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Metropolitan and Rural Transportation Planning:

Case Studies and Checklists for Regional Collaboration

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NADO & NADO Research Foundation
400 N. Capitol St., NW, Suite 390
Washington, DC 20001
202.624.7806 • info@nado.org
NADO.org • RuralTransportation.org

AMPO
1029 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 710
Washington, DC 20005
202.296.7051
AMPO.org

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Who should use this guide?

The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation and Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), with funding support from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), developed the following guide to facilitate improved collaboration, communication and partnerships among the nation's metropolitan planning organizations, rural transportation planning organizations, state departments of transportation and other entities. To date, little national research has been conducted on the partnership efforts of MPOs and RPOs. This report aims to help enhance that discussion.

• Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)

MPOs serve as the lead transportation planning organizations for areas with a population of 50,000 or more. MPOs are required by federal law to plan for regionally significant transportation projects, manage and mitigate mobile source emissions, and provide other valuable transportation services to their local government partners. Of the existing national network of 385 MPOs, about half are administered or staffed by a regional planning organization, with the remaining MPOs operated within a state, county or city planning office or by a stand-alone nonprofit entity.

• Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RPOs)

RPOs are voluntary regional transportation planning entities that facilitate the input and participation of local government officials serving areas below 50,000 population in the statewide transportation planning process in many states. Depending on state and local needs, RPOs often work with state and local officials to identify and prioritize transportation project needs on a regional basis, provide technical assistance to local officials, and assist state transportation officials with public outreach and coordination. RPOs may also develop regional long-range transportation plans, conduct special transportation studies, and craft and coordinate regional public transportation plans and services. In general, RPOs are funded under state DOT contracts and/or with local government support. Rural transportation planning programs are often housed within regional planning commissions, councils of governments or regional development organizations.

• State Departments of Transportation (DOTs)

Since state DOTs are primarily responsible for the development and implementation of statewide transportation improvement plans and programs, they play a significant leadership role in fostering intergovernmental partnerships and collaborative planning.

• Local Governments, Private Sector Entities and Stakeholders

Local governments often have significant responsibilities and ownership of transportation infrastructure and services, including roadways, bridges, airports, transportation systems, ports and intermodal facilities. Under federal law, local officials in metropolitan areas above 200,000 population have significant responsibilities and roles in determining the allocation and planning of federal surface transportation funds through MPOs known as Transportation Management Areas (TMAs). In metropolitan areas between 50,000 and 200,000, local government officials play a key leadership and governing role on MPO boards, which work in cooperation with state DOTs to establish plans and investment programs. In non-metropolitan areas below 50,000, state DOTs are required to consult with local officials through a formal process that is separate from the general public participation process. Depending on the state, this may or may not be done by working in conjunction with RPOs.

Metropolitan and Rural Transportation Planning:
Opportunities for Enhanced Regional Collaboration

The ability of the United States to maintain and grow a world-class economy will be influenced significantly by our ability to sustain and modernize our nation's intermodal transportation system in a seamless, efficient and strategic manner. The mounting pressures and challenges within the transportation sector, in both metropolitan and rural regions, have been well documented by numerous national study commissions, as well as federal, state and local policy officials and stakeholders.

The nation is expected to add another 100 million people by 2035, which will put additional strains on our environment, freight logistics system, housing stock and transportation infrastructure. International trade is expected to grow faster than the economy as whole. By 2030, U.S. imports and exports are projected to rise to 60 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), according to Cambridge Systematics, Inc., up from 27 percent in 2005. In addition, private industry will continue to aggressively implement just-in-time manufacturing and delivery initiatives as part of their supply chain management agenda.

With additional partners, metropolitan and rural planning organizations may be able to identify creative solutions to contemporary challenges and issues on the horizon.

These realities should spur metropolitan and rural local officials to come together to enhance the coordination, planning and implementation of new transportation improvement initiatives. It also means that state and local policy makers and planners should think more about the relationship between transportation and issues such as economic development, environmental stewardship, housing, land use, commuter patterns and freight movement.

This guide is intended to document cases where collaboration across regional planning boundaries has been successful. It also provides a checklist for possible actions to improve the relationships of neighboring MPOs and RPOs. The guide is not intended to evaluate existing relationships, but rather to provide an outline for enhanced regional and intergovernmental partnerships.

The following checklist provides a series of steps that local elected and appointed officials, technical committee members and professional planning staff of RPOs and MPOs, along with their state DOT and other partners, may take to enhance the transportation planning dialogue among metropolitan and rural communities and regions.

The guide covers basic issues like relationship building, peer networking and professional development. It discusses pressing policy and programmatic issues such as air quality conformity, emergency preparedness, freight mobility and public transit services. In addition, the guide offers ideas for strengthening collaboration among transportation, economic development, housing and land use planning activities at the regional and local levels.

The steps outlined in this guide are not intended to offer a comprehensive set of actions in every case, but they will provide regional transportation planning staff and local leaders with a starting point for initiating or enhancing collaboration among metropolitan and rural communities and regions.

✓ MPOs and RPOs build relationships through sharing of plans, priorities and data

• Policy Boards:

__ Local officials who serve on MPO and RPO policy boards meet periodically with leadership from neighboring regions to discuss and share information about long-range plans, transportation improvement programs, project priorities and regional or community visions

• Technical Committees:

__ Members meet periodically with technical committees of neighboring regions to identify shared themes in long-range plans, transportation improvement programs and project priorities; common interests could include topics such as freight corridors, air quality, safety, access management, traffic modeling, public transportation, evacuation and incident management planning

__ Members make recommendations to policy boards on specific issues or projects where MPO and RPO collaboration may be desired

• Professional Staff:

__ Staff members develop and maintain transportation outreach lists that include neighboring regions' professional staff and leadership to notify of upcoming meetings or significant projects and issues

__ RPO and MPO staff members of neighboring regions meet or communicate regularly to share transportation plans and project priorities, discuss emerging issues, and inform of significant residential, commercial or industrial developments that may impact the transportation network

__ RPOs and MPOs form interregional staff networks for GIS and modeling activities to improve staff capacity and share data, forecasts and analysis

__ Staff members call on professional staff from other regions to lend technical expertise, particularly to newly designated planning organizations

- **Intergovernmental:**

__ State DOTs incorporate each region's plans and priorities into statewide plans, thereby making them available to all regions

__ State DOTs facilitate interregional staff networks, mentor relationships for sharing technical expertise and data exchanges

To read case studies on sharing of information, plans and priorities, see pages 13 – 18.

✓ Neighboring transportation planning organizations establish formal relationships

- **Policy Boards:**

__ MPO and RPO policy board leadership and/or professional staff serve as ex officio, non-voting members of neighboring organizations' policy boards

__ Board members consider amending bylaws as needed to include leadership or professional staff from neighboring regions as ex officio, non-voting members of the policy board, committees or working groups

__ Board members consider memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with neighboring regions to define areas of collaboration and common interest

- **Technical Committees:**

__ MPO and RPO technical committee leadership and/or professional staff serve as ex officio, non-voting members of neighboring regions' technical committees

__ MPO and RPO committee members review and make recommendations on MOUs to define areas of collaboration and common interest

- **Professional Staff:**

__ MPO and RPO professional staff members serve in an ex officio, non-voting capacity on neighboring organizations' policy boards, technical committees or working groups

__ MPO and RPO professional staff members work together to identify areas of collaboration and responsibilities of organizations that could be included in MOUs

- **Intergovernmental:**

__ State DOT headquarters or district staff facilitate statewide joint meetings of policy boards, technical committees and professional staff of MPOs and RPOs

__ State DOT staff members encourage MPO and RPO staff and leadership to attend neighboring organizations' meetings and to serve in an ex officio, non-voting capacity on policy boards, technical committees or working groups

To read case studies on establishing formal relationships, see pages 13, 16 and 18.

✓ Metropolitan and rural regions develop integrated evacuation plans

• Policy Boards:

__ Board members consider plans and policies to integrate evacuation strategies with neighboring regions, including the formation of committees or work groups of members of both RPOs and MPOs to work with state and local first responders

__ MPO and RPO member jurisdictions consider local plans and policies to implement integrated evacuations, such as seeking interoperable communications

• Technical Committees:

__ MPO and RPO committee members share individual jurisdictions' evacuation plans and strategies to identify potential areas of multi-jurisdictional and multi-regional collaboration

__ MPO and RPO committee members review and make recommendations to policy boards about evacuation models, policies and plans, such as the need to establish an MPO/RPO evacuation work group or committee

• Professional Staff:

__ MPO and RPO staffs work together with state and local first responders to identify evacuation corridors

__ MPO and RPO staffs collaborate with state and local first responders to develop evacuation scenarios and models for various manmade or natural hazard events

__ Staff members work together to determine if a shared multi-regional corridor evacuation plan is feasible or desired, and if an MPO/RPO evacuation work group or committee is needed

__ GIS professionals collaborate on developing standardized data and layers on regional evacuation maps depicting evacuation routes, shelters, medical facilities and other features significant for evacuation planning

• Intergovernmental:

__ State DOTs and departments of emergency management convene or assist with collaboration of regional evacuation plans and designation of evacuation routes

__ State DOTs and departments of emergency management provide assistance with the development of interregional evacuation models and scenario planning

__ State DOTs incorporate regions' shared evacuation priorities into statewide transportation plans

__ Transportation providers, first responders and other entities involved in evacuations participate in RPOs and MPOs to determine roles in evacuating transit-dependent and other vulnerable populations

Results of Census 2000 provided evidence of a gap in the planning process for rural communities near rapidly growing urbanized areas and new urban centers.... Key rural stakeholders are left out of the process and are not prepared for the change in status and funding eligibility for urbanized areas.

— FHWA, *Rapidly Urbanizing Areas*

✓ RPOs and MPOs collaborate to address rapidly urbanizing areas that develop in rural, suburban or exurban areas outside an MPO

- **Policy Boards:**
  - __ MPO and RPO board members consider shared project priorities, transportation improvement programs and long-range plans to address rapid growth
  - __ Members identify planned developments that may affect regional traffic patterns, such as significant residential, commercial or industrial developments approved at the local level
- **Technical Committees:**
  - __ Members review and make recommendations to policy boards on prioritizing projects that address rapid growth, freight and passenger mobility and congestion reduction
  - __ Members review and make recommendations on the growth forecasts and data collection
- **Professional Staff:**
  - __ MPO and RPO staffs communicate to share data and results of regional travel demand models, growth forecasts, congestion bottlenecks and freight mobility
  - __ GIS staff collaborate to identify spatial relationships among land use changes and the transportation network
  - __ MPO and RPO staffs share current regional plans and priorities
  - __ MPO and RPO staffs discuss complementary project priorities and plans in high growth areas and corridors
- **Intergovernmental:**
  - __ State DOT staff members provide technical guidance on integrating plans and priorities
  - __ State DOT provides assistance with travel demand modeling, particularly outside of MPO areas, to aid regions in integrating priorities
  - __ State DOTs incorporate regions' shared priorities into statewide plans
  - __ Transit agencies serving each region participate in RPOs and MPOs
  - __ Rail, airport, bicycle and pedestrian stakeholders participate in RPOs and MPOs

To read case studies on growth management and urbanization, see pages 15, 17 and 18.

✓ RPOs and MPOs work to address transportation and climate change

• Policy Boards:

__ RPO and MPO boards consider long-range plans and transportation improvement programs that develop strategies to both mitigate and adapt to climate change

__ RPO and MPO member jurisdictions consider local land use policies to direct residential, commercial and industrial development away from geographic areas vulnerable to climate change-related, extreme weather events

__ RPO and MPO member jurisdictions consider local land use policies that use smart growth or transit-oriented/transit-ready development principles, which may help reduce greenhouse gas emissions

__ RPO and MPO member jurisdictions consider local policies, such as purchasing policies to use alternative fuel vehicles in fleets to reduce reliance on greenhouse gas-intensive fuels or idle reduction policies

• Technical Committees:

__ Members review and make recommendations on inclusion of climate change strategies in long-range plans, transportation improvement programs and other documents

__ Members review and make recommendations on data and travel demand forecasts

• Professional Staff:

__ MPO and RPO staffs identify planned or existing transportation infrastructure and facilities that may be affected by extreme weather events, particularly facilities significant to multiple regions such as airports, intermodal facilities, major bridges or rail and highway corridors

__ MPO and RPO staffs collaborate to develop strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as prioritizing investments in regional transit, sidewalks and trails or administering behavioral programs like an MPO/RPO rideshare program to accommodate rural, suburban and exurban residents who regularly travel into urban areas

__ GIS professionals work together to develop interregional map products, including those that depict locations of critical facilities that may be vulnerable to the effects of climate change, greenhouse gas emission hotspots, alternative fuel infrastructure or other characteristics of the transportation network related to climate change

• Intergovernmental:

__ State DOTs, departments of environmental quality (DEQs) and climate change commissions encourage RPOs' and MPOs' participation in statewide climate change programs

__ State DOTs provide resources and assistance on planning for climate change, including sharing resources developed at national and state levels

__ State DOTs incorporate regions' shared climate change priorities into statewide plans

__ Owners and operators of facilities such as airports, transit or intermodal facilities and rail lines participate in RPOs and MPOs, along with stakeholders such as bicycle, pedestrian or other modal advocates

Collaboration Checklist

✓ MPOs and RPOs improve regional air quality

- **Policy Boards:**
  - __ MPO and RPO boards consider shared long-range plans, transportation improvement programs and project priorities that support improved air quality, including partnering on the programming of some projects eligible for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds
  - __ MPO and RPO boards approve agreements to identify agencies' and officials' roles in developing and approving air quality plans to meet or stay under federal air quality standards
  - __ Local officials serving on RPO and MPO boards consider local land use and other transportation-related policies to improve air quality, such as planning and zoning that encourage smart growth or transit-oriented/transit-ready development principles
- **Technical Committees:**
  - __ Members review and make recommendations to policy boards on prioritizing projects that support regional air quality improvement
- **Professional Staff:**
  - __ RPO and MPO staffs discuss projects with regional significance for air quality conformity
  - __ RPO and MPO staffs share data and collaborate on parameters used in air quality models
  - __ GIS professionals collaborate on products depicting pollutant hot spots, traffic bottlenecks and other air-quality related characteristics of the transportation network
- **Intergovernmental:**
  - __ State DOTs and DEQs assist small urban and rural regions with air quality modeling
  - __ State DOTs and DEQs involve RPOs in regional interagency air quality agreements
  - __ State DOTs provide or assist with the definition of regionally significant projects, which may have impacts on regional air quality, included in the long-range plan
  - __ State DOTs incorporate regions' shared air quality priorities into statewide plans
  - __ Owners and operators of facilities or services such as airports, transit, intermodal centers, rail lines, and stakeholders such as bicycle, pedestrian or other modal advocates participate in RPOs and MPOs

To read a case study on collaborating on air quality, see page 16.



✓ RPOs and MPOs collaborate on integrated plans for transportation, economic development, housing and land use

• Policy Boards:

__ Local officials on RPO and MPO boards determine common elements in each region's vision for future growth and development

__ RPO and MPO boards consider long-range plans, transportation improvement programs, and priority lists that include complementary visions for future growth

__ Local officials serving on RPO and MPO boards consider local land use and housing plans and policies that implement the regions' visions for economic development and transportation connectivity, which may include smart growth or transit-oriented/transit-ready development principles according to regional needs

• Technical Committees:

__ Committee members review and make recommendations to policy boards on collaborating on elements of long-range plans, transportation improvement programs and project priority lists among neighboring MPOs and RPOs

• Professional Staff:

__ MPO and RPO staffs share existing comprehensive, transportation, economic development, housing and land use plans

__ MPO and RPO staffs share data and forecasts for each region's transportation and land use patterns

__ GIS professionals share parcel data and maps describing past and current land use

• Intergovernmental:

__ Federal, state and local public entities participate in integrated transportation, land use, economic development and housing studies through RPOs and MPOs; participants may include representatives of transportation, environmental protection and natural resources, community and economic development, housing, agriculture and other related agencies, as well as transit agencies and stakeholder groups

__ State DOTs and other agencies incorporate regions' shared transportation, economic development, land use and housing priorities into statewide plans

To read case studies on considering economic development, housing and land use in transportation, see pages 15, 17 and 18.

✓ Freight mobility becomes a shared concern among neighboring MPO and RPO regions

• Policy Boards:

__ RPO and MPO boards consider regional long-range plans, transportation improvement programs, management and operations strategies and project priorities that support complementary freight planning

__ Board members determine whether RPOs and MPOs will join corridor coalitions to facilitate complementary freight planning efforts along significant freight routes

__ Local officials serving on RPO and MPO boards consider local land use and access management policies to ensure corridor preservation as the regions grow

• Technical Committees:

__ Members review and make recommendations on integrating freight plans, project priorities and management and operations techniques

__ Members review and make recommendations on participation in corridor coalitions

__ Members review and make recommendations on freight data and forecasts

• Professional Staff:

__ Staff members identify nationally or regionally significant shipping routes that pass through their regions, and the entities responsible for planning along those routes

__ Staff members collaborate to identify sources of congestion that may hamper freight and passenger mobility

__ RPO and MPO staffs work together to identify and participate in existing corridor coalitions, and if none exist, examine the need for corridor coalitions

__ RPO and MPO staff members share freight data, models and forecasts

__ GIS professionals work together to develop spatial representation of the corridor, land uses, freight activity centers and other characteristics

• Intergovernmental:

__ Private sector, governmental or modal entities such as owners and operators of rail lines, intermodal terminals, ports, locks, airports or major shippers participate in RPOs or MPOs to provide perspectives on their roles in freight movement

__ State DOTs convene or participate in freight corridor coalitions and facilitate involvement of coalition members

__ State DOTs provide assistance and resources to RPOs and MPOs in developing regional and multi-regional freight plans

__ State DOTs provide regional planning entities and local officials with updates on available funding for freight-related transportation projects

__ State DOTs incorporate regions' shared freight priorities into statewide plans

To read a case study on addresing freight mobility, see page 14.

✓ The locations of residential areas, human services, employment centers, commercial zones and other destinations encourages planning for regional transit service

• Policy Boards:

__ MPO and RPO boards consider complementary plans and priorities for investments that support improved regional transit connections and services

__ Local government officials serving on RPO and MPO boards consider local policies that support transit-oriented or transit-ready development to facilitate access to existing and future service

• Technical Committees:

__ Members review and make recommendations to policy boards on prioritizing projects that support improved regional transit connections and services

__ Members review and make recommendations on demographic and ridership data

• Professional Staff:

__ MPO and RPO staff members work with transportation providers to share existing plans

__ MPO and RPO staff members share demographic data, such as information on each region's transportation disadvantaged populations or commuter-shed

__ MPO and RPO staff members collaborate with each other and transportation providers to collect data if information is needed on ridership, origins and destinations

__ GIS professionals work together to develop mapping applications to identify routes of existing transit service, relative over- and underserved areas and activity centers to assist with regional transit planning

• Intergovernmental:

__ State DOTs facilitate development of regional coordinated human services transportation plans, if not already completed

__ State DOTs provide regional planning entities and local officials with notices of available funding for transit or related enhancement projects

__ State DOTs incorporate regions' shared transit priorities into statewide plans

__ Public transit and human services providers participate in MPOs and RPOs and share plans

✓ MPOs and RPOs enhance professional development, knowledge exchange and networking for policy board officials, committee members and staff

• Policy Boards:

__ Local officials who serve on RPO and MPO policy boards participate in national, statewide and regional conferences and associations to improve their knowledge and familiarity with federal and state transportation planning requirements and programs

• Technical Committees:

__ Members participate in national and statewide conferences or retreats to enhance participation in RPOs and MPOs and to improve knowledge of transportation planning, program development and project implementation processes and issues

• Professional staff:

__ MPO and RPO planning, GIS, modeling and other professional staff participate in national and statewide meetings and associations to improve the state of practice and to collaborate, inform and exchange details of long-range plans and regional transportation improvement programs with other regions

__ Staff members examine the formation of statewide associations of MPOs and RPOs, which could foster leadership in the development of statewide MPO and RPO training, peer exchanges and program innovations

• Intergovernmental:

__ State DOTs convene or participate in regular statewide MPO and RPO meetings or retreats to enhance relationships in statewide planning networks and improve the state of practice

__ State DOTs create a regional planning coordinating committee to meet regularly and inform RPOs and MPOs of statewide transportation planning issues and to facilitate local and regional input into state DOT professional development training

To read case studies on professional development, see pages 13, 14 and 17.

Literature Review and Research Context

Rural and urban regions may have many different characteristics and infrastructure needs: varied transportation responsibilities of local governments, project funding sources, planning requirements, demographic and workforce characteristics, modal shares, average daily trips for road segments or mobility challenges.

Currently, little other research on collaboration between rural and urban transportation planning agencies exists. One research study commissioned by the Federal Highway Administration provides several case studies on rural and urban transportation planning partnerships, specifically in places where rural and small metropolitan areas are rapidly urbanizing. The report provides insights for both once-rural areas that are designated as new MPOs, and semi-rural areas that will soon become part of neighboring MPOs' planning regions (Overman and Cherrington 2006).

But rural and urban regions also often have integrated economic patterns, land use and housing relationships, emergency management and security needs. MPOs and RPOs share concerns over environmental impacts of transportation, interest in preserving mobility for passenger and freight transport, and a need for continuing professional development for local officials and planning staff, among other common issues.

Throughout the research conducted for this guide, transportation planning professionals indicated that successful initiatives involving the collaboration across organizational boundaries were facilitated by institutional relationships or formal agreements, but that pressing issues or projects were the deciding factor in how closely MPOs and RPOs might work together. The following case studies provide a snapshot of existing partnerships among transportation planning regions.



Professional Development and Advocacy Top Arizona's RPO and MPO Priorities

Since the late 1990s, Arizona's small urban MPOs and rural councils of governments (COGs) have collaborated to host an annual Rural Transportation Summit to enhance professional development for planning staff, elected officials, technical committee members and other stakeholders. The annual event provides a valuable forum for peer networking and information sharing among the MPOs and COGs, which staff the state's regional rural transportation planning program.

One result of the discussions held at early summits was the decision by the MPOs and COGs to form the Rural Transportation Advocacy Council (RTAC) in 2001. The council's executive board, comprising local elected officials appointed by each RTAC member COG or MPO board, sets the legislative agenda. Funded through member dues, RTAC is staffed by a legislative liaison who plays an important role in this planning effort by making sure local officials stay informed and educated. The legislative liaison delivers a comprehensive message on federal and state legislative issues, provides regular and timely legislative updates on rural transportation issues, and monitors activities at the state DOT.

The MPOs and COGs' partnership ensures that a unified voice for rural and small metropolitan regions is heard in the state legislature and statewide transportation planning process.

Chris Fetzer, Planning Director for the Northern Arizona Council of Governments, notes that the overarching benefit of having a liaison has been the recognition of a strong, collective rural and small metropolitan voice within the state legislature.

Amid recent rapid population growth across the state, much attention in Arizona often turns to the major metropolitan areas where increasing congestion and rapid development are most readily apparent. But the small urban MPOs and rural COGs' partnership ensures that a unified voice for rural and small metropolitan regions—where many communities are also dealing with explosive growth—is heard in the state legislature and statewide transportation planning process.

For more information, visit www.rtac.net. For checklists on establishing formal relationships between organizations and professional development, see pages 2, 3 and 11.

Alabama Develops Planning Mentor Network

After a successful two-year pilot project that created an RPO in one region of the state, the Alabama Department of Transportation decided to extend its RPO program statewide in late 2006. The RPOs were established as new programs within the existing statewide network of regional development organizations, often known locally as councils of governments (COGs) or regional planning commissions (RPCs). Seven of Alabama's 12 regional development organizations also staff MPOs, including in regions that may be predominantly rural but have one or more urbanized areas with populations of over 50,000.

Since the MPOs have been established longer and have had more experience with transportation planning processes and activities than the RPOs, staff at the regional development organizations that housed both MPO and RPO programs were able to serve as mentors to staff members from more rural regions new to transportation planning. In many cases, MPO and RPO policy members and planning staff overlap, so establishing relationships between the rural and urban planning programs to share data and information has been a benefit across the state. *For more information, visit www.dot.state.al.us/Docs/Bureaus/Transportation+Planning. For checklists on sharing expertise, plans, priorities and professional development, see pages 2 and 11.*

Iowa Planning Organizations Focus on Freight

Three RPOs and one MPO in Iowa joined forces to develop the Trans-Iowa/Illinois Freight Corridor Study in 2007. The study analyzes current and projected traffic and economic patterns in counties along the corridor to determine the feasibility of marketing the route as an alternative to the increasingly crowded segment of Interstate 80 from Des Moines, Iowa to Interstate 74 in Western Illinois. With growing traffic on the Interstates expected to result in congestion problems, the three highways making up the Trans-Iowa/Illinois Freight Corridor may grow in their significance in connecting Iowa's residents and businesses to the larger Midwestern and national economies.

The Iowa Department of Transportation, another partner in the study effort, has made the corridor a priority by programming improvements such as two- to four-lane conversion of the three numbered routes making up the corridor. Even so, more work remains to complete the study's recommendations, such as supporting a coalition to facilitate discussions surrounding complementary land use and access management strategies that may be adopted by local governments along the route. The coalition also intends to brand and market the corridor to manufacturers, the trucking industry and travelers.

This partnership among the RPOs, MPO and Iowa DOT has resulted in greater public participation than the organizations would have achieved alone, as well as enhancing the level of information made available to decisionmakers at the state and local levels. *View the corridor study at www.seirpc.com/Transportation/transport_lrp.html. For checklists on sharing plans and data and addressing freight, see pages 2 and 9.*

Vermont Regions Analyze Land Use, Transportation and Impacts of Growth

With support from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), five regional planning commissions (RPCs) joined together to complete the Northwest Vermont Project, with assistance from the Chittenden County MPO, state and federal agencies and other planning partners. The resulting guide, *Transportation and Land Use Connections: Experiences from Northwest Vermont*, projects growth in the region and assesses local communities' capacity to manage that growth.

The collaborative process provided valuable information and tools for the whole Northwest Vermont Region, which will empower local governments to manage growth.

The purpose of the guide was to help local governments and planners analyze the impacts of development and population growth on land use and commuting and other trips. Chittenden County, where Burlington is located, contains one quarter of Vermont's population and one-third of its jobs. The geographic area from which the workforce is drawn has quickly expanded into surrounding rural regions in recent years, a trend that is expected to continue.

In Vermont, the RPCs have served as RPOs through transportation planning contracts with VTrans since the early 1990s. Each region conducted its portion of the Northwest Vermont Project somewhat differently. As a result, the final report contains not only population and land use projections, but also descriptive guidelines for implementing a variety of planning tools covering access management, build-out analysis, development constraint, road standards and other topics. Throughout the process, the RPCs met regularly to collaborate on each segment of the project. The MPO also provided technical expertise with the transportation-land use model employed in the study for Chittenden County.

This collaborative process provided valuable information and tools for the whole Northwest Vermont Region, which will empower local governments to manage growth that could threaten the functionality of the transportation system through increased congestion, alter the type of transportation network needed, and determine the level of investment to build and maintain infrastructure. *For more information on the Northwest Vermont Project and to view the guide, visit www.transportation-landuse.org. For checklists on sharing plans and priorities, managing rapid urbanization, and integrating transportation with land use and other issues, see pages 2, 5 and 8.*



Air Quality Brings Tennessee Regions Together

In 2004, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) determined that the region surrounding Knoxville, Tennessee was a non-attainment area, exceeding the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone and small particulate matter (PM2.5). In accordance with the federal Clean Air Act and transportation planning regulations, the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), as the local MPO, became responsible for incorporating the entire air quality non-attainment area into its long-range plan and Transportation Improvement Program to show that proposed projects would not result in additional emissions. However, much of the region designated as non-attainment was located outside of the MPO's boundaries in rural counties and another nearby MPO, the Lakeway Area Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (LAMTPO).

At the time, no regional rural planning entity existed, so the region developed a Regional Transportation Planning Council comprising representatives of the rural non-attainment counties, and the Knoxville Regional TPO established an agreement with the newly formed LAMPTO. Since then, the state DOT established RPOs within existing regional development organizations to ensure rural officials had a role in the statewide planning process. The East Tennessee Development District staffs two RPOs, one of which carries out the functions of the now defunct Regional Transportation Planning Council, since the RPO's member jurisdictions include the non-urbanized non-attainment areas.

The Knoxville Regional TPO can program obligated Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds throughout the non-attainment region, using a call for projects from local jurisdictions. But the TPO's Long Range Transportation Plan, providing the basis of all transportation decisions in the region, must be approved by not only the TPO and its members, but also LAMTPO and East Tennessee Development District's South RPO.

To facilitate integrated planning efforts in air quality and other issue areas, East Tennessee's RPO executive boards and technical committees include representatives of the neighboring MPOs and RPOs, DOT, and other planning partners. In addition, East Tennessee Development District appoints one board member to serve on the executive board of the Knoxville Regional TPO, and staff members serve on the technical committees for both MPOs.

For more information, visit www.knoxtrans.org/plans/airqual.htm. For checklists on sharing plans, establishing formal relationships, and addressing air quality, see pages 2, 3 and 7.

Washington's Regional Planning Organizations Develop Strong Relationships

Washington's current transportation planning program was established in the state's 1990 Growth Management Act, which called for the creation of regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) in non-metropolitan areas. In regions where MPOs exist, the RTPOs are required to be located in the same lead planning organization to avoid duplication of effort in developing plans and documents, and the Washington State DOT administers the programs jointly.

The Growth Management Act mandated integration among the rural and metropolitan regional planning functions within each multi-county region, but the DOT and planning agencies work together to foster partnerships across regional boundaries as well. The MPO/RTPO/DOT Coordinating Committee meets quarterly to provide a venue for planning partners to share information, hear presentations on new developments and trends, and keep planning staff versed in statewide planning issues. Recent topics have included transportation finance, freight movement, climate change and state and federal policy updates.

In addition, several MPOs and RTPOs recently joined together in a forum to discuss all-weather roads as a priority across eastern Washington. Many counties place restrictions on vehicle weights in winter months, as heavy loads combine with freeze-thaw cycles to damage roadways. Since much of the economy in the eastern half of the state is natural resource-based, having corridors of all-weather roads built to withstand such pressures is a freight and economic development issue, explains Mark Kushner, Transportation Director at the Benton Franklin Council of Governments (BFCG), which serves as both an RTPO and MPO.

In regions where MPOs exist, RTPOs are required to be in the same planning organization to avoid duplication of effort, and the state DOT administers the programs jointly.

Kushner further noted, "When the price of grain is up or a bottle of wine is needed, local businesses want to be there to get the best price. Restrictions placed on roads prevent damage that taxpayers would otherwise have to pay to repair, but when heavy truckloads of fruit, vegetables, hay or grain cannot move, farmers cannot transport their goods to global markets."

BFCG took the initiative to work with local governments to prioritize routes that might be considered for an all-weather improvement and is drafting a letter on the impact of restrictions on the economy, which will be submitted to the state legislature next year. But outside its regional boundaries, BFCG staff recognize the strength and unity of purpose that come from organizing such forums to foster discussion among several RTPOs and MPOs and from participating in the quarterly meetings.

For more details on Washington's MPO/RTPO/DOT Coordinating Committee, visit www.wsdot.wa.gov. For checklists on growth management, integrating transportation and other issues, and professional development, see pages 5, 8 and 11.

Bridging Ideas in a Shared Workplace: Utah MPO and RPO Work Toward Common Goals

For the Mountainland Association of Governments (AOG) in Orem, Utah, having the Wasatch County RPO co-located with the Mountainland MPO is critical to successful transportation planning efforts within the AOG. Established in 1974, the Mountainland MPO's knowledge has assisted the RPO with learning the details of transportation planning processes and with developing a close relationship with the DOT regional office. The pilot RPOs in Utah are relatively new organizations, having only been established for a few years.

In many states, planning organizations develop networks in which staff from more experienced organizations (typically MPOs) lend their expertise to assist staff from newly formed organizations (often RPOs or smaller MPOs) with improving their capacity to complete complex tasks. But for Mountainland, such outside assistance is not necessary since all of the transportation planning staff can work on both RPO and MPO projects. For example, the Wasatch County RPO received a state planning grant to retain a consultant to develop a travel demand model shortly after the RPO was created. Because the MPO had its own model, Mountainland had the staff capacity already in place to know how the RPO model was built and to maintain and run it. This has allowed the Wasatch County RPO to become one of few RPOs in the nation with the capacity to complete travel demand forecasting entirely in-house.

Another major benefit of co-location is that although the MPO and RPO have separate policy boards, the local officials on each also serve on the Mountainland AOG full board of directors. That way, MPO and RPO board members are already familiar with each other and the jurisdictions throughout the region. They also have the opportunity to work together on the AOG's region-wide initiatives, such as economic development, aging and adult services. *For more information, visit www.mountainland.org.* *For checklists on sharing priorities, establishing formal relationships, managing urbanization, and integrating transportation with other issues, see pages 2, 3, 5 and 8.*

Additional Collaboration Resources

Achieving a Seamless Transportation System for North Carolina: A Framework for Collaboration, North Carolina Association of MPOs, North Carolina Association of RPOs, and North Carolina Department of Transportation, Raleigh, NC, October 2005, www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/tpb/PDF/framework_for_collaboration.pdf.

Overman, John and Linda K. Cherrington, *Rapidly Urbanizing Areas*, Federal Highway Administration, Washington, DC, 2006, www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/metro/rapurbov.htm.

Also see *Transportation Planning Bibliography: Rural and Urban Planning Collaboration* at www.RuralTransportation.org for more resources.

Advisory Committee

The following individuals participated in a peer exchange and information gathering forum on March 10, 2008 in Washington, DC. The feedback, lessons learned and input provided by the participants was used to develop the guide ***Metropolitan and Rural Transportation Planning: Case Studies and Checklists for Regional Collaboration***.

Chris Fetzer, Northern Arizona Council of Governments
Steven Gayle, Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study (New York)
Jake Gilmer, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission (Virginia)
Rick Green, Upper Savannah Council of Governments (South Carolina)
Dewayne Hellums, North-Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments
Jennifer Lehto, East Tennessee Development District
Laura Lewis Marchino, Region 9 Economic Development District, Inc. of Southwest Colorado
Sandra Maes, North Central New Mexico Economic Development District
John Marshall, Western Piedmont Council of Governments (North Carolina)
Tom Mason, Cheyenne Metropolitan Planning Organization (Wyoming)
Susan Moe, FHWA – Minnesota Division
Tyler Meyer, Greensboro Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (North Carolina)
Fred Rader, Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council (West Virginia)
Harrison Rue, Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (Virginia)
Don Rychnowski, Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board (New York)
Marlie Sanderson, North Central Florida Regional Planning Council
Shawn Seager, Mountainland Association of Governments (Utah)
Paula Strauss, Tennessee Department of Transportation
Brian Tapp, Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission
Nico Tucker, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments
Kent Van Landuyt, Missouri Department of Transportation
Connie Willman, Meramec Regional Planning Commission (Missouri)
Chuck Wise, Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission (Vermont)

As part of the project, the NADO Research Foundation and the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) also sponsored two multi-state regional convenings to examine rural and urban regional transportation planning practices and collaboration strategies. The first workshop, held May 22 – 23, 2008 in Raleigh, North Carolina, covered the states of North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. The second event, held on July 10, 2008 in Austin, Texas, covered Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. The event also featured presentations from Kentucky, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Tennessee. Workshop materials are available online at RuralTransportation.org.

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NADO

National Association of Development Organizations
and the NADO Research Foundation

AMPO

Association of
Metropolitan
Planning
Organizations

400 N. Capitol St., NW, Suite 390
Washington, DC 20001
202.624.7806 • info@nado.org
NADO.org • RuralTransportation.org

1029 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 710
Washington, DC 20005
202.296.7051 • AMPO.org