greater trade area includes eighteen counties in North Dakota and Minnesota, and the southern portion of the province of Manitoba, Canada.

The area is serviced by an excellent system of transportation facilities, as Interstate 29 and U.S. Highway 2 both pass through the community. Interstate 29 provides access to points south, while terminating at the United States-Canada border north on route to Winnipeg. U.S. Highway 2 provides an east-west highway connection between Duluth, Minnesota, to the east, and Spokane and Seattle to the west.