



Rural Local Officials

Consultation Assessment Guide:

*Evaluating Your Knowledge and Input into
the Statewide Transportation Planning Process*

By the
National Association of Development Organizations (NADO)
Research Foundation

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The **Rural Local Officials Consultation Assessment Guide** is intended to provide rural local elected and appointed officials, along with their regional planning organizations, with a framework for appraising the effectiveness, timeliness and results of their involvement and input into the statewide transportation planning and decision-making processes within their respective states.

The guide provides an overview of the February 2007 rules issued by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) that provide the basic framework for state transportation agency consultation with non-metropolitan local elected and appointed officials. The guide highlights the various techniques typically used by state transportation officials to solicit the feedback and priorities of rural local officials, as well as features a list of online and hard copy resources for additional information and background on the subject area.

Most importantly, the guide provides a basic framework for rural local officials and their regional planning organizations to conduct an assessment of their own participation and knowledge of the statewide and regional transportation planning and decision-making processes.

The guide is NOT intended to serve as a formal evaluation tool to measure the actual performance and outcomes of your state's rural transportation planning consultation

program. It is only designed to identify the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the state rural consultation process from a local government official or regional planning organization perspective.

The guide is designed to be used by an individual, a local government or regional planning organization and/or a group of stakeholders such as state associations of counties, municipalities and regional councils. This assessment tool is flexible so that it may be adapted to each state.

The Rural Local Officials Consultation Assessment Guide is intended to provide rural local government officials and their regional planning organizations with a framework for appraising the effectiveness, timeliness and results of their involvement and input into the statewide transportation planning and decision-making processes for their respective states.

The findings and outcomes should be used to identify new and expanded opportunities for rural local government officials and their regional planning organizations to provide timely, constructive and on-going feedback and input into the statewide transportation planning process.

Visit www.ruraltransportation.org for additional information and background materials.

FEDERAL GUIDELINES AND RULES:

AN INTRODUCTION TO STATE CONSULTATION WITH RURAL LOCAL OFFICIALS

Transportation planning and project development is often viewed in the context of moving goods in an efficient, seamless and cost-effective manner while allowing people to travel safely, economically and reliably.

In today's global marketplace, transportation policy, planning and project development is becoming increasingly interconnected with—and impacted by—national, statewide, regional and local strategies and investment decisions for community and economic development, emergency preparedness, energy, environmental stewardship, housing, land use and workforce development, among other elements of a community and region.

Since the passage of the landmark 1991 federal highway and transit authorization law, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), federal policy makers have stressed the importance of state transportation agencies involving local government officials in the statewide and metropolitan transportation planning and project programming process.

While federal surface transportation laws since 1991 have mandated that state transportation officials consider the views and input of local officials, these laws and the accompanying federal rules contain significant differences for local officials in metropolitan areas above 50,000 and those representing non-metropolitan areas below 50,000 population.

Local government officials in urban areas are granted well-defined roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority through the national network of 385 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). These local planning entities, which receive a dedicated allotment of federal highway and transit planning funds as a pass-through from their state, are governed by a policy board of local elected officials, along with representatives of transportation agencies with authority and responsibility.

MPOs are tasked primarily with carrying out metropolitan transportation planning in cooperation with the state and with operators of publicly owned transit services. As outlined in the FHWA-FTA report, *The Transportation Planning Process Key Issues: A Briefing Book for Transportation Decisionmakers, Officials and Staff*, MPOs establish and manage a setting for regional decision-making, as well as foster the input and participation of local government officials, the general public and other affected constituents. They study and evaluate alternative transportation improvement options, prepare

The primary decision makers for federal-aid transportation plans and investments in non-metropolitan areas below 50,000 population resides at the state level. However, state transportation agencies must have a formal and documented process for consulting with rural local officials.



and maintain a long-range transportation plan covering a planning horizon of at least 20 years, and develop a short-range program of transportation improvements and projects based on the long-range plan.

There are two basic levels of MPOs. In urbanized areas above 200,000 population, MPOs known as Transportation Management Areas (or TMAs) serve as the lead transportation planning entity. TMAs are also tasked with additional planning requirements such as the congestion management process (CMP), have greater control and decision-making authority with planning and project selection, and receive a suballocation of Surface Transportation Program (STP) project funds from the state.

MPOs with populations between 50,000 and 200,000 also provide an important forum for regional and local transportation planning by local officials and others. However, these MPOs are not required under federal law to receive a direct allocation of project funds from the state.

makers aimed to ensure that rural local officials are empowered to provide sufficient input and involvement in the statewide planning and investment decision-making processes, including through the facilitation of existing regional planning organizations.

This call for enhanced state transportation agency consultation with rural local officials is based on the premise that local governments often have significant responsibilities for local transportation assets such as roads, bridges, transit systems, airports and intermodal transfer facilities. It also reflects the interwoven nature of transportation and its relationship and impact on basic infrastructure, housing, land use and economic development planning and development at the regional and local levels.

Unlike the metropolitan planning process, the federal law guiding state consultation with rural officials is more general and flexible. This allows each state Department of Transportation to develop a consultation process that reflects its geographic, governance and demographic characteristics. At the same time, federal policymakers encouraged state transportation officials to use the existing network of regional planning and development organizations to foster and facilitate the involvement of rural local government officials.

*For more details on the Statewide and Metropolitan Transportation Planning Processes, download the FHWA-FTA guidebook, **The Transportation Planning Process: A Briefing Book for Transportation Decisionmakers, Officials and Staff**, at www.planning.dot.gov/documents/BriefingBook/BBook.htm*

RURAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND LOCAL OFFICIAL CONSULTATION

As part of the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and continued in the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), federal policy

The primary guidelines for state consultation with rural officials are contained in the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) joint rulemaking, Statewide and Metropolitan Planning: Part 450 Planning Assistance and Standards. (*Federal Register: February 14, 2007, Part III*)

Highlights of the FHWA-FTA state transportation planning and consultation rules for rural local government officials include:

- **Each state DOT must have developed and implemented a documented process for local elected and appointed government official input into statewide transportation plans and investment programs by February 2004.**
- **The consultation process must be “separate and discrete” from state DOT processes for obtaining input from the general public,** giving more weight to local government officials in recognition of their significant transportation responsibilities, including ownership of roads, bridges, airports and transit systems.
- **By February 2006 and at least every five years thereafter, state DOTs must seek feedback from local officials regarding the consultation process.** States are also directed to seek comments and input from state associations of counties, municipal officials, regional development organizations and other non-metropolitan officials.
- **The rule modified the previous FHWA-FTA definition of “consultation” by requiring states to confer with local officials before taking actions, consider the officials’ views and periodically inform them about actions taken.** In addition, the rule clarifies that the definition of “non-metropolitan local official” includes elected and appointed officials.
- **If a state chooses not to follow the consultation process and framework recommended by local officials** and their respective state associations during the

comment period, then the state must make its rationale for its decision public.

STATE DOT TECHNIQUES FOR RURAL CONSULTATION AND OUTREACH

According to a 2001 study by the National Academy of Public Administration, state transportation officials typically use a variety of methods and techniques to solicit and consider the views and input of rural local government officials. While federal transportation planning law and rules mandate a specific structure and process for metropolitan areas above 50,000 population, states have much more flexibility for non-metropolitan areas. State techniques and methods for rural consultation include:

- **Use of Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs).**

Unlike the MPO process, there is no federal designation or mandated work program or governance structure for these regional transportation planning entities. In nearly 30 states, according to studies by the NADO Research Foundation, RPOs are housed and staffed within an existing regional planning organization. The state DOT provides planning funds to the RPOs through a cooperative agreement or contract, also often requiring a local match by local governments within the region. In more isolated cases, RPOs are operated and staffed by state DOT district

Each state DOT must develop and implement a documented process for rural local elected and appointed government official input into statewide transportation plans and investment programs.



offices, counties or other related governmental planning entities.

Each RPO typically has a policy committee consisting primarily of county and municipal elected officials, along with state transportation officials, public citizens and transit officials. They also tend to have a technical advisory committee with public works staff, state transportation officials, transit providers, public citizens and representatives of other modal interests, along with planners from the region.

- **State consultation tours, hearings and meetings** with county commissioners, municipal officials and other related local government officials. These events tend to also be open to the public and may be focused on various stages of the planning and project selection processes.

- **Outreach to state associations of counties, municipalities and regional councils** through participation at statewide meetings, regional and local planning meetings and informal dialogue and communications.



- **Sub-allocation of planning and/or project funds to local governments** and, in cases such as Arizona, California and Iowa, sub-allocation of at least a portion of federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds to regional councils of governments serving as RPO-type entities.

- **Placing local government representatives on state policy-making and advisory bodies**, such as transit coordination committees, transportation enhancement advisory panels, intermodal strategy working groups and other related committees and working groups.

- **Use of MPOs to coordinate with and/or plan for adjacent non-metropolitan areas.** In many cases, an MPO and RPO may be housed

within the same regional planning organization. However, MPOs are strictly prohibited from using federal transportation funds for planning in non-metropolitan areas so activities are funded by the state or are covered by the regional or local entity that houses the MPO.

FOUR Cs

OF FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING DIALOGUE

Under federal transportation planning rules, the statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes are guided by four levels of intergovernmental collaboration and outreach. Each of the following definitions holds a specific meaning that state transportation agency and MPOs must follow.

CONSIDERATION means that one or more parties takes into account the opinions, actions, and relevant information from other parties in making a decision or determining a course of action.

CONSULTATION means that one or more parties confer with other identified parties in

accordance with an established process and, prior to taking action(s), consider the views of the other parties and periodically inform them about action(s) taken.

COOPERATION means that the parties involved in carrying out the transportation planning and programming processes work together to achieve a common goal or objective.

COORDINATION means the cooperative development of plans, programs and schedules among agencies and entities with legal standing and adjustment of such plans, programs and schedules to achieve general consistency, as appropriate.

PRIMARY STATE DOT PLANNING FUNCTIONS

Prepare and Maintain a Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan: Develop and update a long-range transportation plan for the state. Plans vary from state to state and may be broad and policy-oriented, or may contain a specific list of projects. States are required to follow the “*consultation*” definition for local officials in non-metropolitan areas.

Develop a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP): Develop a program of transportation projects based on the state’s long-range transportation plan and designed to serve the state’s goals, using spending, regulating, operating, management and financial tools. States are required to

follow the “*consultation*” definition for local officials in non-metropolitan areas.

For metropolitan areas, the STIP incorporates the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) developed by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for urbanized areas above 50,000 population.

Involve the Public: Involve the general public and all other affected constituencies, including rural local government officials, in the essential functions listed above.

Source: The Transportation Planning Process Key Issues: A Briefing Book for Transportation Decisionmakers, Officials, and Staff (FHWA-FTA Transportation Capacity Building Program)





RURAL LOCAL OFFICIALS CONSULTATION ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION:

ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE RURAL TRANSPORTATION CONSULTATION PRACTICES

The Rural Local Officials Consultation Assessment Guide is intended to apply lessons learned from the real world experiences of state and local officials involved in transportation planning and development from across the United States. The guide focuses on the core issue areas that rural local officials and their regional planning organizations must address to be effective voices and participants in the statewide transportation planning process. The guide's ultimate goal is to foster stronger intergovernmental information exchanges, partnerships and collaborations among state and local officials, resulting in improved transportation system planning, performance and project development.

To assist with a systematic approach to evaluating the participation input and opportunities of non-metropolitan local officials as part of the statewide transportation planning process, the guide recommends following the steps outlined below and detailed in the accompanying sections:

- Identify and understand the basic federal requirements that state transportation agencies must meet for outreach and communication with rural local elected and appointed government officials, including through regional planning organizations.
- Identify and study noteworthy practices currently being used and piloted across the nation by state transportation agencies, rural local governments and RPOs.
- Identify special institutional, governance and geographic characteristics of the state that require flexibility in the consultation process, including the rural nature of the state, decision-making and ownership structure for various transportation modes, projects and programs, and the institutional structure and setup for local governments within the state.
- Identify current consultation strategies and techniques used by the state and evaluate the appropriateness, effectiveness, timeliness and transparency of the consultation model.
- Identify specific ideas and strategies to improve the participation, performance and input of rural local officials and their regional planning organizations in the statewide consultation process.

The assessment tool is structured to allow rural officials and RPO leaders to evaluate their own participation and involvement, as well as provide a basic analysis of the state's rural official consultation program. The guide should be applied to both new and proven strategies that will improve the overall transportation planning process of your state and region, including raising the level of awareness and attention to the pressing needs and priorities of the state's rural areas.



SECTION 1: FEDERAL RULES FOR STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY CONSULTATION WITH RURAL LOCAL OFFICIALS

Strong partnerships between rural local government officials and state transportation agency representatives are critical to the inclusion of rural needs and priorities during the statewide transportation planning process, best known as the gateway for accessing federal-aid highway and transit funding. Federal rules require state transportation agencies to solicit and consider the input of rural local elected and appointed officials as part of their planning, program and project development efforts. As such, each state must have a formal and documented process for ensuring the timely participation and feedback of rural officials. While each state may design its own process, it must be “separate and discrete” from the public involvement process. This section focuses on the specific guidelines that state transportation officials must follow under federal law and regulations.

RATINGS: Excellent / Average / Needs Improvement / Do Not Know

Does your state transportation agency have a transparent, clearly defined and documented process for soliciting and considering the views of rural local elected and appointed government officials, including through your state’s regional planning organizations?

The statewide transportation planning process is best known as the gateway for accessing federal-aid highway and transit funding.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- State transportation officials have met and worked with our state associations of counties, municipalities and regional planning organizations to develop a documented and clearly defined process for rural official consultation throughout the development and updating of the state’s long-range statewide transportation plan and the prioritization of specific projects and goals within the short-range Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).
- Rural local government officials, including the leadership of regional planning organizations, were full participants in the development and crafting of the state’s consultation process for non-metropolitan local officials.
- State transportation officials have dedicated the financial and staffing resources necessary to fully implement the consultation process, including funding assistance for regional planning organizations (including Rural Planning Organizations or RPOs) and/or local governments to foster the enhanced and continuous participation of rural local officials.

- The consultation process is designed to ensure the views and feedback of local government officials, both elected and appointed, are considered by the state before decisions are made, and that the state keeps local officials informed about actions taken.
- Rural local government officials understand the consultation process being used by the state to gather their ideas, priorities and views. To facilitate local government understanding, the state provides training, educational workshops and technical assistance for both new and experienced local officials on an on-going basis.
- The state transportation agency has provided feedback on the recommendations and ideas of rural local officials, including regional planning organizations, to potentially improve their participation and involvement in the statewide transportation planning process.
- Rural local government officials have made a strong commitment to engage in the state’s consultation and planning processes, including attending meetings, providing professional and meaningful input, and coordinating regional and local comprehensive plans and strategies.

Does your state transportation agency have a rural consultation process for local government officials that is “separate and discrete” from the general public involvement process, as required under federal transportation planning rules?

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- State transportation officials have ensured that the consultation process for rural local officials, including the voluntary establishment and funding of RPOs, is “separate and discrete” from the public participation process. *(Please note how the process specifically addresses this criteria.)*
- The state transportation agency has provided financial resources to a statewide network of RPOs, which are managed by existing regional planning organizations and/or state DOT district offices, counties or other related entities, to develop sub-state regional plans and priorities for consideration by the state. While the final decisions are still made by state policy officials, such as the governor, legislature or transportation commission, local officials are given a prominent role in shaping regional and local priorities, as well as contributing to the overall goals and objectives for the statewide system, including rural assets and needs.
- The state works with rural local officials, including RPOs, to coordinate the goals and priorities outlined in the statewide transportation plan and programs with regional and local economic development, energy, housing and land use strategies.
- The state transportation agency is working with rural local officials, including RPOs, to foster and enhance the participation of the general public in the transportation planning process.



SECTION 2: STATE DOT METHODS FOR RURAL LOCAL OFFICIAL CONSULTATION

The core purpose of the non-metropolitan local consultation process is to foster the effective and meaningful involvement by local elected and appointed officials in the statewide transportation planning process. This should help improve state transportation decisions on plans, policies, projects and programs that have an impact on rural areas and constituents.

State transportation agencies have the flexibility under the federal transportation law SAFETEA-LU and FHWA-FTA rules to use a variety of techniques to consult with rural local officials. The primary federal requirements are that the state consultation process be documented and written, developed in consultation with local officials, and reviewed every five years for potential improvements and modifications. It must also be “separate and discrete” from the general public involvement process. This section focuses on helping rural officials identify the strategies being used by your state.

RATINGS: Excellent / Average / Needs Improvement / Do Not Know

Has the state transportation agency established a formal, meaningful and continuous process for local government officials, both elected and appointed, to participate in the statewide transportation planning process?

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- The state transportation agency has developed and implemented a formal and meaningful process for soliciting and prioritizing the views and perspectives of rural local officials, such as the establishment of Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) similar to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) or the suballocation of planning and/or project funding to the sub-state regional and local levels.
- The state transportation agency encourages the development and prioritization of sub-state, regional transportation program goals, objectives, strategies and projects that are considered and incorporated into the overall statewide plan and program.
- State and local officials work together to improve the coordination and integration of state, regional and local strategies, plans and project investments related to economic development, energy, land use, transportation, the environment, safety and security, and other essential elements of a competitive economy.

- Rural local officials, including through RPOs, are engaged by the state on a continuing, comprehensive and coordinated basis, rather than a sporadic, informal and limited basis.
- The state transportation agency has defined the types of actions, decisions and responsibilities expected of rural local officials, including RPOs, and provides regular feedback and updates on the recommendations of rural local officials and RPOs, where applicable.
- Rural local officials, including through RPOs, are encouraged to consider the long-term and short-range needs, priorities and conditions of all transportation assets and modes within the state and region, including roads and bridges, public transportation services, aviation, rail, ports, bike and pedestrian pathways, and intermodal and freight facilities.
- The state transportation agency ensures that rural portions of the state are represented and serve on statewide advisory committees, working groups and policy-making bodies dealing with critical issues such as safety, public transportation coordination planning and implementation, intermodal and freight strategies, transportation financing, transportation enhancements, and sustainable development.
- Rural local officials are encouraged by the state to collaborate and coordinate the exchange of information and priorities with federal, state and local agencies; neighboring communities and regions, including metropolitan and suburban areas; and the general public.
- Rural local officials are committed to the state consultation process and improvements are routinely made by state and local officials to improve the planning, development and coordination of the statewide transportation system.



The core purpose of the non-metropolitan local consultation process is to foster the effective and meaningful involvement by local elected and appointed officials.

SECTION 3: STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE, PLANNING PROCESS AND DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK

The specific consultation models and strategies being used by state transportation agencies may be influenced, limited and dictated by the institutional, demographic, financial, ownership and policy decision-making structures of the state. It is important to assess these types of factors in determining the appropriate level of local government involvement, control, responsibilities and collaboration. This section focuses on the correlation between unique characteristics of the state and its relationship to the design and implementation of the state rural consultation process.

RATINGS: Excellent / Average / Needs Improvement / Do Not Know

Has the state transportation agency developed a rural official consultation process that maximizes the potential involvement and contributions of local government officials, especially related to the roles and responsibilities of local governments in community and economic development, land use planning and zoning, emergency preparedness, energy, environmental stewardship, housing, public transportation and infrastructure development?

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- Rural local officials are aware of the specific steps, timing, decision-makers, scope and purpose of each stage of the statewide transportation planning process and the development and implementation of the short-range Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and the long-range Statewide Transportation Plan.
- Rural local officials are knowledgeable about the various and specific roles played by the governor, state legislature, state transportation agencies and commissioners, state transportation headquarters and district office staff, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) as part of the planning, project development and project selection processes.
- Rural local officials are knowledgeable about the various ownership structures, funding eligibility criteria and applicable federal laws and regulations that guide the use, allocation and eligibility of federal-aid surface transportation funding for highways, transit and safety.
- The state transportation agency has established a mechanism for addressing any inconsistencies or conflicts with regional and local planning efforts throughout the process.

- The state transportation agency has effectively communicated and defined the types of issues, actions and decisions that they will solicit, consider and involve rural local officials.

Have rural local officials, including RPOs, been proactive in working with the state in leveraging available and potential resources, coordinating various plans, strategies and projects, and crafting a long-range vision for the state and sub-state regions that links transportation plans with other elements of regional and local comprehensive development strategies and plans.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- A significant number of rural local officials have attended meetings related to the local consultation process and have expressed their support and interest in the process.
- The state transportation agency disseminates regular updates and information resources to a significant number of rural local officials, including through RPOs, on opportunities, outcomes and issues related to the statewide planning, program development and project implementation aspects related to non-metropolitan areas and constituents.
- Rural local officials have worked with the state transportation agency to establish a mechanism for identifying, measuring and documenting the level of participation, as well as evaluating the level of satisfaction of rural local officials with the consultation process.
- Statewide and regional organizations consisting of rural local officials, including RPOs, are working with the state transportation agency to engage and contact “inactive” local officials to encourage their participation and involvement.
- Statewide and regional organizations consisting of rural local officials, including RPOs, are working to provide well-informed, constructive and comprehensive input and recommendations to the state, rather than focusing solely on individual projects and improvements that may be very local in nature, rather than being more of a statewide or regional significance.
- Statewide and regional organizations consisting of rural local officials, including RPOs, routinely request and hold meetings with state transportation officials at the headquarters and district levels to discuss ways to improve the consultation process for non-metropolitan local officials. This includes through RPO-type policy, technical and citizen committees.
- Statewide and regional organizations consisting of rural local officials, including RPOs, work to improve the coordination of transportation strategies and investments for metropolitan and rural regions of the state, including elements related to local land use, economic development, emergency management, housing, infrastructure development, safety, security and workforce needs and initiatives.

SECTION 4: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Transportation planning is a complex and time consuming process that involves its own language and acronyms, stages and steps, and layers of decision makers and decision making. One of the most important elements of the state rural consultation process is the education and training of local government officials, members of RPO policy and technical advisory committees, and regional and local planning staff. The education process should include overviews of the state decision-making structure, stages and descriptions of the planning, program development and project selection processes, and the roles, responsibilities and expectations of participants. This section focuses on the potential strategies and outcomes of statewide and regional education and training initiatives.

RATINGS: Excellent / Average / Needs Improvement / Do Not Know

Have statewide associations representing local officials, including regional planning organizations, worked together with state transportation officials to develop, offer and encourage training opportunities related to the rural consultation process?

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- Statewide and regional organizations of rural local officials, including regional planning organizations, have worked with state officials to offer transportation planning workshops for local elected officials, as well as planners, public works officials and others involved in the statewide transportation planning process. This includes providing training on the skills needed to be effective and productive participants in the local consultation process.
- The statewide network of MPO and RPO transportation planners meet on a regular basis to exchange information, conduct peer learning and mentoring, and explore new ideas, trends, techniques and initiatives. These efforts should include the development and implementation of quality control measures and guidelines for planning documents, processes and outcomes.
- A tracking mechanism has been developed and is being managed by a statewide coordinator or organization to ensure that local elected and appointed officials, planners and others such as representatives of RPO policy and technical advisory committees, are attending and completing the necessary training. In addition, a system has been put into place to ensure that new local officials, planners and representatives are given the appropriate training.
- Rural local officials, including RPOs, are encouraged to attend national and multi-state regional training and networking events related to rural consultation to expand their learning circles and consider other innovative and tested techniques and strategies.

Has the state transportation agency spent the resources and time necessary to provide educational opportunities for local officials, including RPOs, to improve the knowledge and effectiveness of rural consultation participants?

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- The state transportation agency conducts meetings and training workshops with local officials, including RPO representatives, on the state's rural consultation process, along with additional educational events about the specific guidelines and timing of the project development and selection process, transportation programs and related policies.
- The state transportation agency has worked with representatives of rural local officials, including RPOs, to develop and distribute manuals, technical documents, Web sites, policies, guidelines and other related materials to help keep them informed, knowledgeable and prepared to participate in the consultation process, as well as keeping them updated on state transportation plans and programs, project development and selection and related policies.
- The state transportation agency has worked with representatives of rural local officials, including RPOs, to develop a tracking and evaluation system to determine if the training and outreach activities are effective, timely and useful for rural local officials.
- The state transportation agency has worked with representatives of rural local officials, including RPOs, to determine if the training and outreach programs are resulting in more informed and higher quality input by rural local officials to the state.
- The state transportation agency has placed an emphasis on training its own staff about the importance of consulting and involving rural local officials in transportation planning.



One of the most important elements of the state rural consultation process is the education and training of local government officials, members of RPO policy and technical advisory committees and regional and local planning staff.

SECTION 5: BUILDING AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL DIALOGUE AND STATEWIDE PARTNERSHIPS

An effective and efficient multi-modal and intermodal transportation system must operate seamlessly, across modes and across jurisdictional boundaries. Since transportation infrastructure and assets are owned and operated by various levels of government, private operators and other public and private entities, there must be increased collaboration and coordination of strategies and investment decisions. Local government officials must take a proactive approach to working with state transportation officials on future plans, programs and projects.

RATINGS: Excellent / Average / Needs Improvement / Do Not Know

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- Statewide and regional organizations consisting of rural local officials, including regional planning organizations, have become familiar with the state’s rural consultation process and are prepared to serve as valued and informed participants in the consultation process.
- Statewide and regional organizations consisting of rural local officials, including regional planning organizations, have taken the initiative to identify and recommend regional transportation policies, priorities and program goals, even if the state transportation agency has not sub-allocated statewide planning resources to the local level or established RPOs.
- Statewide and regional organizations consisting of rural local officials, including regional planning organizations, have volunteered or been invited to serve on statewide and regional transportation advisory committees and task forces to ensure rural issues are considered during the planning and priority setting processes.
- Statewide and regional organizations consisting of rural local officials, including regional planning organizations, have offered to co-host forums, workshops and events to identify, discuss and coordinate transportation activities related to regional and local economic development, energy, land use, environmental stewardship, safety and security. This also involves improving the collaboration between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas.

After completing the Rural Local Officials Consultation Assessment Guide, please take time to review the evaluations made for each section and criteria. It is important to review the overall findings and identify specific areas that need to be improved and addressed as well as continued and maintained.

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Transportation Planning Capacity Building Resource Center

Federal Highway Administration / Federal Transportation Administration

www.planning.dot.gov

Rural Planning Organizations of America (RPO America)

A Program of the National Association of Development Organizations

www.ruraltransportation.org / www.nado.org

American Association of State Transportation and Highway Officials (AASHTO)

www.transportation.org

Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO)

www.ampo.org

National Association of Regional Councils (NARC)

www.narc.org

PUBLICATIONS AND LINKS

The Transportation Planning Process Key Issues: A Briefing Book for Transportation

Decisionmakers, Officials and Staff (A Publication of the Transportation Capacity Building Program, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration) (September 2007)

www.planning.dot.gov/documents/BriefingBook/BBook.htm

Evaluating State DOT Rural Planning Practices

Prepared by ICF Consulting for the AASHTO Standing Committee on Planning (NCHRP Project 08-36)

www.ruraltransportation.org/library/nchrp.pdf

Non-Metropolitan Local Consultation Process: A Self-Assessment Tool for States

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (August 2006)

www.ruraltransportation.org/aashto.pdf

Planning for Transportation in Rural Areas

Federal Highway Administration with Dye Management Group (July 2001)

www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/rural/planningfortrans/ruralguide.pdf

Transportation Planning in Rural America

National Association of Development Organizations (December 2005)

www.nado.org/pubs/scan2005.pdf



Rural Transportation.org

**Noteworthy Rural Consultation Models and Practices,
Case Studies of MPO-RPO Collaboration,
Updates on Conferences and Events,
A Directory of RPO Contacts and Much More**

FHWA-FTA Rural Transportation Planning Peer Exchange: Indiana, Iowa and New Hampshire
www.planning.dot.gov/Peer/Indiana/indianaPE.htm

FHWA-FTA Rural Transportation Planning Peer Exchange: West Virginia and Pennsylvania
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ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The following individuals participated in a peer exchange and information gathering forum on March 10, 2008 in Washington, DC. The participants provided invaluable feedback, lessons learned and input into the rural local officials consultation assessment tool.

Chris Fetzer, Northern Arizona Council of Governments
Steven Gayle, Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study (New York)
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Connie Willman, Meramec Regional Planning Commission (Missouri)
Chuck Wise, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (Vermont)

As part of the project, the NADO Research Foundation sponsored two multi-state regional convenings to examine the state consultation practices being used in various regions of the nation. The first workshop was held on May 22-23 in Raleigh, North Carolina and covered the states of North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. The second event was held on July 10 in Austin, Texas and covered Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas, along with presentations from Kentucky, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Tennessee regional planning organizations and state transportation officials. Workshops presentations are available online at www.ruraltransportation.org.

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