
Transportation Planning 101



How do the pieces fit together?

Process



Source: *The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process: Key Issues*, US DOT

What is an MPO?

- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Each urbanized area with a population > 50,000
- Transportation policy-making body
- Members: Representatives from local government and transportation agencies
- Baltimore Regional Transportation Board



What does the MPO do?

- Federal funds for transportation channeled through MPO
 - Metropolitan transportation planning in cooperation with federal government, state, and operators of publicly owned transit services
 - Ensure that existing and future transportation expenditures are based on continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C) planning process
 - Provide reasonable opportunity for input from public and interested parties
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What is the MPO required to produce?

- **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP):** Planning studies and tasks; budget; covers 1-year period
 - **Long-Range Transportation Plan:** Future goals, strategies, projects; updated every 4 years; at least 20-year horizon; consistent with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends; financial plan; *air quality and financially constrained*
 - **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):** Short-range (4-year) program; based on goals/strategies of long-range plan; updated every year; funding sources and implementation schedule; project must be in TIP to get federal funding; *air quality and fiscally constrained*
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Other MPO Functions – Air Quality



- Nonattainment area (does not meet one or more US EPA air quality standards as set by Clean Air Act)
 - Transportation plans, programs, and projects must conform to State Implementation Plan (SIP)
 - MPO coordinates transportation and air quality planning; models projects to determine air quality impacts
 - Transportation conformity on long-range plan and TIP is demonstrated when projected regional emissions do not exceed region's motor vehicle emissions budgets in SIP
 - Conformity determination accepted by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
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Other MPO Functions – Congestion



- For metropolitan areas with populations > 200,000
 - Must have a congestion management process (CMP) that identifies actions and strategies to reduce congestion and increase mobility
 - Identify congested locations; determine causes of congestion; evaluate potential of different strategies; evaluate impacts of previously implemented strategies
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What does the state DOT do?

- Conduct transportation planning and programming
 - Design, construct, operate, maintain state facilities (air, water, surface transportation)
 - Work cooperatively with federal government, MPOs, tolling authorities, ports, local agencies, and special districts that own, operate, or maintain different portions of transportation network, or individual facilities
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What is the state required to produce?

- **Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan:** Future goals, strategies, and projects; at least 20-year planning horizon; *not air quality or fiscally constrained*
 - **Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP):** Short-range program; updated every year; incorporates TIPs from MPOs; funding sources and implementation schedule; *fiscally constrained*
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Federal Funding – Authorization

- **Authorizing Legislation: SAFETEA-LU**
 - Congress enacts legislation that establishes or continues operation of a federal program or agency, including amount of money it expects to be available to states, MPOs, and transit operators
 - Congress reauthorizes federal surface transportation programs over multiple years
 - SAFETEA-LU: expired in 2009, working off of continuing resolutions
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Federal Funding – Sources

- Federal transportation funding available through Federal Highway Trust Fund (motor fuel tax, excise taxes); supplemented by general funds
 - State DOT administers sources of funding from FHWA
 - State DOT allocates money to urban and rural areas based on state and local priorities and needs
 - Transit funds for urban areas sent directly from FTA to transit operator
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Federal Funding – Match

- Most federal transportation programs require a non-federal match (state or local governments must contribute some portion of project cost)
 - Matching level established by legislation
 - For many programs, amount state or local governments must contribute is 20 percent of capital cost for most highway and transit projects
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Federal Funding – Reimbursement

- Federal funding programs are not "cash up front" programs; eligible expenditures are reimbursed
 - Authorized amounts are "distributed" to states, but no cash is disbursed at this point
 - States are notified that they have federal funds available for their use; projects are approved and work is started
 - Federal government reimburses states, MPOs, and transit operators for costs as they are incurred and approved, reimbursing up to limit of federal share
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