Metropolitan Transportation Planning: Primer

FHWA/FTA Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program
Purpose of this Presentation

To provide an overview of the perspective on:

• The purpose and process of metropolitan transportation planning, and the larger context for it

• The authority and responsibilities of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

• The role of the MPO Board
PLANNING FOR TRANSPORTATION
The MPO ...

• Is the required “forum for cooperative transportation decisionmaking for the metropolitan area”  
  23 CFR 450.104

• Is the engine driving regional collaboration and coordination

• Must meet regional transportation needs while being responsive to community interests and local by-laws and policies

• Is THE entity responsible for transportation planning in the metro area
A Metropolitan Planning Organization…

• Has the authority of Federal law

• Is a representative group of local stakeholders

• Leads the transportation planning process for the metropolitan area

• Is the region’s policymaking organization responsible for prioritizing transportation initiatives

• Carries out the metro transportation planning process in cooperation with the State DOT(s) and transit operators
All “urbanized areas” are required to have an MPO or be part of an MPO.
The MPO must work with others

- **Actively** seek the participation of all relevant agencies
- **Actively** seek input from the general public
- **Cooperate** with the State and public transit providers and **coordinate** with other transportation providers
MPO structure

• An MPO is required to have a decisionmaking “policy body”

• Beyond this, there is no required structure for an MPO, but most (LIKE US) are made up of

  - A Policy or Executive Board
  - Technical Advisory Committees
  - A director and staff
The MPO Board

• Takes approval actions

• Sets regional long-term transportation policy and approves plans

• Prioritizes and programs specific transportation initiatives for funding
Who sits on the Board?

• 8 Members from Local Bodies:
  – 4 People from Each Side of the River
  – 3 of the 4 are Elected Officials
  – Serve 2 year Terms

• Specific Representation of members:
  – 2 from Each City Council
    • Greg Leigh & Clarance Vetter- EGF City Council
    • Jeannie Mock & Ken Vien- GF City Council
  – 1 from Each County Commission
    • Warren Strandell - Polk County
    • Gary Malm - GF County
  – 1 from Each Planning Commission
    • Mike Powers- EGF Planning Commission
    • Steve Adams- GF Planning Commission
In making decisions, the Board should consider...

- Public comments and community values
- Long-term vision for the region
- Effect on system operations
- Impacts on the environment and the economy
- Comparison with alternative options
- Cost effectiveness and short- and long-term availability of funding
- Federal, State, and local regulations and plans
- Whether more information is needed
How does the Board obtain technical analyses?

- **MPO staff** provide committees with technical assessments and evaluations of proposed transportation initiatives.
- The **Technical Advisory Committee** provides recommendations to the board on specific strategies or projects.
- Staff may engage consultants to generate needed data.
Role of the MPO staff

- Provide information and technical support to board members and advisory committees
- Prepare documents
- Foster interagency coordination
- Facilitate public input and feedback
- Manage the planning process
MPO Staff Responsibilities

Earl Haugen  
Executive Director

Jairo Viafara

Bike/ Ped

Teri Kouba

GIS/ Transit

Peggy McNelis

Office Manager
Relationship between MPO and Local Governments

• Local Governments are members of the MPO
• MPO is the avenue for local governments to access Federal transportation funds
Relationship between MPO and Local Governments

• MPO process depends on cooperative relationships with member governments, State DOT(s), and transit operator

• Process has mutual veto/mutual suicide; i.e. It's much easier to block projects than to approve projects. It takes cooperation to get a project through the process
MPO PROCESS AND PRODUCTS
# MPO Products

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| LRTP        | 20 Years (min.)
              25 Years (preferred) | Future Goals, Strategies & Projects | Every 5 Years |
| TIP         | 4 Years      | Transportation Investments/Projects | Every Year |
Transportation planning and programming

Planning:
- Developing a vision
- Creating policies and strategies to support the vision
- Long-term

Programming (TIP):
- Prioritizing proposed initiatives
- Matching initiatives with available funds
- Short-term

The public must be involved in both
Basic requirements

• Reflect
  - The “3C” planning process
  - The ten FAST planning factors

• Develop
  - A Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) or simplified statement of work
  - Public involvement process/plan (PIP)
  - Financial Plan

• Produce and maintain
  - A Long-Range Transportation Plan
  - Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
The Three C’s

A Comprehensive, Cooperative, and Continuing process is required for initiatives to be eligible for Federal transportation funding.
Federal Planning Factors

The Board is required to consider:

- Economic vitality of the region
- Safety of the transportation system
- Security of the transportation system
- Accessibility and mobility options
- Environmental protection, energy conservation, and quality of life
- Integration and connectivity of the system
- Efficient system management and operation
- System preservation
UPWP

- Reflects local planning priorities
- Lists studies & tasks to be performed by MPO and/or member agencies (with MPO funds)
- Covers 2 years
- Funding sources for each study/task
- Basis for contract for federal funding
- Schedules
- Responsible agencies for each study/task
- Often includes “preamble” element
UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

Grand Forks - East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization

Prepared By
Grand Forks - East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization
Who provides funding for MPO transportation initiatives?

- Federal government (FHWA, FTA) 80%
- State government – just Mn 5%
- Local governments – 7.5/7.5%
The Long-Range Transportation Plan

- Describes vision for the region, and policies, operational strategies, and projects to achieve it
- Covers at least the next 20 years
- Leads to an intermodal system
- Reflects public involvement
- Contains a financial plan and is fiscally constrained
- Is updated every 5 years
2040 Plan Horizon

- Street/Highway Element
- Transit Development Element
- Pedestrian/Bicyclist Element
- ITS Strategy and Regional Architecture Element
The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

- A staged, multi-year, intermodal program of prioritized transportation initiatives consistent with Plan
- Shows annual activity for a 4-year period
- Contains a financial plan and is fiscally constrained
- An initiative not listed in the TIP cannot receive FHWA or FTA funds
- Reflects public involvement
- Is updated every year
The MPO planning process

1. Metro Plan
2. TIP
3. Metro UPWP (Selected, Funded, Implemented)
METROPOLITAN PLANNING PROCESS – SUMMARY

**UPWP**
- LRTP/Modal Plan Implementation
- Unique Technical Assistance
- Other Studies as Needed

**Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)**
- Overall Transportation Plan for Metropolitan Area (20 Year Vision)
- Modal Plans
  - Transit Development
  - Bike/Pedestrian
  - ITS/Traffic Operations

**Public Participation Plans**
- Title VI
- Limited English Proficiency
- Environmental Justice

**Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**
- Programs Federal Aid to implement Identified Needs

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN GRAND FORKS

**Title VI**
- Limited English Proficiency
- Environmental Justice
CONCLUSIONS
Effective planning pays off

- Modal connectivity to provide access, mobility, and ease in travel for all citizens
- Quality communities
- Environmental protection
- Regional economic development
- Safer transportation systems
- Equitable and efficient use of scarce financial resources