

*Metrolina*  
*Transportation Framework Study*

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## Glossary of Terms

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**ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act):** Federal bill approved in February 2009 aimed at creating jobs and spurring economic activity. The bill included funding for transportation infrastructure projects and non-transportation projects and programs.

**COG (Council of Governments):** state-designated lead regional organization that serves as a conduit of grants, a staff resource for members, and a forum for local governments to address current problems and future needs.

**KPI (Key Performance Indicator):** Measures of how well an operation is conducting its business.

**L RTP (Long-Range Transportation Plan):** A minimum 20-year vision of future transportation projects and programs, a portion of which is constrained to the forecasted revenues that the metropolitan planning organization planning study area will receive.

**MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization):** Formed in cooperation with the state, develops transportation plans and programs for the metropolitan area. For each urbanized area, a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) must be designated by agreement between the Governor and local units of government representing 75% of the affected population (in the metropolitan area), including the central cities or cities as defined by the Bureau of the Census, or in accordance with procedures established by applicable State or local laws (23 U.S.C. 134(b)(1)/Federal Transit Act of 1991 Sec. 8(b)(1)).

**MTIP (Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program):** A federally-required capital program adopted by metropolitan planning organizations.

**ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act):** Federal law describing procedures and programs for transportation in the U.S., enacted in 1991 and expired in 1997.

**NCDOT (North Carolina Department of Transportation):** State organization responsible for the majority of roadway systems in North Carolina, as well as management and funding allocation responsibilities for projects and programs concerning aviation, rail, public transportation, bicycle, and pedestrian modes of travel.

**NHS (National Highway System):** A federally designated set of roadways consists of the highway routes and connections to transportation facilities depicted on the map submitted by the Secretary to Congress with the report entitled "Pulling Together: The National Highway System and its Connections to Major Intermodal Terminals" dated May 24, 1996.

**RPO (Rural Planning Organization):** According to NC General Statutes, a voluntary organization of local elected officials or their designees and representatives of local transportation systems formed by a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Transportation to work cooperatively with the Department to plan rural transportation systems and to advise the Department on rural transportation policy.

**RTA (Regional Transportation Authority):** The name for a body that would manage the regional transportation system and proactively engage MPOs and RPOs in regional discussions of important issues.

**RTS (Regional Transportation System).** Federal- and State-numbered transportation corridors, and intra-regional greenway and transit connections

**SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users):** Federal law describing procedures and programs for transportation in the U.S., enacted in 2005 and expired in 2009.

**SEO (Stakeholder Engagement Officer):** A position created and hired by the Regional Transportation Authority to engage with MPOs/RPOs and the public.

**STIP (State Transportation Improvement Program):** A federally-required, four-year capital program (and three additional illustrative years after the first four in North Carolina) adopted by the State DOT at least every two years.

**STP (Surface Transportation Program):** Federal program which distributes funds to states 25% based on federal-aid highway miles, 40% on vehicle miles traveled, and 35% on tax payments to highway account. 75% of the funds are distributed to urban areas with a population over 200,000. MPOs receive 10% of the STP funds in their planning areas as a direct set-aside.

**TEA21 (Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century):** Federal law describing procedures and programs for transportation in the U.S., enacted in 1998 and expired in 2003.

**TMA (Transportation Management Area):** An urbanized area with a population over 200,000 (as determined by the latest decennial census) or other area when designation is requested by the Governor and the MPO (or affect local officials), and officially designated by the Administrators of the FHWA and the FTA. The TMA designation applies to the entire metropolitan planning area(s) and is required to develop a Congestion Management Process and undergo external process compliance certification reviews.

## Executive Summary

**M**etropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations were initially created to serve as the forum for regional transportation decision-making, working cooperatively with the state department of transportation, United States Department of Transportation, and other public and private transportation providers. MPOs were first contemplated in the 1962 Federal Aid Highway Act, and then formalized in the 1973 Act. Rural Planning Organizations were created in the wake of 1990's-era legislation that required states to receive equivalent input from rural areas as they would in urbanized areas. In 2000, North Carolina recognized both MPOs and RPOs officially in the state's general statutes. As these planning agencies, which are mainly comprised of the local government and NCDOT representatives in their planning areas, grow and evolve their missions become progressively more inter-related on major transportation projects. A number of MPOs around the country are currently examining their organizational structures, for example, to see how they can serve their member agencies better in a regional and even global transportation market. Requirements and expectations for engaging the public, planning and financing a regional transportation system, and managing the air quality impacts of those systems have continued to track generally upwards with successive federal and state legislation, particularly for larger metropolitan planning organizations with populations over 200,000.

### **Finding It In the Report**

**Page 5** – *How did we get here: a history of MPOs and RPOs in North Carolina*

**Page 6** – *Comparing operations among the Metrolina MPOs and RPOs*

**Page 13** – *What MPOs and RPOs do in Metrolina*

**Page 21** – *How well do the MPOs and RPOs work in Metrolina, according to the perceptions of our members*

**Page 31** – *What do other places (MPOs) have to tell us about their performance, our performance, and challenges being faced and overcome?*

**Page 46** – *What could we do now to get even better?*

**Appendices** – *Complete focus group summaries, legislation, etc.*

**Purpose.** The purpose of the study was to look at how we go about the business of creating a sound, multi-modal transportation system to effectively move people and goods in the Greater Charlotte Region, supporting the economy, and sustaining livability. Surveys, focus groups, and interviews were the primary means of gathering information throughout the study, as was a detailed review of the by-laws, charters, and planning products produced by the Metrolina MPOs and RPOs. Three MPOs and two RPOs were direct participants of the study, with the Rock Hill-Fort Mill MPO in South Carolina participating as observers only. The findings of the internal and external reviews are presented briefly below, along with the suggested actions on how regional transportation planning could be improved.

**Internal Framework Findings.** Both Metrolina-area MPOs and RPOs expressed great satisfaction with the service that they received from their current staff. Although some concerns were expressed about retaining adequate local decision-making authority, regional planning initiatives, leveraging revenue options, and engaging the public were areas where some improvement through more regional consolidation of function was noted during one or more of the eight focus groups or the internal survey, which were the perceptions generated by 100 respondents. From an organizational standpoint, the MPOs and RPOs generally operate along very similar lines, with only MUMPO using weighted voting to ensure that local roadway needs are not marginalized. All of the MPOs and RPOs employ a technical committee and policy committee framework; have similar objectives and core functions; and similar quorum requirements. MPOs have the responsibility of determining conformity with air quality standards for mobile sources and the larger MPOs also have to conduct a congestion management process and undergo an external federal certification process every four years. Additionally, all of the MPOs and RPOs use somewhat different project priority mechanisms to rank the importance of transportation projects for inclusion in their planning and programming documents. RPOs are not currently required by NCDOT to create comprehensive long-range transportation plans, nor can they get reimbursed by the State for contracting out work to private consultants.

The results of conducting eight focus group interviews echoed the findings of the surveys:

- There is high degree of satisfaction with the size of each MPO/RPO, the level of engagement of members, and the ability to coalesce around the area's needs to react to situations as they arise, one example being dealing with the Yadkin River Bridge project.
- Limited funding for project implementation, and its allocation, is a primary concern.
- There is also high frustration with the timely delivery of transportation projects, leading to a sense of "endless planning" that may be able to be addressed by having more local and regional financing options available to everyone.
- There is a sense of limited meaningful public engagement and a lack of a regional-scale land use-transportation planning linkage.
- While most felt that staff-level collaboration among MPO/RPO staffs works fairly well (air quality conformity, travel demand model, FAST Lanes Study), there is very limited coordination at the policy level among MPOs/RPOs. This is not to say that no problems have been encountered at the staff level, but they have been successfully overcome.

**External Framework Findings.** When asked the same questions as the Metrolina Region MPOs and RPOs, the external peer MPOs tended to perform slightly better in the areas noted above, as well as having better relationships with their respective state departments of transportation. Many MPOs, like our own regional planning organizations, cited that engaging the public effectively was challenging, although one thought that their MPO was doing well with engaging the public. Along similar lines, the peers often had more opportunities for local government members to participate in the planning process through standing committees. Two of the MPOs surveyed discussed "umbrella" agencies that conducted regional-scale planning in cooperation with or supported by one or more MPOs. The peer agencies universally had undergone a regional land use-transportation planning exercise, either as a result of the MPO process or through state requirements for coordinated planning. These state contexts are very important in terms of shaping not only the state-MPO (and RPO) relationship, but also the ability of the MPO to create and manage their own funding sources.

**Future Directions.** The report suggests a number of ways of improving performance as a region, the purpose of the study. These concepts are not presented in detail, and some concepts need to be considered together to operationalize (e.g., a regional body working with a regional transportation system) but some actions could be taken very quickly and without any additional, formal organization (e.g., regular, formal meetings with NCDOT and legislative coordination summits). Each of these concepts attempts to address one or more performance areas that the study was designed to investigate and improve.

- Create a Regional Transportation Authority to manage regional transportation system elements in concert with state and federal partners.
- Establish regular, joint legislative review sessions and biannual reviews with NCDOT Division and Department staff.
- Hire a professional staff position (Stakeholder Engagement Officer) to liaise with NCDOT, public, and MPOs/RPOs as well as to provide outreach to the public through prepared statements, video, presentations, and flyers.
- Identify and maximize existing and potential revenue sources.
- Create a regional transportation plan and adopt an aggressive five-year work program to create a regional land use-transportation forum and plan.

**Participants and Contact Information.** The Centralina Council of Governments managed this project funded by the North Carolina Department of Transportation and through the consulting services of The Louis Berger Group, Inc.; PBS&J, Inc.; and the Center for Urban Transportation Research. The research team also wishes to thank the participation of the staff and members of the Cabarrus-Rowan MPO; Gaston Urban Area MPO; Lake Norman RPO; Mecklenburg-Union MPO; and Rocky River RPO.

Call the Council of Governments at 704-372-2416 and reference *Metrolina Transportation Framework Study* to receive more information on this project and study findings.

## 1.0 Introduction: The Purpose and Origin of Regional Planning Organizations

**R**egional planning and *Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)* specifically can trace their origins in the United States to World War I and post-war planning efforts that eagerly anticipated the end of the conflict and the commensurate economic growth that would accompany it. The National Planning Board created in 1933 (and later reorganized into the National Resources Planning Board that was disbanded in 1943) urged a moderated, careful, and “comprehensive” approach to regional planning.

The NRPB’s decade of existence is the only legacy that our country has of a nationalized planning institution, but the underlying concepts survive in regional planning today.<sup>1</sup> The cautious approach advocated by the NRPB quickly gave way to the unbridled optimism of the 1950’s, as millions of servicemen and women came home, started families, and purchased homes and cars in record numbers. Suburbanization in the United States pre-dates 1950, but the magnitude and pace of what happened afterwards were wholly new. However, the fast pace of suburban growth was not viewed as a universal good as the decade wore on, and in 1962 the federal Highway Act contained specific language to develop a comprehensive, coordinated, and continuing (3-C) approach to roadway planning, as it was becoming evident that travel patterns did not respect traditional municipal and county boundaries. Just as with requirements to gather input from rural areas now, the states had no concrete guidance initially on how to operationalize the 3-C process requirement, but several areas formed regional planning bodies with differing levels of authority.

Since the responsibility of implementing the Highway Act largely fell to the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) – an agency closely allied with state departments of transportation – the first metropolitan planning bodies tended to become advisors to the states. Other regional planning initiatives in the 1960’s tended to follow suit, although collectively they signaled an important change of perception of the role of government. By the early 1970’s opposition to the ongoing road-building policies from previous decades had grown greatly in major cities. The 1973 Highway Act responded after a year-long struggle with environmental and transit advocacy groups by

### Quick Summary

*This section addresses the history of Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations nationally and in North Carolina.*

- *Regional planning and MPOs’ origins are rooted in post-WWI “readying for growth” work by the federal government.*
- *While the 1980’s saw a shift away from a regional planning emphasis, this was restored and enhanced in the transportation field by ISTEA in 1991 and subsequent federal transportation authorization legislation).*
- *MPOs have formal standing in federal law; RPOs are defined through NC General Statutory language. MPOs with over 200,000 people in their urbanized areas have additional responsibilities and funding authority.*
- *MPOs and RPOs are “attached” to other government agencies to allow them to process federal funds, hire staff, and execute contracts.*
- *Both MPOs and RPOs are charged with developing transportation project priorities through a proactive public process and providing a public forum for the discussion of transportation projects inside their planning areas.*
- *The purpose of the study is briefly stated as identifying ways of improving regional planning and programming.*

creating Metropolitan Planning Organizations and funding them to carry out the 3-C process, with the final rules on how to implement these organizations issued in 1975.<sup>2</sup> However, regional planning lost ground with the shift from categorical grant programs administered largely by regions and localities, to “block grants” administered by states. Although MPOs remained, their authority was reduced, and many MPOs came to be viewed as rubber-stamping state department of transportation decisions. One estimate has 38 of 39 programs that required coordinated regional planning being terminated during the early 1980’s. However, the events during this time period reinforced the need for government institutions to engage private-sector solutions to traditionally public sector problems such as privately operated Transportation Management Associations.

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) hailed a reversal of sorts in the fortunes of MPOs and regional planning, doubling funding for the former and clarifying the definition of the latter. Following on the heels of a decade-long battle to amend the Clean Air Act, ISTEA created not only a stronger role for MPOs but also introduced more participants into the decision-making process that the MPO – and State DOTs – had to address. Along with the new level of authority, especially for MPOs with urbanized populations of over 200,000 people, came more responsibilities to engage stakeholders like freight operators and private service providers as well as a lead role in proving mobile source air quality conformity and establishing financial constraint of proposed projects. Subsequent federal legislation has only strengthened the break that ISTEA made with prior federal transportation legislation, inviting natural resource agencies, bicycle/pedestrian system users, low-income/minority (“Environmental Justice”) and limited English proficiency (LEP) populations to the table not just to be listened to but actively participate in the decision-making process. Perhaps the most important legacy of ISTEA is that the relationships between state DOTs and MPOs were forced to mature and, although many tensions still exist, that relationship is considerably more cooperative today than in previous years.

The mention of metropolitan planning organizations in North Carolina’s General Statutes (NCGS) has been a relatively late arrival. While the North Administrative Code has several requirements dating back to 1978 that deal with apportionment of federal funding and the necessity of maintaining a work program approved by NCDOT, the NCGS definitions and responsibilities of MPOs in the creation of a transportation plan would wait until the year 2000 to be officially inserted. Appendix A contains some of the most relevant General Statutes in their entirety; however, there are mentions of MPOs in several other locations, such as when a Transportation Authority is required to receive MPO approval of its financial plan. The adjustments made to NCGS 136-66.2 that deal with the creation of a long-range plan are significant, altering language that referred to a “thoroughfare” plan that had been in place since 1959.

**Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs)**, although tracing their origins to a rich rural history in the U.S., stem directly from a single requirement contained as one of the 23 statewide planning factors in ISTEA:

*The transportation needs of nonmetropolitan areas (areas outside of MPO planning boundaries) through a process that includes consultation with local elected officials with jurisdiction over transportation*

and as “additional requirements” to seven planning factors in the successor to ISTEA, the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21):

*“Additional Requirements.—In carrying out planning under this section, each State shall, at a minimum, consider—*

*“(1) with respect to nonmetropolitan areas, the concerns of local elected officials representing units of general purpose local government;*

*“(2) the concerns of Indian tribal governments and Federal land management agencies that have jurisdiction over land within the boundaries of the State; and*

*“(3) coordination of transportation plans, programs, and planning activities with related planning activities being carried out outside of metropolitan planning areas.”*

In North Carolina as in at least 27 other states<sup>3</sup>, the Rural Planning Organization was formed to fulfill this requirement. In 2000, the North Carolina General Assembly authorized the development of Rural

Transportation Planning Organizations to establish a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process, mirroring the 3-C process described in the 1962 federal Highway Act. According to the Rocky River RPO Bylaws, several actions are integral to the responsibilities of the RPO, as described in the following bulleted items.

- Develop long-range local and regional multi-modal transportation plans in cooperation with the area MPOs and the North Carolina Department of Transportation.
- Provide a forum for public participation in the rural transportation planning process.
- Develop and prioritize suggestions for transportation projects which the Rural Planning Organization believes should be included in the State Transportation Improvement Program.
- Provide transportation-related information to local governments and other interested organizations and persons.
- Conduct transportation related studies and surveys for local governments and other interested entities/organizations.
- Undertake mutually agreed upon transportation related tasks to enhance transportation system development, coordination and efficiency.

The 2006 *RPO Manual* created by NCDOT<sup>4</sup> identifies ten deliverable items that each RPO must produce:

1. Planning Work Program (PWP)
2. Five-year planning calendar
3. TIP priority list (biennial)
4. Public participation plan
5. Prioritized list of transportation plan study needs
6. Regional comprehensive transportation plan
7. Compilation of land use plans
8. Annual performance report (Due with final quarterly reimbursement package)
9. Inventory of RPO equipment (hardware & software)
10. Audits

The RPO organization mirrors its MPO counterpart in several ways with these deliverables, such as the development of an annual work program (and, under North Carolina practices, a five-year planning calendar); a prioritized list of transportation projects; and the creation of a rural transportation improvement program, a prospectus, and a long-range plan. At this point in time, RPOs are not expected to produce this last item (regional comprehensive transportation plan), but rather are expected to “stitch” together a number of plans within their jurisdiction. Both RPOs and MPOs have a statewide organization as well as national organizations that help provide forums for sharing ideas and taking a position on issues. Today’s RPO also has a lead planning agency (LPA), a designation used almost solely in North Carolina to describe the legal dependency of the MPO (usually attached to a city but in two cases to a Council of Governments) or RPO (typically attached to Councils of Government, although the Rocky River RPO has Stanly County as a LPA) to a contract-able authority. A cursory review of other RPO models indicates that most RPOs are receiving between \$70,000 and \$120,000 from their state departments of transportation to finance their activities, with a 20% match being commonplace. This figure falls into rough alignment with funding that North Carolina’s RPOs are receiving now.

Regardless of these similarities, the key difference between metropolitan and rural planning organizations is their standing in federal law: MPOs are codified under law in 23 USC Section 134 and in federal planning regulations 23 CFR 450. While there are differences among MPOs brought about by state-level policies and statutes as well as in the federal code itself (MPOs with over 200,000 population or in air quality nonconformity status have additional responsibilities and certification review requirements), nevertheless the differences in authority and therefore the practice of the RPO are quite different than that of a MPO in North Carolina. For example, consultants cannot be retained by RPOs and subsequently reimbursed by NCDOT, and RPOs are not currently required to produce comprehensive plans from which to base their project priorities. In some respects, RPOs are in a position not unlike that of MPOs created after the 1962 and before the 1973 federal highway acts: there is a call to achieve an outcome without

federal guidance on exactly how the outcome is to be achieved. Some discussions during the current reauthorization of the federal transportation bill have indicated intent to codify RPOs into federal law.

The purpose of this study was to reexamine the metropolitan and rural planning organizations in the Metrolina area, and particularly to study areas of regional planning performance as perceived by the members of each MPO. This effort was principally accomplished by surveying and interviewing both the internal members and the external peer agencies selected by the Steering Committee. The study was funded by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and managed by the Centralina Council of Governments. The consulting firm of The Louis Berger Group, Inc. was retained to conduct the study, as were two subconsultants, the Center for Urban Transportation Research and PBS&J, Inc.

## 2.0 Organizational Structure and Responsibilities

The contents of this section specifically review the existing operational structures of the five planning organizations included under this study framework. Included in this assessment are descriptions of voting, membership, and quorum policies embedded in the Memoranda of Understanding and / or committee by-laws for each planning organization.

### 2.1 General Observations on Structure

The structure of each planning organization is established by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and further refined through the adoption of by-laws. The adopted by-laws established for both the technical and policy boards (generally referred to as “Technical Coordinating Committee” and “Transportation Advisory Committee” in the majority of the regional transportation planning organizations in North Carolina) detail the meeting framework, member agencies, voting policies, and purposes. Some differences exist in the coverage or overlap of the MOUs and the by-laws of individual agencies, but the MOU is the controlling element and the by-laws typically provide additional, operational details. While the by-laws typically take a ¾-majority of members to modify, the MOUs require a re-signing of all member agencies, including NCDOT.

MUMPO eschews the term “Transportation Advisory Committee” (TAC) in its description of its primary policy body, referring to this committee as simply “the MUMPO.” While the preliminaries resemble those of the Gaston MPO memorandum of understanding nearly word-for-word, MUMPO has other dissimilarities as well that differentiate it from the other two MPOs. The MOU goes into detail about how a MUMPO action can only be altered by another MUMPO action, and most specifically about the conditions under which the MUMPO technical committee (TCC) can change a thoroughfare’s proposed alignment. The specificity of this language is unusual in a Memorandum of Understanding, and clearly delineates the authority of the MPO in such matters.

The Gaston Urban Area MPO (GUAMPO) is unique in the Metrolina Region in the creation of an Executive Committee, comprised of the following personnel:

- Chair of the TAC;
- Vice-Chair of the TAC;
- North Carolina Board of Transportation;
- TAC representative from the City of Gastonia<sup>5</sup>;

#### Quick Summary

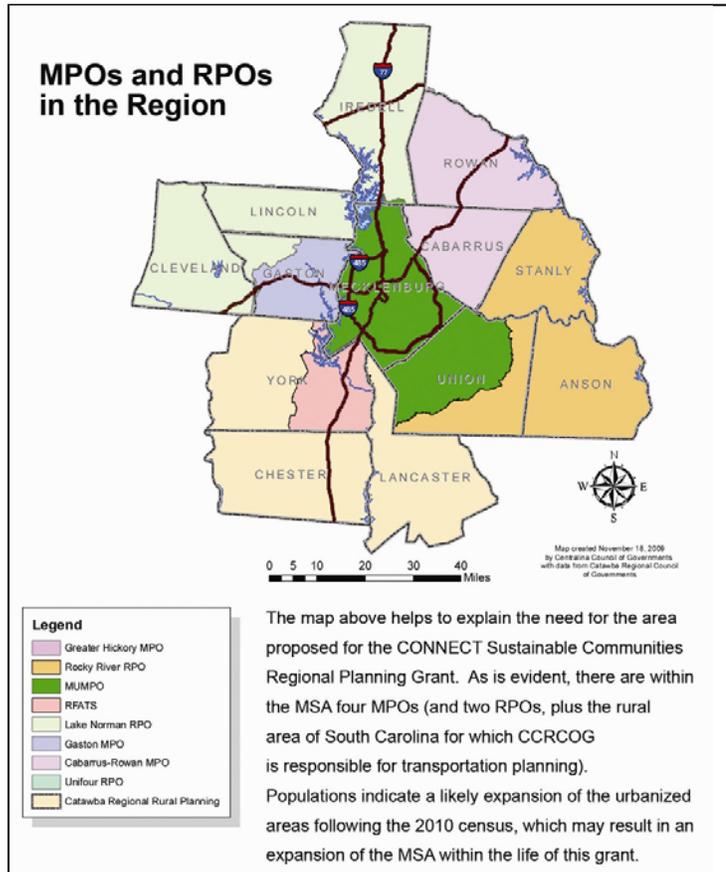
Section 2 offers a review of the organizational structures of the three MPOs and two RPOs in this study.

- The structures of both MPOs and RPOs stem from a single, NCDOT historical source, and thus share many similarities.
- The purposes of regional transportation organizations in North Carolina are also very similar, and stem primarily from federal legislation governing the functions of MPOs. However, RPOs are not currently generating long-range transportation plans.
- Some variations in voting structures are evident, but generally a “one person, one vote” arrangement predominates. The exceptions are MUMPO, which has a weighted vote to ensure preeminence of local planning authority for roadway projects, and the Lake Norman RPO that employs consolidated voting that permits one county to represent multiple municipalities inside it.
- MPOs and RPOs have generally similar quorum requirements, committee structures, and responsibilities, although the larger MPOs (called Transportation Management Areas, or TMAs) have additional responsibilities over air quality, certification, and a direct allocation share of one federal funding pool.

- and
- TAC representative from Gaston County.

In addition to having general oversight of the operations of the TAC, this board can meet independently if called by the Chair or any two of the other members to approve UPWP and TIP amendments until such time as the full TAC can meet. However, the Executive Committee is required to adhere to the intent of the MOU, By-laws, and actions taken by the TAC.

Table 1 on the following page encapsulates some of the key characteristics of each MPO/RPO in the study region, while the succeeding text explains in more detail the structural components of each organization, highlighting significant differences where they exist.



**Figure 1. MPOs and RPOs in the Metrolina Region**  
(source: Centralina Council of Governments)

**Table 1. Organization Dashboard**

Planning Organization	Voting Policy Board Members (Local / State / Others / Affiliates) <sup>1</sup>				Voting Technical Board Members (Local / State / Others / Affiliates) <sup>1,2</sup>				Quorum (Policy Board/ Technical Board)		Alternate Meeting Sites (Policy Board/ Technical Board)		Alternate Officers (Policy Board/ Technical Board)		Weighted Voting	Cites Coordination with Centralina COG for Land Use Decisions	Refers to "Thoroughfare Plan" in MOU	Scheduled Policy Board Meetings per Year	Prospectus Cited in MOU	Policy Board Officer Terms (Years)	Absentee Voting
	L	S	O	A	L	S	O	A	P	T	P	T	P	T							
<b>Metropolitan Planning Organization</b>																					
CRMPO	16	1	0	3	16	3	0	12	51%	51%	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	12	N	1	N
GUAMPO	11	1	2	1	17	6	2	0	50%	51%	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	6	Y	1	N
MUMPO	17	1	0	3	22	3	1	17	51% <sup>3</sup>	50%	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	6	Y	1	N
<b>Rural Planning Organization</b>																					
RRRPO	11	1	0	0	11	2	0	15	51%	51%	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	8	N	2	N
LNRPO	13 <sup>4</sup>	1	0	10	13 <sup>4</sup>	2	0	8	51%	51%	Y	N	N	N	N	N/A <sup>5</sup>	N	4	N	2	N

(1) L=Local; S=State; O=Others; A=Affiliates (types of member representation) and P=Policy; T=Technical

(2) MUMPO does not employ the term "affiliates" although 17 agencies are listed as being notified of meetings of the TCC. Affiliate members are noted in the by-laws and / or MOU as non-voting participants in meetings. The term "ex-officio member" denotes membership in a committee without voting privileges.

(3) This is 51% of the weighted votes from at least seven voting members.

(4) The Lake Norman RPO assigns all of its municipal members in a single county a single vote; hence, the number of votes is four counties, four municipal agency votes, and two NCDOT votes (Division 12 and Transportation Planning Branch representatives) for a total of 10 votes allocated to 14 members in the TAC and 15 members in the TCC.

(5) Since the Lake Norman Rural Planning Organization is housed at a Council of Government, this question is not applicable.

## 2.2 Voting Schema

With the exception of MUMPO, all of the organizations require a simple majority to take action on any agenda item, with the exception of modifying the by-laws (typically requiring a 3/4-majority vote). The concept of weighted voting is typically of concern to multi-jurisdictional organizations, and metropolitan / rural planning organizations are no exception. A weighted voting arrangement occurs when just one voting member has a vote that counts for more or less than at least one other voting member of the same committee. While not a true weighted voting scheme, a facsimile of weighted voting may occur when more than one representative from a single organization is present on the same committee, if the assumption is made that most or all of the voting members from the same organization will vote the same way on a given issue.

MUMPO is the only one of the five planning organizations that has a weighted voting scheme. Furthermore, while a simple majority of the weighted vote suffices to carry most actions in MUMPO, votes on non-state/federal road projects that affect a member municipality directly must agree with the municipality being impacted or overturned by a 3/4-majority vote of the full MUMPO committee.

The Lake Norman RPO has a slight deviation from the other agencies in that all of the municipalities in a single member county get a combined single vote (a total of four municipal votes). The result is that 10 votes are allocated among the 21 member agencies that have a seat at the table.

## 2.3 Observations on Quorum Requirements

All of the organizations studied require either a simple quorum of 50% or 51% of the voting members, with one exception. MUMPO requires a 51% majority of the weighted voting membership from at least seven voting members. In other words, at least seven members must be in attendance and those members must account for a combined 51% of the weighted vote. If not for this provision, then the City of Charlotte and two other member agencies could comprise a quorum and take action on any item in the agenda without participation from the larger set of member agencies.

Table 2 illustrates the MUMPO voting structure in accordance with the MOU updated in 2003.

**Table 2. MUMPO Weighted Voting Structure (2003)**

Member Agency Name	Weighted Votes
City of Charlotte	16
Town of Cornelius	1
Town of Davidson	1
Town of Huntersville	2
Town of Indian Trail	1
Town of Matthews	2
Mecklenburg County	2
Town of Mint Hill	2
City of Monroe	2
Town of Pineville	1
Town of Stallings	1
Union County	2
Town of Unionville	1
Town of Waxhaw	1
Town of Weddington	1
Village of Wesley Chapel	1
Town of Wingate	1
N.C. Board of Transportation (NCBOT)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>

### 3.0 Functions

The following section outlines in detail the specific functions of MPOs and RPOs as identified in Memoranda of Understanding, policy/technical committee by-laws, and prospectuses. Other subsections compare and contrast public participation, project prioritization systems, and long-range transportation plan elements. The purpose is to provide a basis for assessing the similarities and dissimilarities of the functions of each of the five organizations in the study region.

#### 3.1 Functional Objectives

Embedded in the by-laws of the policy and technical committees as well as the MOU are statements regarding the specific functions of technical and policy committees of the Metrolina MPOs and RPOs. The following chart (Table 3) depicts the objectives stated by each MPO and RPO in the study region. The objectives are not listed in any particular order of priority.

Table 3. Objectives of MPOs/RPOs

Objective	CRMP ○	MUMP ○	GUAMP ○	RRRP ○	LNRP ○
Cooperative, Coordinated, Comprehensive planning process in accordance with federal guidelines	●	●	●	○	○
Advise on transportation needs	●	●	●	●	●
Coordinate with NCDOT	●	●	●	●	●
Inform public and serve as a forum for discussion	●	●	●	●	●
Develop short- and long-term planning products	●	●	●	●	●
Revise federal aid boundaries and system	●	●	●	○	○
Development	●	●	●	●	●

#### Quick Summary

Section 3 goes into detail on the specific functions of the MPOs and RPOs in the Metrolina Region.

- Both MPOs and RPOs are responsible for advising on transportation needs, coordination with NCDOT, informing the public and serving as a forum for public engagement, developing long- and short-term planning products and developing multi-modal transportation plans.
- MPOs and RPOs influence project selection processes by adopting and implementing project priority systems; these priority mechanisms share many similarities across MPOs and RPOs especially the need for “congestion relief.”
- However, MPOs and RPOs have some dissimilarities in how they prioritize projects and what planning elements are emphasized (e.g., transit planning, land use-transportation coordination, and air quality).
- MUMPO’s bylaw language clearly stipulates preeminence in transportation decision-making in its area, and generally exhibits more modifications from other MPO bylaws. Otherwise, the committee structures share many similarities, employing a single technical and single policy body for every MPO and RPO.



<b>of a multimodal transportation plan</b>					
<b>Air quality conformity and planning</b>	●	●	●	○	○
<b>Coordinate with other (adjacent) MPOs</b>	●	●	●	○	●

Key: (●) Stated explicitly in by-laws; (●) Requirement of federal law; (○) Not an objective or requirement

While the Cabarrus-Rowan and MUMPO policy board by-laws closely mirror each other, the GUAMPO by-laws are similar in some respects but worded slightly differently, or else contain different items such as air quality conformity. MUMPO also clearly stipulates that its organization is the premier decision-making authority in matters where “the North Carolina Board of Transportation’s specific concurrence is not required by Federal or State law.” GUAMPO also carefully words an objective to note that the MPO is responsible for developing a multimodal program. However, both air quality maintenance/determinations and multimodal program development are requirements of federal transportation law, and are thus still issues that all of the MPOs must address. The two RPOs have objectives that are similar, although Lake Norman RPO specifically states that an objective is to coordinate with metropolitan planning organizations. Generally, the two RPOs have more in common with each other than they do with the MPOs, an intuitive statement since the latter have a common ancestry in federal law while the former are creations of state policies that attempt to address a federal requirement to coordinate with rural areas. MPOs and RPOs therefore do not, for example, generally land use development decisions, revenue generation, or environmental remediation (except for air quality) as parts of their core missions since these functions are not given as strong a footing in either federal or state law.

### 3.2 Public Participation

Metropolitan planning organizations have a federal requirement to not only inform but to engage the public in their planning processes. Each MPO is required to have a formally adopted Public Participation Plan (PPP) that outlines how they intend to meet this requirement. Additionally, MPOs are required to develop Title VI and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plans to identify and engage populations that have been traditionally underserved in coordination efforts of the past. Even certain outreach techniques, such as visualization and internet-based outreach options, are hard-wired into the language of the current federal metropolitan planning rules. The cumulative effect of these requirements is to place an increasing importance and level of resources engaging various segments of the public. Finally, with the adoption of SAFETEA-LU the MPOs are required to coordinate with transit companies, bike/walk advocates, and natural resource agencies during the development of long-range transportation plans (LRTPs). RPOs do not have as extensive a list of requirements, but they are charged from a state policy standpoint with reaching out to various segments of the public, and the two RPOs in the study region have adopted public participation plans.

The following table (Table 4) illustrates these public engagement policies of MPOs and RPOs, noting where there are distinct variations among the five planning organizations. The indicator dots show how much information is contained in the PPP document for various areas of work effort, but no attempt has been made to verify if the MPO or RPO is actually carrying out the actions contained in the PPP.

**Table 4. Public Participation Comparisons In Metrolina MPOs and RPOs**

Public Participation Policy	CRMPO	MUMPO	RRRPO	LRNPO
Post-evaluation of events and outreach efforts	●	● <sup>1</sup>	○	○
Minimum duration of LRTP public review period (days)	30	30	30	30
EJ access requirements / techniques	●/○	●	●	○
Mobility handicap access requirements / techniques	●/○	●/●	●	●
Limited English Proficiency requirements / techniques	●/○	●/●	●	○
LRTP Outreach Provisions	●	● <sup>2</sup>	N/A	N/A
Comprehensive Transportation Plan Provisions	○	●	●	○
UPWP/PWP Outreach Provisions	●	●	●	○
Transportation Improvement Program Provisions	●	●	●	○
Major Investment Study Provisions	●	○	○	○
Air Quality Conformity Determination Provisions	○	●	●	○

Key: (●) Yes, in detail; (●) Yes, but with minimal detail provided; (○) Not included in the adopted PPP

- Notes:
- (1) The annual report cited by MUMPO (p. 18) does not mention if this includes a performance-based evaluation component.
  - (2) MUMPO does include reference to LEP populations in various parts of the PPP (e.g., the Outreach and Education Program, p. 9)
  - (3) GUAMPO provided “Public Involvement in the Transportation Planning Process Gaston Urban Area” which does not contain an outline of the technical provisions of the public engagement process.

Universally, the planning organizations leave open the specific techniques that are employed to engage the public during various common activities, such as creating or updating the long-range transportation plan. However, most of the organizations do cite a list and a brief description of commonly used outreach techniques that could be employed for any action or project undertaken by the MPO. The PPP document may also be supplemented by separate Title VI/Environmental Justice and Limited English Proficiency plans; however, most of the organizations reviewed did not offer specific remedies for engaging traditionally disadvantaged segments of the public in the adopted PPP. MUMPO does provide specific language on how some of these populations are to be engaged for specific actions or products generated by the organization, and goes further by recommending the implementation of an outreach program to underserved populations. The Rocky River RPO is notable for (A) its detail in providing the exact locations and contact information for public distribution outlets; and (B) a set of resources for identifying low income and minority (EJ) populations as well as Spanish hearing impaired translation services. While the four planning organizations discuss the disposition of public comments (typically this includes summarization to the TCC/TAC boards, inclusion in minutes, direction to respond to the commenter by letter), only CRMPO discusses in detail post-evaluation performance of how well public outreach techniques work. All of the organizations maintain a web presence that helps disseminate information to the general public and stakeholders. The LRNPO public information plan tends to focus on techniques and their use rather than identifying specific actions to be taken for various work items (e.g., plan updates, work programs, improvement program updates, etc.).

**Federal Law (§ 450.316: Interested parties, participation, and consultation)**

*The plan required by law for all MPOs must include the following elements, at a minimum:*

- *Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;*
- *Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;*
- *Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;*
- *Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web*

### 3.3 Prioritizing Projects

The transportation improvement program is a (minimal) four-year outlook of projects to be implemented by state and federal (and often local or private participating) transportation agencies. The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) creates a seven-year TIP every other year; the metropolitan and rural planning organizations follow suit with a MTIP document that mirrors the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) word-for-word but only for projects within the relevant planning area. Large MPOs with over 200,000 population, called Transportation Management Authorities or TMAs, have clear primacy in the development of the improvement program

**Federal Law (§ 450.324 Development and content of the transportation improvement program)**

*The TIP for every MPO must be financially constrained to the anticipated revenues to be received for at least the first four years of the TIP; 49 U.S.C. 5307 distributions are also required to be prioritized and transportation control measures (TCMs) must receive priority consideration for implementation. The long-range plan (metropolitan transportation plan) is not required to be prioritized, although fiscal constraint requires a de facto prioritization of projects.*

inside their jurisdictions; however, the process of how disputes get worked out has traditionally called into question the relationship between NCDOT and MPOs in project selections and descriptions in the STIP/MTIP. Both MUMPO and GUAMPO are TMAs; the Gaston Urban Area MPO may become pass the 200,000 population threshold as a result of the 2010 Census count.

Regardless, the STIP/MTIP must be financially constrained to anticipated revenues for at least the first four years. Another requirement of the STIP/MTIP is that projects must be “prioritized” and consistent with the long-range transportation plan, a minimum 20-year outlook on projects and programs. The ways in which MPOs and RPOs have created and updated their project prioritization mechanism varies widely across North Carolina and across the country<sup>6, 7</sup> and provide a good indication of the organization’s values as they seek to prioritize limited transportation funding across many, often competing, interests. It is worth noting that with the advent of a statewide project priority listing the priority-setting processes within each MPO/RPO may become increasingly irrelevant and progressively sublimated into the statewide process. [Table 5](#) on the following page provides a summary of each of the planning organizations’ project prioritization factors.

**Table 5. Project Priority Factors and General Weighting**

Public Participation Policy	MUMPO	GUAMPO	RRRPO	LNRP0
<b>Congestion Reduction</b>	●	●	●	●
<b>Safety</b>	●	●	○	●
<b>Cost Efficiency (Cost per Lane Mile)</b>	○	●	○	●
<b>Cost Efficiency (Cost per User)</b>	○	●	○	○
<b>Air Quality</b>	●	●	○	●
<b>Consistency with Thoroughfare/Transportation Plan</b>	○	●	●	●
<b>Consistency with the TIP</b>	○	○	●	○
<b>Economic Development</b>	●	○	●	●
<b>Multi-Modal Project or Enhancement</b>	●	○	○	●
<b>Minimize Impact on Natural Environment</b>	●	●	○	●
<b>Minimize Impact on Built Environment</b>	○	●	○	●
<b>Environmental Justice Considerations</b>	●	○	○	●
<b>Enhancement of Regional Goods and People Movements</b>	○	○	●	●
<b>Policy Body Scoring</b>	○	○	●	○
<b>Supports Local Land Use Planning</b>	●	○	○	●
<b>Improves Accessibility to Center City</b>	●	○	○	○
<b>Promote Intermodal Connectivity</b>	●	○	○	○
<b>Benefit-Cost Comparison</b>	●	○	○	○

Key: (●) = High Priority Factor; (●) = Moderate Priority Factor; (●) = Low Priority Factor; (○) = Not Scored

The results of the project priority assessment indicate that only congestion relief is used universally by all four regional planning organizations (note that CRMPO did not have a formally adopted list of priority factors at the time of this writing). Safety, consistency with the long-range transportation plan, and minimization of harm to the natural environment were also cited by three of the four regional planning organizations as project priority factors.

The process employed by each of the MPOs/RPOs is different, sometimes in important respects. MUMPO has a positive/negative scoring system whereby most (although not all) projects can get a maximum of five positive points and a minimum of five negative points if the factor proves to be a detriment in or more areas of impact (although LNRPO also has several factors with a negative dimension). Only the Rocky River Rural Planning Organization allows its policy board members to directly allocate some points to projects. Generally all of the organizations tend to rely heavily on numerical inputs directly from the travel demand model or other sources more than others. All of the organizations appear to avoid a strict adherence to the eight planning factors listed in the Metropolitan Planning Rules and the factors are not mode-specific, both of which are common elements in other MPOs from around the country.

In order to foster more regional cooperation, the Charlotte Regional Alliance for Transportation (CRAFT). CRAFT is intended to be both a technical and policy forum for projects and programs of a regional scope in the Charlotte bi-state region and to be for the “public good.” RPOs are not formally included in the interlocal agreement that chartered CRAFT, but transit operations and NCDOT are allotted one position on the Executive Committee. As of this writing, the Executive Committee has not met in nearly two years; however, the Technical Committee, which includes some additional representation for environment and planning departments in member counties, does meet regularly to discuss regional project concerns.

## 4.0 Perceptions of MPO and RPO Functionality

In order to initiate the assessment of individual metropolitan and rural planning organizations the study team conducted both focus groups and an internal survey of stakeholders. This section discusses both the survey results (Section 4.1) and the comments received from the focus groups (Section 4.2). Appendices contain the complete (paper version) of the survey (Appendix B) and the complete summary minutes of discussions conducted with the eight focus groups (Appendix C).

### 4.1 Internal Framework Survey

The total number of respondents to the internal framework survey was 100. Most of the respondents, when asked their representation, responded that they were municipal staff (32%) and/or on a MPO Technical Committee (28%). RPO Technical Committee staff and elected officials were also represented well in the survey respondents. Bicycle/Pedestrian advocates and NCDOT staff accounted for the lowest number of representatives (less than 3%).

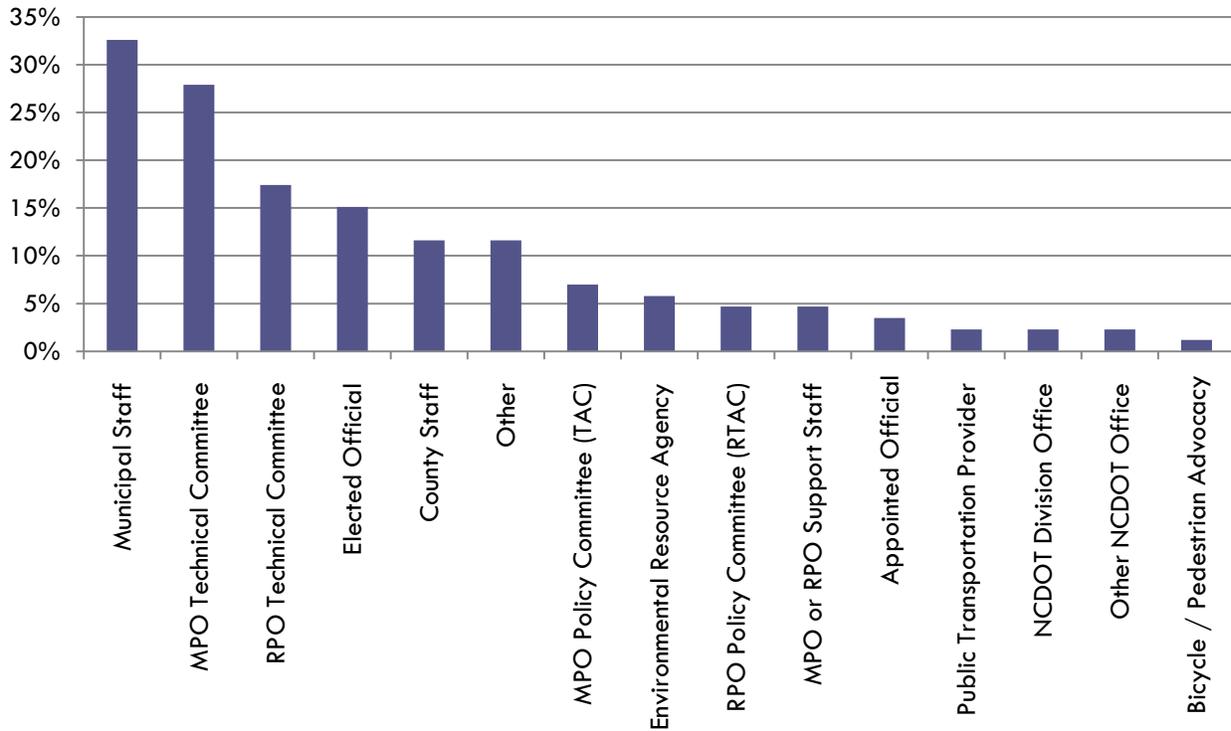
Figure 2 on the next page illustrates the representation of this survey.

#### Quick Summary

Section 4 details the findings of the internal framework survey, responded to by 100 MPO/RPO stakeholders and members in the Metrolina Region.

- The picture of the Region as it is described by a single group of counties is not shared universally, with the most-recognized component of the Region, Mecklenburg County, being recognized by only 75% of the respondents as a part of the Metrolina Region.
- Most respondents felt that issues such as “implementing a multi-modal system”, “air quality”, “coordination” with adjacent planning organizations” and “the long term quality of a rail transportation system” would improve significantly if the transportation planning agencies consolidated at least some of their functions.
- Additional consolidation efforts, according to collective opinion of the participants, would result in more regional cooperation and more attention from NCDOT and USDOT partners.
- Major concerns were raised over a loss of local autonomy, or “voice,” as well as a decline in staff service if consolidated services were deployed.
- There is a sense of limited meaningful public engagement and a lack of land use-transportation planning linkages, as well as limited coordination at the policy level among MPOs/RPOs.

Please identify the agency or organization that you most accurately represent with respect to dealings with Metrolina transportation agencies (metropolitan and rural transportation planning organizations). You may choose up to two (2) selections.



**Figure 2. Survey Representation**

Survey respondents were also asked to identify counties that they considered to be in “their” region. The following (Figure 3) is a listing of those counties. While the majority (75%) of respondents cited Mecklenburg County as being part of the Metrolina Region, the percentage is still unexpectedly low since this county contains the most population and the largest city in the study area. Other counties that were not part of the selection options but were “written in” as in-region counties included Anson, Catawba, Lincoln, and Cleveland.

Please check each county that you think is a part of our Region. Check all that apply.

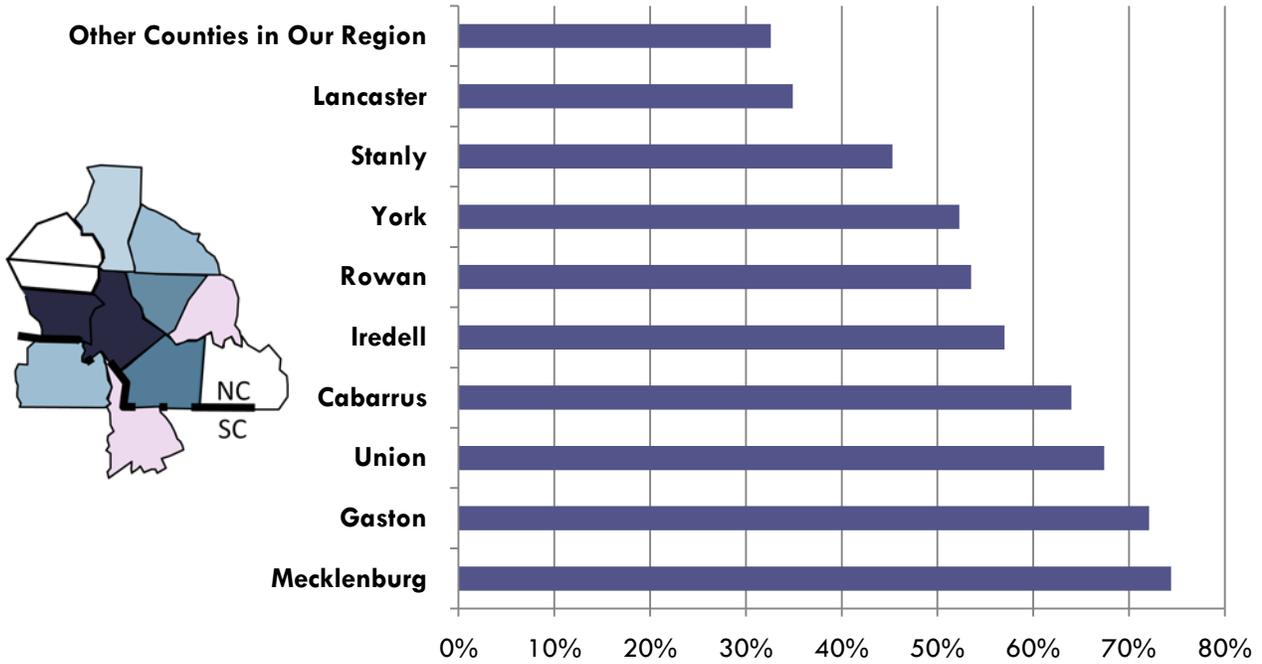
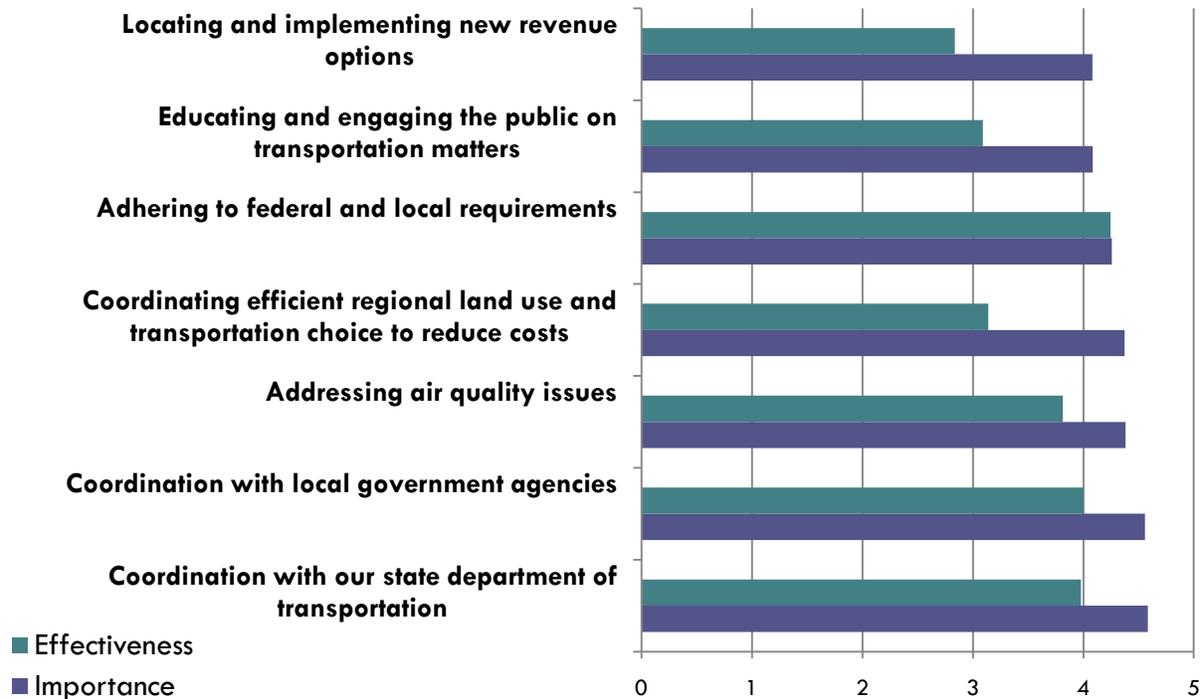


Figure 3. Counties in the Region, Survey Respondents

The next two questions focused on the functions that a MPO/RPO should do well and how well the Metrolina planning organizations were performing in those same areas. [Figure 3](#) shows how the respondents cited the importance and performance in six different areas.

- Which functions do you think our regional transportation planning organizations do effectively now?
- On which functions *SHOULD* a regional transportation planning organization focus its attention? Rate each answer on a five-point scale.



**Figure 4. MPO Functions and Performance**

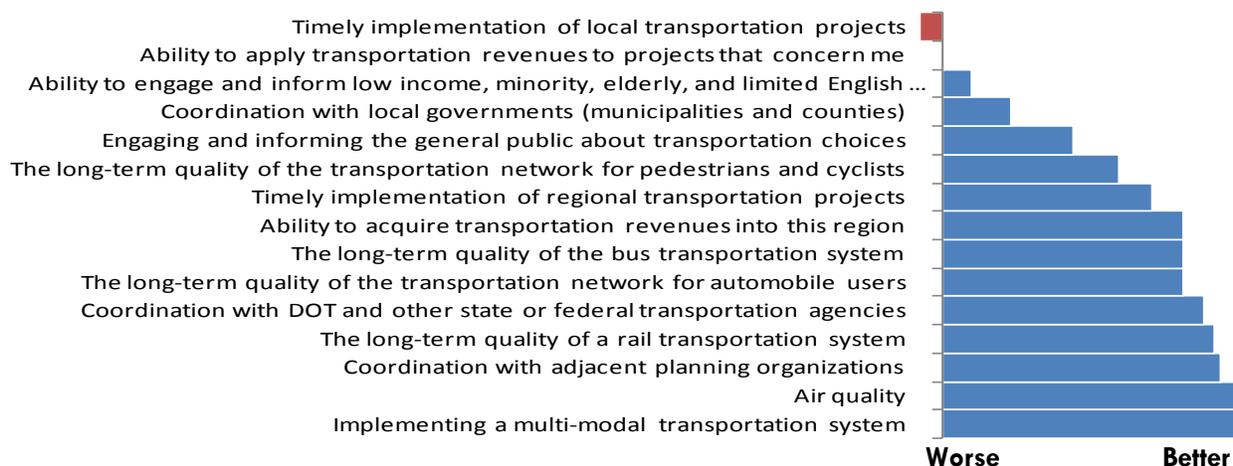
While the variability in the responses was very small (less than half a point on a 1 – 5 Likert-type scale) for any issue related to the importance of a MPO/RPO function (i.e., everything is important), there was more variability on the perceived effectiveness of the regional planning organizations on these same performance areas. Two other key points can be observed from this graphic.

- The level of satisfaction with the current performance is lower than the level of importance perceived by the respondents. A partial explanation may be that while every performance area is viewed as important, the actual level of performance is more dependent on past, direct experience(s).
- The degree of difference between the importance assigned to a performance area and the perceived level of effectiveness in that same area describes, to some extent, a “gap” between the desired and actual level of performance. For example, “educating the public” was viewed as considerably more important than the level of actual performance in that area. The largest performance gaps were identified in “locating revenue sources” and “coordinating efficient regional land use and transportation choice.”

Another question attempted to ask directly how the functions of the MPO/RPO would be affected if consolidation took place in some form:

*How would the following areas be affected if our regional planning organizations consolidated some or all of their functions?*

*Figure 5 shows the managed responses to this question.*

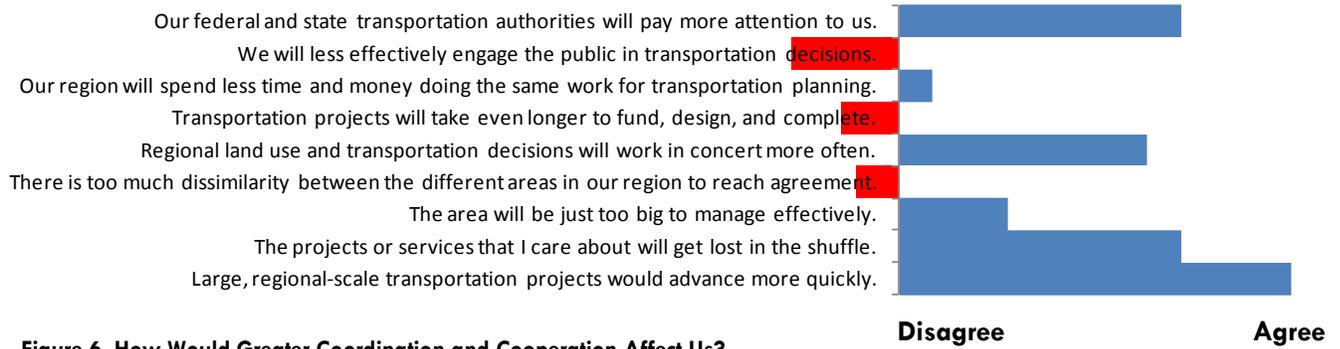


**Figure 5. How Would Consolidation Affect Performance?**

In order to produce the chart in [Figure 5](#) the responses to the original seven-point Likert scale was converted to numeric points where a “Better” response was awarded three points, the next highest favorable response two points and so forth to “Neutral,” which received zero points. If the respondent thought consolidation would negatively impact a function, then the responses were assigned negative values (-1, -2, or -3). The respondents to the survey rated multi-modal transportation and air quality as priority issues that would be affected positively through a partial or wholly consolidated planning organization. Better coordination, long-term quality of rail transit, and coordination with state / federal transportation agencies were also viewed as being favorably impacted by MPO/RPO consolidation. Less favorable were impacts to timely implementation (the only function assigned an overall negative score), projects of local concern, and the ability to engage traditionally underserved (low income, minority, elderly, and limited English proficiency) populations in the planning process.

Along similar lines, a separate question asked each respondent to state their level of agreement with several statements. Again, to produce a numeric chart ([Figure 6](#)) the responses on a Likert-type scale were converted to point values, with agreement getting positive values and disagreement receiving negative values.

*If our regional transportation organizations cooperated more fully or more often, how would that affect important issues that affect you and your organization?*



**Figure 6. How Would Greater Coordination and Cooperation Affect Us?**

While the respondents as a group agreed that large-scale, regional products would advance more quickly, there was disagreement with statements dealing with effective public engagement, projects taking longer to complete (actually a positive with respect to greater coordination), and too much dissimilarity to reach agreement (again, this is a positive statement regarding greater collaboration).

The table on the following two pages identifies those issues that were not previously mentioned, but should be addressed or addressed better by the MPOs and RPOs in the study region. The responses to this open-ended question have been grouped into various sections for ease of interpretation; no attempt at prioritizing responses was made in the listing of responses in [Table 8](#).

Are there other functions besides those previously listed do you think the metropolitan and / or rural planning organizations should be carrying out now, or carrying out better? Please list them in priority order; if there are no additional items that the planning organizations should be carrying out, you may skip this question.

**Table 6. Additional Functions Our MPOs Should be Doing Now**

First Choice of Additional Functions	Second Choice of Additional Functions	Third Choice of Additional Functions
<b>Technical Assistance</b>		
Grant technical assistance	Taking lead in talking about additional transportation options such as bikeways	Increased research on new SCM technology to reduce gas costs
Provide technical assistance to smaller local governments	Safety Training	
<b>Integrating Land Use and Transportation</b>		
integrating land use and transportation	Directing joint transportation land use decisions	Engage public in a significant way to create a regional vision plan
Coordinating efficient regional land use and transportation choices	Tying together the big picture transportation issues to local policy decisions	
Ensuring that transportation planning works with communities to create good land use planning		
Analysis of alternative development scenarios		
Overseeing the implementation of a regional mass transit system		
Making transportation plans/projects driven by local & regional development visions		
Lobbying NCDOT, especially related to land-use issues		
End sprawl		
Holding local government accountable for land use/air issues		
<b>Financing and Economics</b>		
Identify and Implement new revenue sources	Working with State officials to replace State Equity Formula	either do local projects or supplement NCDOT/municipal funding
More authority to move transportation money in our district	Identify and Implement new revenue sources	Proactive in working with Regional Partnership on positioning region for economic development
Coordination and prioritization of projects ensuring all areas see an equitable distribution of available resources based on a formula encompassing the road mileage available versus the road mileage planned versus the tax revenue generated.	Operate more effectively	
Coordinating with local and regional economic development initiatives	Lobbying State Legislature, especially related to funding issues	
MPOs should have authority to generate dedicated revenue stream	Have authority to spend that revenue stream	
Integrated economic development & logistics systems planning	Locating and implementing new revenue sources	
New Revenue Source	Should consider developing local funding & implementation capabilities	
Helping to improve the quality of employees by paying operators a living wage		
Simplifying funding		

First Choice of Additional Functions	Second Choice of Additional Functions	Third Choice of Additional Functions
<b>Multi-Modal (Transit)</b>		
Stressing multi-modality (e.g. public transit, freight, greenways, etc.)	increased public transportation	Commuter rail planning
increased multi-modal transportation	Transit benefit programs, carpool/vanpool programs	Identify and Implement new revenue sources
Mandate consideration of multi-model forms of transportation & emphasize rail opportunities	Regional/Statewide Transit Planning	Bus or vans service to small cities
Commuter Rail - public awareness campaign	Rail line to neighboring cities & towns	light rail
Mass Transit	get people out of single occupancy vehicles	Looking at more than just highway issues
Better coordination or consolidation with metropolitan transit commission		
Assisting with the development of a mobility management program for the area		
<b>Multi-Modal (Bicycle and Pedestrian)</b>		
Multi-modal Planning (i.e. Bike/Ped)	Ensure transportation planning includes walkable/bikeable communities	Air quality
Better bicycle/pedestrian options		
Embed with vigor regional trail and bike plans into LRTP		
<b>Coordination, Communication and Public Engagement</b>		
Holding NCDOT more accountable	Better coordination with local capital improvement plans	Identify planning proposed activities that local governments passes that will be costly to region
Better communication/coordination with NCDOT on smaller (non-TJP) projects	Advocating for coherent urban & rural policy frameworks at state & federal levels	More sensitivity to local concerns/issues
Coordinating directly-becoming one agency-with the local COGs.		
Advocacy for transportation projects @ local level - to public		
Educate elected officials not to muse "public"		
Ensuring that transportation decisions are implemented regionally		
Advocacy		
<b>Air Quality Conformity</b>		
Prioritize air quality issues over long run when making long range transportation planning	Promoting more projects for air quality improvement	
Tie link air quality of transportation to the public more effectively		
<b>Project Ranking</b>		
	Facilitating the prioritization of specific projects	
	Ranking projects objectively - making criteria known	
	Identify & support some projects for less populated government/areas	
<b>Roadway Improvements</b>		
	Improve intersections	
	Road of regional concern	

## 4.2 Focus Groups Summary

During the week of May 24<sup>th</sup> and on June 21<sup>st</sup>, a series of eight focus group meetings was conducted with the following agencies:

- Lake Norman RPO
- Rocky River RPO
- Cabarrus-Rowan MPO
- Mecklenburg-Union MPO
- Gaston Urban Area MPO
- Environmental / Sustainability Advocacy Representatives
- Chamber of Commerce and Business Representatives
- Public Transportation Provider Representatives

Each focus group was asked similar prompting questions, but there was no attempt to tightly focus the content of the discussion, favoring instead a more open exchange of information. The purposes of the groups were to (1) raise awareness of the scope of the project, especially to note that consolidation recommendations were not a probable outcome; (2) gather input from the focus group participants in the form of a survey instrument (see Section 4.1); and (3) help gather information pertaining to relevant performance areas and candidate peers for the external review. While Appendix C contains complete summaries of all the focus group meetings, the following is a brief summation of the primary themes that were voiced during multiple meetings and / or had particular relevance to the exploration of performance and consolidation issues.

*What do we like and what works well now?* Every MPO and RPO surveyed agreed that the level of staff support received (from their own staff) was excellent, both in terms of responsiveness and quality. The technical and policy bodies of the RPOs/MPOs also seemed to be generally on the same page, and worked in concert with each other. The size of the group offered opportunities for discussion which a larger forum might preclude. Perhaps most importantly, the quality and quantity of the services provided by the MPOs/RPOs staffing component was viewed very favorably. This is exemplified to a degree by the relatively high participation rates at both technical and policy board meetings by members of those groups (70% to 80% cited by one group). Although cross-jurisdictional projects seemed to be an issue, the regional leadership created sometimes informal dialogue (e.g., I-485 construction; Yadkin River Bridge project) when the need arose.

*“I’ve been working in this community for 32 years and I just now feel like I’m beginning to understand the [planning] process.”*

*What do we like/find frustrating about transportation planning and project delivery in our MPO area, and in the larger metro region?* Like many other metropolitan regions across the country, the allocation and amount of funding is a primary source of concern. The SPOT program that identified priorities was liked by at least one group (Lake Norman RPO) and offers one potential solution for internal allocations of funding between regions of the State, although there was a participant who expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of flexibility of roadway design standards that are dictated at the state level. Other groups, like CRAFT, Chambers of Commerce, and Regional Roads Committee are viewed as occasionally introducing external influences into the priority-setting process. Several groups, notably the Environmental / Sustainability focus group, noted the lack of meaningful public engagement and interaction with the MPO/RPO staff and planning process generally. A number of people expressed frustrations with the complexity of financial forecasting and air quality conformity processes. The timely delivery of both projects, and in the case of air quality conformity inputs, planning products was cited as an issue in a number of instances. The lack of delivery has produced a perception that there is endless planning with very little implementation. A part of this situation might be improved by having more local and regional financing options available to everyone in the Region. This sentiment extends beyond highways to public transportation services as well – and includes a need to better link land use and transportation decisions, especially across MPO/RPO boundaries and the three NCDOT funding regions.

*How do we think collaboration across MPO/RPO boundaries works?* Regardless of project delivery, a number of commenters suggested that staff-level collaboration on projects (planning and design) worked generally fairly well, particularly with air quality conformity and travel demand modeling. CRAFT, while it has not proven to be efficacious at the policy level (the policy members have not met for over a year) has been good for inter-jurisdictional information exchanges between staffs of the RPOs and MPOs in the Region. A number of special projects also underscore the performance of MPO/RPO staff collaboration within and without the CRAFT venue including the FAST Lanes Study, CATS Express Bus Service; and NC 73 Council of Planning. However, the focus group participants again cited policy-level decision-making, linking land use/transportation, and major regional transportation products as areas where collaboration across MPO/RPO boundaries has been lacking. Additionally, providing linkages to ancillary stakeholder groups representing important business, environmental, and community interests could be better. One participant in the Lake Norman RPO focus group suggested that twice-annual meetings would be beneficial to addressing the concerns about internal-external collaboration.

*What are the Areas of Performance that We Are Interested In?* The focus groups cited a number of performance areas during the discussions that should be examined in other, outside peer agencies. These include the following.

- Internal & External Communication
- Project Delivery and Financing
- Internal & External Funding Allocation
- Engaging Smaller Member Agencies
- Land Use/Transportation Linkages
- Multi-Modalism, esp. Transit/Rail
- MPO / RPO Collaboration with DOTs
- Urban/Rural Dichotomies

*What are Our Suggestions for External Peer Candidates, and What Makes a Good Peer?* The focus groups were asked about their suggestions for external peer regions. This question required at least a general knowledge of the workings of other MPO agencies, and was answered lightly across all focus groups; some suggestions were as follows:

- San Diego;
- Houston-Galveston;
- Salt Lake City;
- Denver;
- Phoenix;
- Kansas City;
- Nashville; and
- Indianapolis.

When queried about what makes a good peer for this study and the Metrolina Region, a number of themes emerged. Focus group participants suggested that MPOs/RPOs that successfully integrate the interests of both large and small communities (member agencies) as a critical learning experience, especially in large, complex urban environments. The ability to successfully keep these member agencies engaged through programmatic actions (e.g., the ARC Livable Communities Initiative) was important in a day-to-day sense. The participants were also interested in learning more about the RPO/MPO role in innovative financing exercises, as well as how they have integrated land use and transportation decision-making. Some respondents thought that multi-state MPOs were important to consider, since the South Carolina Rock Hill-Fort Mill MPO (RFATS) was often viewed as a functional part of the Metrolina Region. As cited in earlier conversations, developing multi-modal transport systems and successfully engaging the public and stakeholder groups were also cited as being of interest to some of the focus group participants.

## 5.0 External Peer Review Study

The investment of public monies in regional transportation planning organizations is considerable. According to one source, the federal government alone allocates nearly \$400 million annually for transportation planning within the nation's 385 metropolitan planning organizations, while lower levels of government contribute at least \$100 million each year.<sup>8</sup> Since MPOs were created in the 1960's and further refined in the early 1970's, as well as under each subsequent federal transportation bill, the number and variety of MPOs has increased with every passing decade. Along with this divergence came differences in organizational structures, procedures, and methods of delivering both "core" federal products like long-range transportation plans and more discretionary deliverables like public participation techniques and member service programs. To understand the performance of these diverse organizations requires a targeted effort to dialogue qualitatively and quantitatively survey "peer" metropolitan planning organizations.

In order to assess the current state of the Metrolina Region's metropolitan planning organizations, an external peer agency review was conducted for this study that mirrored the questions and issues from the internal framework study. The Steering Committee and Centralina COG staff, aided by the project consulting team, determined seven MPOs that possessed features for comparison and review that were of interest. Once these MPO peers were selected, the external review was conducted, consisting of two primary phases of work. The first involved having a 60- to 90-minute conversation with the MPO staff, typically the chief administrative officer or director of the MPO. The second phase consisted in part of a brief, on-line survey of the technical and policy board members of each MPO in the peer study. The MPO peer selection process and two external phases of work are described in the following paragraphs along with a brief summary of the results.

### Quick Summary

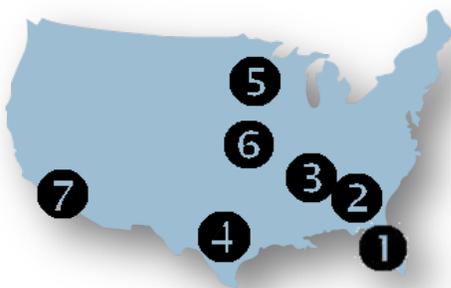
Section 5 discusses in some detail the findings of the external framework study of seven peer MPOs around the country, including comparisons to the responses provided by the peers compared to Metrolina MPOs/RPOs.

- Many of the differences in benchmarking categories between Metrolina and the peer MPOs were fairly small.
- However, some differences in regional cooperation, relationship to the state DOT(s), and ability to leverage revenues were slightly higher in the peer agencies and commented on during individual interviews with their staffs.
- Some regional structures, such as those employed by the Pinellas County (FL) and Nashville area (TN) MPOs aided in regional decision-making without full consolidation of MPOs or MPOs and rural areas.
- Membership, quorum, and voting schemes among the peers varied. In the largest peers, there were cases where multiple small communities might have a rotating seat, be represented by a county, or be represented on committees rather than the policy board. Weighted voting, where it existed, was either not used or used in conjunction with unweighted voting.
- Each of the peers has undertaken some sort of regional blueprinting or land use planning exercise to undergird their regional transportation planning.
- Only one of the peers enthusiastically stated satisfaction with their public engagement program (Minneapolis-St. Paul).
- All peers seemed to indicate a sense of greater control over their funding sources and allocation plans than the MPOs and RPOs in Metrolina.

### 5.1 MPO Peer Selection Process

The consulting project team and Centralina COG staff met with the Steering Committee on June 9, 2010 to discuss, in part, the master list of metropolitan planning organizations that would be reviewed for this study. Up to seven MPOs were to be chosen, based upon criteria supplied by the Consultant and shown in Figure 7. MPOs that had a similarity to or were perceived as successful with respect to issues that the Metrolina Region confronts were discussed. These characteristics included population size, organizational complexity, policy environment, revenue innovations, air quality conformity status, multi-state presence, advanced multi-modal transportation systems, presence of rural planning organizations, and demonstrated ability to forge policy connections between land use development and transportation systems. Fifteen MPOs were on the short-list of peer agencies after the Steering Committee discussion. In order to narrow this list to seven MPOs, information on each one of the fifteen candidates was summarized in an on-line survey distributed to the Steering Committee members. Sixteen Steering Committee members responded to the survey, with the results being as follows, in alphabetical order with the percent of respondents saying that the MPO should be included shown in parentheses.

- Atlanta (ARC) (75%)
- Austin (75%)
- Dallas-Ft. Worth (18%)
- Denver (DRCOG) (75%)
- Houston-Galveston (6%)
- Indianapolis (18%)
- Jacksonville, FL (50%)
- Kansas City (MARC) (56%)
- Minneapolis-St. Paul (68%)
- Nashville (87%)
- Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana (25%)
- San Antonio (25%)
- San Diego (SANDAG) (62%)
- St. Petersburg (50%)
- West Florida RPC (6%)



MPO	Size / Population	Region Diversity (structural or organizational diversity)	Policy Environment	Revenue Innovation	Air Quality Status	Multi-State MPO	Multi-Modal Transportation Systems (rail or near-term)	RPO's in this State	Land Use & Transportation Linkage
Atlanta (ARC)		●	●		●		●	●	●
Denver (DRCOG)		●	●		●		●	●	●
Kansas City (MARC)	●	●	●		●	●			
Tampa-St. Petersburg	●	●	●		●				
Jacksonville, FL	●		●		●		●		
West Florida RPC		●	●			●			
San Diego (SANDAG)		●		●	●		●	●	
Dallas-Ft. Worth		●	●		●		●	●	
Houston-Galveston	●	●	●		●		●	●	
Austin	●		●		●		●	●	●
San Antonio	●		●		●			●	
Minneapolis-St. Paul	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana	●		●			●		●	
Nashville		●	●		●			●	●
Indianapolis			●					●	

Figure 7. List of MPO Candidates and Evaluation Measures

## 5.2 Qualitative Interview

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Each MPO peer was contacted initially as to their interest in participating in the peer study then was asked to participate in a telephone interview. The Consultant project team and Centralina COG staff collaborated on a set of issues to be explored during the interview, listed below.

### Funding Issues

- What are the funding sources that your agency typically applies?
- What funding sources and / or modes does your agency have a meaningful voice in allocating?
- How do you allocate your funding to member agencies?
- How much control does your agency have over state, federal, and local funding levels and allocations?
- How are Congressional earmarks handled – is this “new” money coming into the system, or does it require re-allocating existing funding from other projects?
- Do you work with private sector sources to secure new or leverage existing funding sources?

### Decision-Making Issues

- Please describe your voting process at the policy board level.
- Is there a weighted voting provision, how is it invoked, and how does it work? How often is the weighted voting provision applied (if it is discretionary)?
- In your quorum provisions or membership representations on the policy board, are there conditions that provide a majority vote or decision-making authority to one or a few member agencies?
- Are the chair and/or vice-chair positions rotated among different jurisdictions for the technical or policy boards? Is the location of meetings different, and set on a regular schedule for rotation at different locations?
- Has your organization undergone an important structural change in the fairly recent past?
- How do you engage smaller member jurisdictions (e.g., special allocation provisions, sub-area caucuses, district voting on certain issues, etc.)?
- What is the MPO’s relationship to legislative bodies at the state level?
- Is there a host agency for the MPO, or is it independent? If it is hosted by another agency, what is the perception among MPO members of the MPO’s independence from that hosting agency?

### Cooperation / Collaboration Issues

- How would you rate your agency’s level of effectiveness at cooperating with:
  - State DOT
  - Other, Nearby MPOs
  - Other, Nearby RPOs
  - Resource Agencies
  - Local Government Land Planning Departments
  - Transit Operators
  - Advocacy Organizations
- Are there special considerations or techniques that your agency applies to engage these agencies?
- How effective is the MPO at addressing regional issues or, put a different way, how effective is the MPO at breaking down local barriers to regional participation and decision-making?

### Engaging the Public Issues

- Has your agency undertaken an MPO-wide “blueprinting” exercise? If so, describe when and how it was conducted, emphasizing engagement and buy-in with officials and the public. How effective was this exercise, and could you cite specific changes that occurred as a result or partial result of this effort?

- Has your agency been effective at engaging the public? Please describe any innovative techniques that you could recommend for both urban and more rural / small town member jurisdictions.

The complete results of the peer interviews are presented in [Appendix A](#) (Peer Exchange Interviews). The following is a summarization of these interviews broken out by the same four major categories of exchange, i.e., issues about Funding, Decision-Making, Cooperation, and Engaging the Public.

### *Funding Issues*

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Several of the large MPOs in this study have now or may have in the near-term access to dedicated funding streams separate from the traditional federal/state components. The ARC, for example, allocates a sales tax dedicated to its public transit provider (MARTA), although another local referendum possibly to be held in 2012 to determine on a regional (the region being comprised of a 10-county area assigned to the Regional Planning District) basis for an additional sales tax administered by the State Department of Revenue and the regional transportation-land use authority (GRTA). Similarly, SANDAG manages a ½-cent sales tax generated in San Diego County; since the MPO is only comprised of a single county, allocation issues are not apparent. Allocation to towns and cities is done through the project prioritization system.

When MPOs did cite a source of funding that the MPO alone controls, the project priority system employed by the MPO was the way that they chose to allocate / distribute funding. Only to the extent that these priority systems accounted for geographic diversity would the project funds be disbursed with the intent to serve many parts of the planning area. Typical revenue sources that the MPO allocates independently are CMAQ (congestion mitigation and air quality), transportation enhancement, and Surface Transportation Program – Direct Allocation (STP-DA) funds. In one case (Pinellas County) the state’s distinguishing between regional and sub-regional roadway networks obviated a degree of allocation conflict.

Congressional earmarks did not seem to pose a serious threat to the MPOs that participated in the peer exchange. In one case (SANDAG), the elected legislative delegation appreciates the role of the MPO in getting a “single voice” perspective on regional transportation priorities. One MPO (Pinellas County) did note that, while earmarks had created conflicts with other projects’ dedicated funding, the degree and number of conflicts were reduced under the current administration.

Although several of those interviewed noted that the MPO worked with private sector partnerships in the form of “triple-P” (public-private partnerships) efforts and toll authorities, none of them were successful in developing a sophisticated way of forecasting those revenues for use in the long-range transportation plan. CAMPO did note that some facilities were being financed on a design-bid-build-operate format sponsored entirely by private sector sources, but that this mechanism had also been hurt by the recent recession.

### Decision-Making Issues

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The organizational structures of the peer exchange participants represent a relatively small cross-section of the 385 metropolitan planning organizations in the U.S. Voting structures range from general consensus to strictly weighted voting schema allocating thousands of votes to dozens of member organizations.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, seat rotation (to accommodate more members on the policy or technical boards than otherwise would be practical by “rotating” memberships among different jurisdictions) is not uncommon. One recent survey of 133 MPOs suggests that seat rotation occurs in 27% of the time, and happens much more often in larger (over 200,000 population) metropolitan planning organizations.<sup>10</sup>

To accommodate smaller, more rural, or newer additions to the membership of the MPO, the ARC voting model can be considered a recent success. At the ARC, which has added eight new “outer ring” counties due to the previous (2000) Census, the ARC board (which approves the decisions of the MPO transportation policy board) cannot over-ride the transportation policy board in any decision impacting the eight outer counties. This mechanism is somewhat similar to the MUMPO “sphere of influence” self-imposed limitation on executive actions of the MUMPO (policy) Board. A second enhancement for multi-agency MPOs comes from SANDAG, which requires every vote conducted by the policy board to pass both unweighted and weighted (according to population, with the City of San Diego capped at 40%) vote. This helps to ensure that a level playing field is achieved among the 19 member agencies. Generally, the MPOs studied do not have a weighted voting option. Quorums are typically represented by a simple majority of the voting-eligible member agency representatives. The Pinellas County (St. Petersburg, FL) MPO allows three of their smaller member jurisdictions to share one voting “seat” at the policy board, which is rotated among those three members every two years. Under Florida state law, 20% to 33% of the board representation must be occupied by county government, so some of the smaller towns may only be represented by their “parent” county. Generally, counties or larger towns represent multiple jurisdictions when the number of member agencies becomes unwieldy, as is the case at the Metropolitan Council where 198 municipalities are represented by 33 seats on the MPO policy board. The Metropolitan Council reports that, while there is occasional dissatisfaction with the perception of a too-high degree of authority that the suburban ring towns and cities may wield at the MPO, there is not overall dissatisfaction at the system. Although only in existence since mid-2009, the Middle Tennessee Mayor’s Caucus performs a similar function, performing regional planning studies for a 10-county area well beyond the Nashville MPO boundary. The forum covers not only transportation issues, which was its original intent, but now addresses many other issues including flood recovery and positions on proposed state legislation.

SANDAG, as well as other MPOs in the peer review, tend to rely more heavily on advisory committees than to the Metrolina Region equivalents. With five technical boards\* instead of a single technical advisory body, SANDAG ensures that every aspect of a decision is considered thoroughly before going to its policy board. Having this many boards translates into more staff time required to serve them, but also means that more opportunities for representation are available for member agencies. Other common advisory boards to MPOs include freight and citizen advisory committees. Typically, advisory board members are self-appointed and make recommendations to the technical and/or policy MPO committees.

### Cooperation/Collaboration Issues

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Somewhat surprisingly, every MPO in the peer study spoke positively about their relationship with their state department of transportation. In one case (SANDAG), a partial explanation was provided by the fact that the current MPO director had worked at a high level in the state DOT for 20 years previously. The Metropolitan Council goes even further, stating a belief that their MPO-DOT relationship is the best in the country to their knowledge, citing monthly joint staff meetings and regular, cooperative ventures as the principal reasons for their success. The sole bi-state MPO in the study, MARC, cites that the working

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\* The five technical advisory boards at SANDAG are: policy, transportation/transit, regional planning, public safety, and borders (dealing with Mexican and tribal governments).



relationships and level of MPO responsibility/authority are somewhat different in their two states (Kansas and Missouri), although the relationships in both states are nevertheless quite sound. In Florida, the DOT has made a concerted effort for years to coordinate with and support their MPOs, with the result that the relationships are generally quite good, as is the case with the Pinellas County MPO.

Coordination with rural areas by MPOs varies, principally because there are seldom institutional mechanisms for that coordination without a RPO-like structure. However, the MPOs claim that this coordination still occurs in rural areas through associations with county governments, for example. However, the MPOs in the external peer survey are largely the recognized leader in their region for transportation decisions. Only Pinellas County MPO and the Atlanta Regional Commission had MPOs in their region that were clear competitors for decision-making authority.

One benefit of integrating regional planning councils and metropolitan planning organizations is cited by MARC, since the environmental science staff that work with stormwater management support for local governments maintain a continuous working relationship with natural resource agencies employed by the states. Other MPOs note that having committees devoted solely to environmental issues (e.g., SANDAG) or a state-fostered planning process (e.g., Efficient Transportation Decision Making in Florida) that explicitly requires transportation agencies to work regularly with resource agencies have proved to be conduits for improved cooperation.

The Pinellas County MPO is also part of a regional oversight group that coordinates regional transportation planning among six MPOs (one of which is Pinellas County MPO) and one rural county are called the Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC). Each MPO “hosts” the CCC for a period of three months (as well as one of their quarterly meetings) in a rotating 18-month cycle. In this system, each MPO maintains autonomy but a robust regional planning structure can still be maintained (see text box). The CCC is comprised of the chairs of the six MPOs and one rural county (Citrus County) although this county representative has limited voting rights. There are several non-voting members representing the state DOT, regional planning councils, and transit operator. The CCC has its own website

([www.regionaltransportation.org](http://www.regionaltransportation.org)), public involvement plan, and regional transportation plan. The CCC was formed through a mandate by the Governor and legislative action, but is now administered through an interlocal agreement.<sup>11</sup> Any member may terminate their participation within 30 days of submitting written notice.<sup>12</sup>

Another approach to engaging certain stakeholders is to provide committee seats on advisory or technical committees. Resource agencies, state departments of transportation, educators, and transit operators may have their own committees or have voting or non-voting representation on other committees like citizen or technical boards.

**Chairs Coordinating Committee Products**

- Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan
- Air Quality Coordinating Committee
- 18-Member Joint Citizens Advisory Committee
- Transit Action Plan
- Newsletters and Brochures
- Regional GIS
- Regional Travel Demand Model
- Regional Congestion Management System

### *Engaging Regional Public Issues*

Metropolitan Planning Organizations are required to proactively engage the general public and specific stakeholders like representatives of transit operators, freight interests, bicyclists/pedestrians, elderly, disabled, low-income, minority, ESL (English as Second Language) populations, and resource agencies. MPOs and focus groups in the Metrolina Region expressed some dissatisfaction with the ability of MPOs to

effectively engage these populations in a meaningful way. The same sentiments have emerged at national forums of MPOs, with the blame sometimes being placed on an apathetic public more than on the MPOs.<sup>13</sup>

Discussions with the peer MPOs researched in this study elicited responses ranging from “not good” to “good” in the subjective sense when asked about how well they engaged the public. Most MPOs employed fairly common and traditional outreach techniques, like hosting public meetings/workshops, producing newsletters, and distributing printed information to media outlets, email/mail lists, and institutions like libraries and community centers. MARC noted that they had good experiences working with national television media outlets, but not as much with local media stations and radio stations due to the limited amount of air time available for local news coverage. Although there are attempts at reaching out to ESL populations, mass printing of translated materials is not generally done at MPOs like the Metropolitan Council, which has important populations of Somalis and Hmong inside their planning area. The Pinellas County MPO has worked in the recent past with their Junior League and a member municipality to set up a booth at a back-to-school fair to teach students pedestrian and bicycle safety. This same MPO notes that maintaining a citizen’s advisory committee has been challenging in part since the members sometimes use this committee as a platform for later attempts at seeking political office. SANDAG employs another innovative technique, awarding mini-grants worth \$3,000 to \$5,000 each to non-profit organizations such as ESL, low-income and minority organizations to conduct their own outreach campaigns to increase awareness of transportation plans and issues.

Another aspect of engaging partners on a regional level is the cooperation necessary to carry out regional land use – transportation infrastructure scenario planning. It is noteworthy that every MPO peer studied has carried out some form of a regional study of land use and transportation integration. In the particular case of Minneapolis-St. Paul (Metropolitan Council), the issue is decided at the state level, where state statutes require coordinated comprehensive planning. Similarly, California state law has significantly shaped how SANDAG views sustainability principles in their long-range transportation plans.

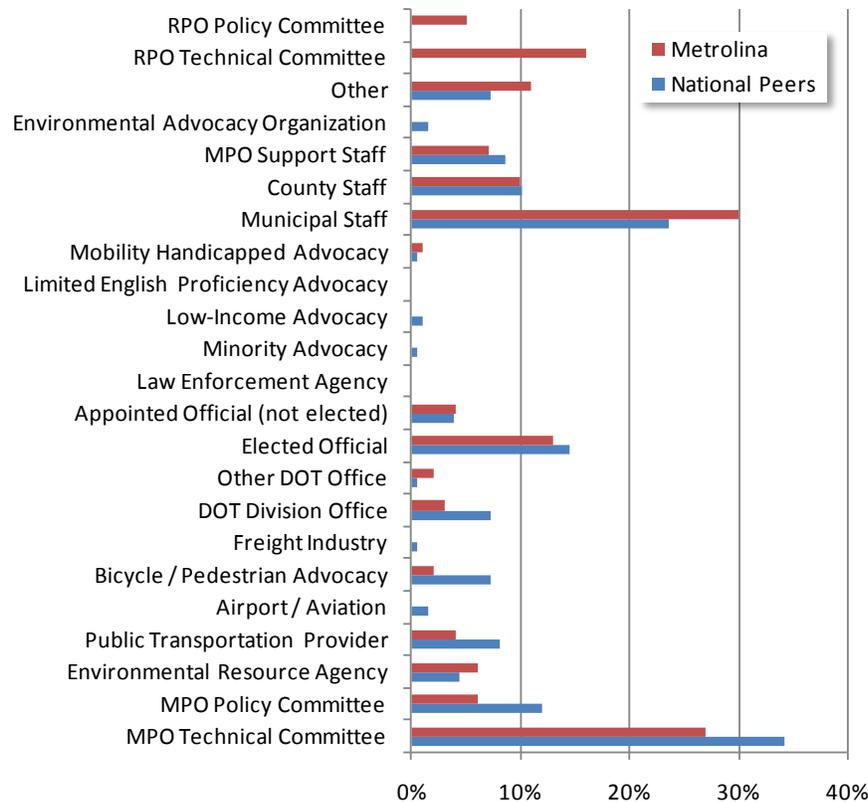
Regional planning also requires compromise and flexibility on the part of even the largest and most effective MPOs, as exhibited by the Mid-America Regional Council regional land use – transportation plan development process. The land use scenario exercise represented in the LRTP started with trend and adaptive use scenarios that called for 40% of the region’s growth to be captured by redevelopment. Communities on the edge of the region felt that this assumption was not feasible for a variety of reasons. The MPO subsequently examined many individual policies and identified which were feasible or not feasible resulting in a scaling back in the amount of redevelopment in the adaptive scenario to no more than 20% of the total growth.

### 5.3 Board Survey Results

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To clarify the performance of the MPOs studied in the peer exchange, an effort was made to survey all seven MPOs. Two of the seven declined (Metropolitan Council and SANDAG) to participate in this portion of the study, although Metropolitan Council did have two individuals respond to the survey. The questions in the external framework survey borrowed directly from several of the questions in the internal framework survey in order to facilitate direct comparisons. The following sections summarize the results of the external survey but also compare these responses to the internal framework survey as well. It should be carefully considered that these results are the perceptions of those persons directly engaged in the MPO planning process by membership on the technical and/or policy boards of each MPO.

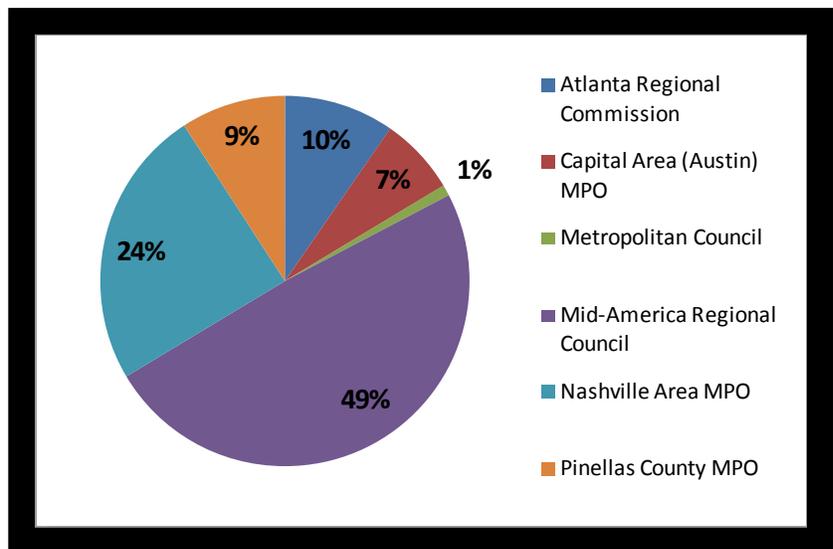
Please identify the agency or organization that you most represent with respect to dealings with your regional transportation agency (metropolitan planning organization). You may choose up to two (2) selections.



The national peers that took the external framework survey were more likely to be representative of elected officials, a state department of transportation, bicycle/pedestrian advocacy group, public transportation provider, and/or a MPO policy or technical committee. Note that RPOs are not present, or not present in the same formal standing, in other states surveyed. The Metrolina MPOs/RPOs tended to be more representative of municipal staff.

Figure 8. Survey Response Comparison

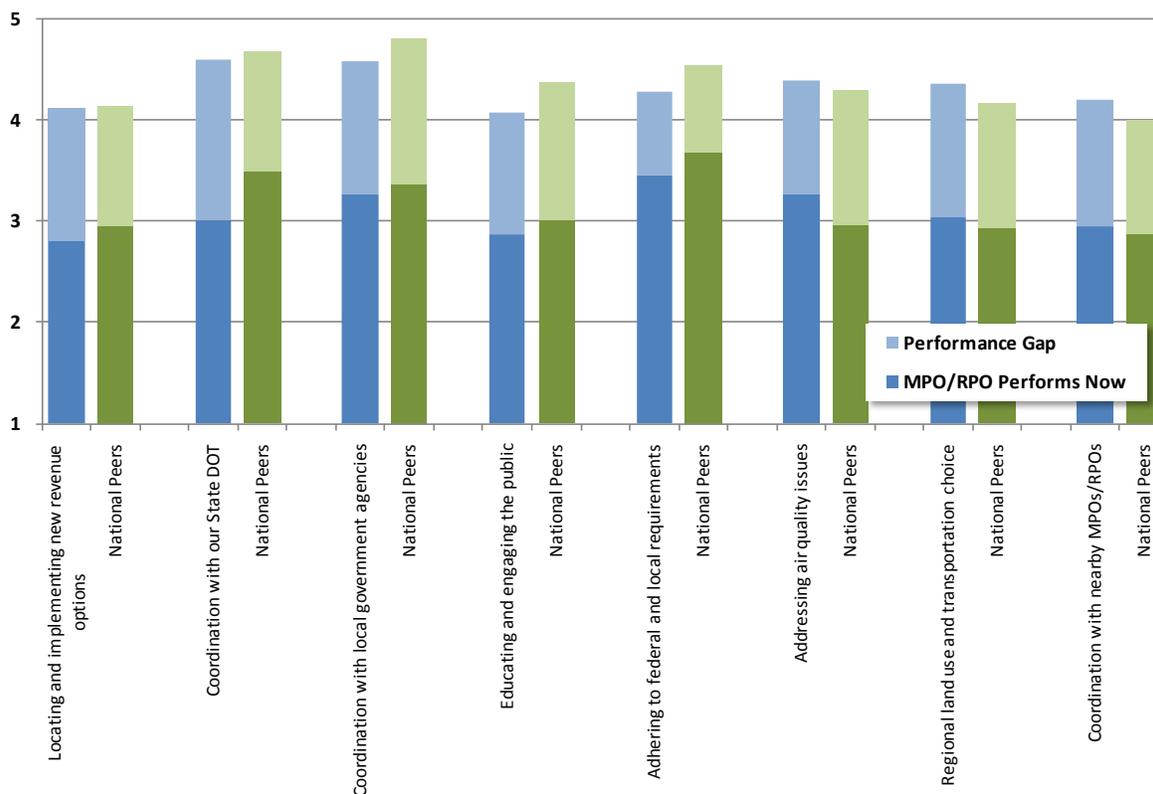
The graphic at right indicates the relative response rate of the 208 responses received for the entire external framework survey. Note that strong response by Mid-America Regional Council (103), and the small response (2) by the Metropolitan Council.



The following question and figure illustrate the summary (aggregated) response of the 208 external framework survey respondents and the 100 internal (Metrolina) framework survey respondents for various areas of performance.

*On which functions SHOULD a regional transportation planning organization focus its attention?*

*Which functions do you think OUR regional transportation planning organization(s) do effectively now?*



**Figure 9. Performance Comparison (Metrolina MPOs/RPOs and National Peers)**

Figure 9 indicates the results for the Metrolina MPOs in the left-hand (blue) column of each pair of columns; the national peers in the right-hand (green) column of each pairing; and the “gap” between how well MPOs should be doing in a particular area compared to how well their own MPO is doing in that same area. These two questions – what does the MPO do well now and what should any MPO do well – form the basis for the performance comparisons between the internal MPOs/RPOs in the Metrolina Region and their national peers.

Note first that the range of differences, when averaged on a 1-5 scale with a “5” being the maximum in performance is not great either for the desired performance or the current performance. However, there are some differences when current performances for the Metrolina MPOs and RPOs are compared to that of their national peers. The participants viewed the relationship with their state DOT(s) to be better as a result of this survey, a finding that was repeatedly validated during the interviews. Second, the Metrolina Region MPOs/RPOs fared better than their national counterparts, on average, as regards addressing federal and state requirements. That MPOs should be particularly strong in this area is not surprising, since the MPO is initially a construct of federal regulations, the RPO a product of state policies. Also, national peer agencies tended to perceive their ability to locate and implement new revenue sources as being higher-performing than did the Metrolina MPO/RPO survey respondents. The actual performance “gap”

here could be even larger than the perceived gap, since several of the surveyed national MPOs (e.g., ARC, SANDAG, and Metropolitan Council) have their own funding sources that they are able to direct.

Although the summary chart of each performance area is meaningful, it disguises the nuances that exist between the individual MPOs that responded to the survey. This phenomenon is in part due to the fact that the Mid-America Regional Council submitted a large number of surveys. The following series of charts better encapsulates the responses for each MPO (and Metrolina MPO/RPO respondents). Note that the Metropolitan Council only had two responses.

Based on these figures on the next page, the Metrolina organizations – which themselves are aggregated in the internal framework survey – do not fare as well as their peers in coordination with NCDOT and are middle-of-the-pack on locating and implementing new revenue sources, even though the MPOs and RPOs have not procured new funding streams for their regions. Educating and engaging the public on transportation matters is a particularly low-performing area for the Metrolina MPOs/RPOs as well. Metrolina fares better on addressing air quality issues, and falls into a middle ground with respect to both coordination with nearby MPOs/RPOs and coordinating efficient land use and transportation decisions. The experiences reported by the survey participants obviously deal primarily with their own, limited understanding of how complicated processes like air quality conformity work now, with little opportunity for direct comparison to similar processes in other metropolitan areas.

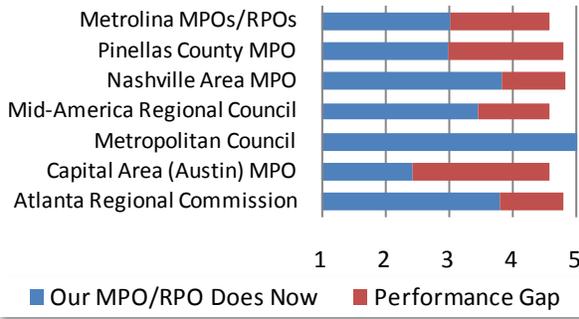


Figure 10. Coordination with State DOT

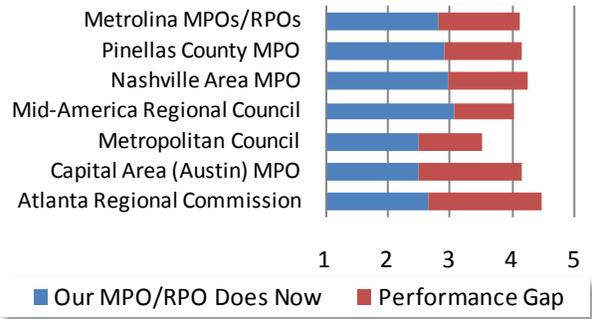


Figure 11. Locating and Implementing New Revenue Sources

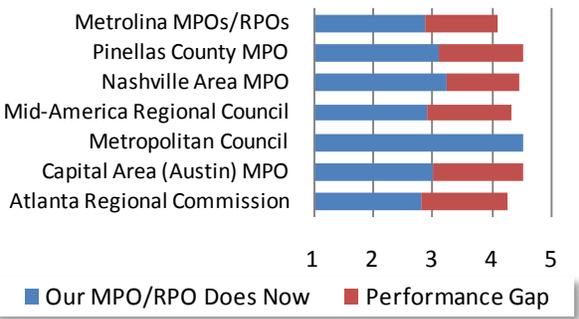


Figure 12. Educating and Engaging the Public

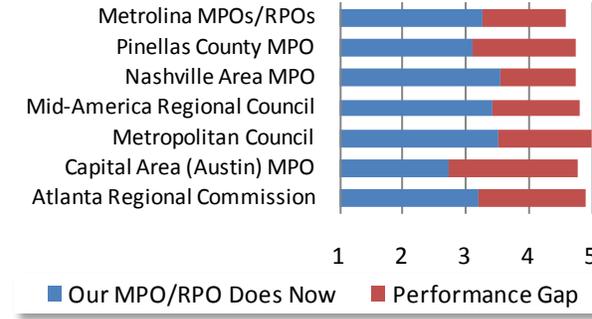


Figure 13. Coordination with Local Government Agencies

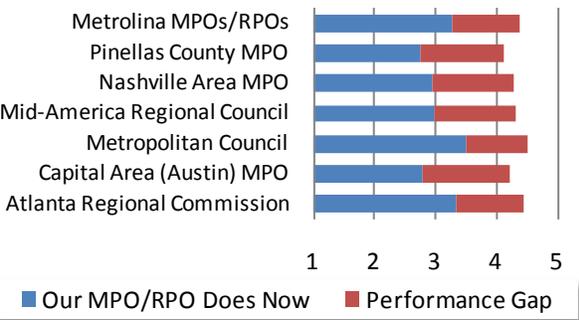


Figure 14. Addressing Air Quality Issues

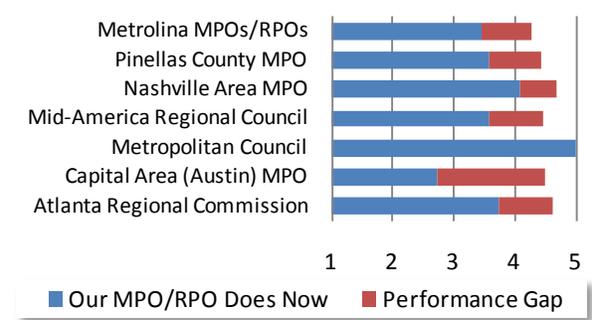


Figure 15. Adhering to Government Requirements

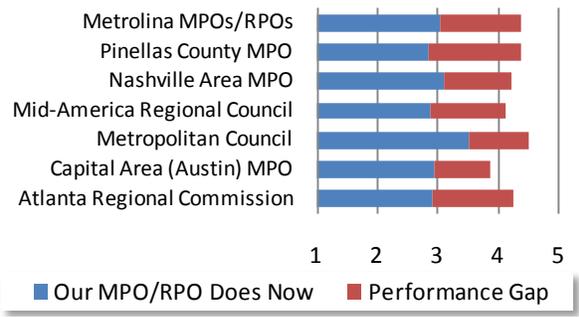


Figure 16. Efficient Land Use and Transportation Decisions

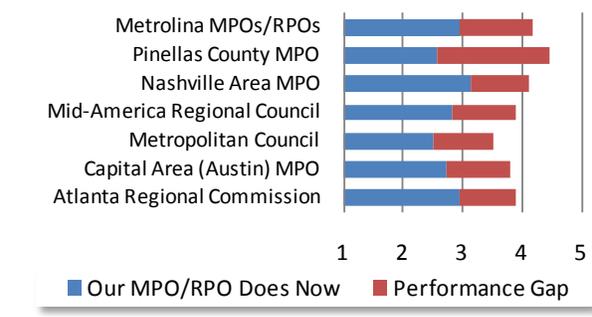


Figure 17. Coordination with Nearby MPOs/RPOs

Both the internal and external survey participants were asked if they had additional comments at the completion of the survey. [Table 7](#) lists these comments with only grammatical and spelling corrections.

**Table 7. Additional Survey Participant Comments**

Internal Metrolina MPO and RPO Comments	External Peer MPO Comments
<p>Cabarrus Rowan MPO will NOT be swallowed by Charlotte. Don't even think we will allow this to happen.</p> <p>Much of this still comes down to the available funds and both the equitable distribution to the MPOs as well as within the MPOs.</p> <p>The business community I represents believes in and is engaged in region-wide planning, and support continued cooperation and collaboration, and communication across the region. WE are VERY apprehensive that a CONSOLIDATED regionwide MPO would be unwieldy and would disenfranchise the smallest elements. We WOULD support a regionwide revenue source, inter-MPO coordination, with final spending decisions being made locally by current MPO structures.</p> <p>To ever get to being close to meeting federal AQ standards, regional transportation planning is critical to getting cars off the road.</p> <p>People will want money brought to their region, regardless of impact to air quality. Economic benefit and air quality will conflict. How will you balance that?</p> <p>Need more "face time" from the RPO's - TCC &amp; TAC don't seem to cut [it]</p> <p>In # 6&amp;7 I tended to look at best case scenario - not necessary the way current interests might act.</p> <p>Frankly, I don't think there is any other choice than to look at transportation in its larger context. It's like the old water beds - when you push down on one center, it bulges up in another corner and in transportation the impacts are not evenly distributed so there needs to be an authority that has the power to impose solutions across jurisdictional boundaries using an agreed upon decision matrix that is reviewed, tracked and re-evaluated frequently.</p> <p>FYI: New to the RPO (attended this past two meetings only).</p> <p>A method to engage regional safe routes to school planning, regional school siting.</p> <p>Not enough emphasis on coordination with State DOT designers and planners. Priority systems of state and local needs to be better coordinated. Functions of BOT members and local MPO's &amp; RPO are not too clear - relationship between DOT, MPO's and RPO's not too clear.</p> <p>Smaller cities and towns do not provide transportation for their cities and towns. The</p>	<p>Our particular MPO has historically abdicated the responsibility for regional planning of large infrastructure and highway projects to the state department of transportation. This has enraged the local public because the state transportation agency wants only toll roads and they aren't working and the public does not want them.</p> <p>Educating MPO board members about internal/external processes is critical to MPO success. Granted many board members do not fully understand the coordinated effort that occurs behind the scenes and simply believe it is "staff" driven. The most crucial part is obtaining buy-in of board members that they are driving the process instead of staff. I think we do a poor job of bringing that issue to light and making the board feel ownership of the process and thereby the end result.</p> <p>More coordination/engagement with local governments needed; DOT also needs to coordinate/communicate better with locals.</p> <p>I am not familiar enough with your MPO to comment on the above. However, the area does have a good reputation for transportation planning and implementation.</p> <p>Our MPO must address the needs of the 4 largest counties in our state. That leaves little or nothing for the outer counties; although their funding and requirements must be addressed through the MPO.</p> <p>The MARC is very effective at spending money.</p> <p>Assisting with legislative issues that involve the MPO on topics or issues that affect the counties within the MPO.</p> <p>I have very little frame of reference for comparison to other regional transportation planning organizations.</p> <p>Need to focus more on transportation planning that protects natural resources, preserves open space, and deters sprawl.</p> <p>MPO "chickens" are managed by the "fox", which has inhibited progress on a wide range of potentially beneficial initiatives. Committee appoints are too often parochial-based (no policies apparently in place to prevent co-chairs employed by a jurisdiction from appointing persons from their jurisdiction to critical committee appointments resulting in stacked decks and initiatives progressing which are viewed politically as beneficial to those "stacked" jurisdictions; too many key funding allocating committees without stakeholder citizen representation). MPO lacks either the fortitude (willingness to stand up to the old guard foxes who stymie progress) or ability (by-laws are written by, approved by and modified by the foxes). Too often needs of citizens take a back seat to the political desires of major jurisdictions. MPO has had some success at breaking down the state line barrier to progress, but very limited. I would suggest the MPO send a questionnaire to all its member foxes asking them to define where the "metro" fits in their decision making process when</p>

Internal Metrolina MPO and RPO Comments	External Peer MPO Comments
<p>County is limited in providing transportation as well. Cities are so dependent on their cars to go to the store, church, Dr., etc. You always have to use a car. Citizens in those cities &amp; towns are isolated if they don't drive or have mass transit. It is scary. This issue should be dealt with more aggressively than ever before. It is a matter of security, health and wellbeing, economics, growth &amp; development.</p> <p>If regional concerns are the priority, a regional network will be effective. Local concerns must continue to be handled at the local MPO.</p> <p>I'm very upset with our transportation projects, they are not fast enough, we're too slow!!</p> <p>Increasing the size may not be as effective as planned. Smaller entities will get lost or overlooked. Each county needs representation.</p> <p>Need to build trust among various parts of region.</p> <p>Communication and decisions made outside established process ability of former board members to "get things done" without it coming through MPO.</p> <p>How to push or pull more funds into the region and ensure that all players/governments - regardless of size - find value in participation in the process.</p> <p>It is unrealistic to lump MPOs and RPOs into the same category as they have completely different structures. MPOs are legitimate organizations established through TEA21. RPOs were established by the state to placate areas too small to fall into MPOs. RPOs could function more efficiently as NCDOT representatives within the agency. MPOs need the collaborative body, and have better resources to provide accurate technical planning. In no way should Centralina Council of Government be involved in transportation. In attempt to gain legitimacy they have sometimes undermined professional technical planning of transportation.</p> <p>The consolidation would be bad for the smaller rural counties because our needs are far different than those in Charlotte. It is hard enough now to get funding but if we consolidate then we will never get attention.</p> <p>Factors affecting the funding priority of various road projects is questionable, at best. I think there are 11 factors all given equal weight, and one is 'distance from center Charlotte'. Why is this on the list?</p> <p>Effective regional planning and coordination is imperative in all categories. This has been an issue to tackle for almost 100 years in the US and we have paid a heavy price in all sorts of ways for our wasteful and unsustainable way of life.</p> <p>The idea of consolidation does not address the inherent funding barrier created by the Equity</p>	<p>compared to local, county, metro, state and federal needs.</p> <p>Although MARC is making progress and moving in the right direction now, in the past we've been disappointed with MARC's lack of will in enforcing clear congressional intent in transportation funding decisions--particularly no requirements or very weak requirements for inclusion of walking, bicycling, and ADA requirements as part of the selection process for transportation funding. Also, follow-up has been weak (i.e., if a certain project said it would include certain elements, were they really included? Were they designed and constructed properly?). This is changing now, particularly with the recently adopted LRTP, thought it is still so new that only time will tell now well the new policies and procedures will work. But, just for instance, the USDOT Policy Statement on integrating bicycling and walking into transportation infrastructure, which was recently whole-heartedly accepted and embraced by USDOT Secretary Ray LaHood, still has only tepid mentions and "considerations" even in MARC's most recent LRTP. See <a href="http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ENVIRonment/bikeped/design.htm">http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ENVIRonment/bikeped/design.htm</a>.</p> <p>MARC does a good job of providing a forum for discussing regional issues that cover two states, 9 counties and over 100 cities but not having any ability to raise funds limits the revenue efforts.</p> <p>While I believe the MPO is doing a good job overall on a variety of issues, I sometimes see the MPO skew towards taking better care of the "bigger" players (counties/cities) at the expense of the smaller players. Some of the fault lies with the smaller communities, but the MPO needs to change this perception if it truly wants to be thought of as a great representative of the entire region.</p> <p>As a built-out community, it is essential that our county achieve greater integration between land use and transportation planning.</p> <p>The MPO has embraced a 35-year-old-plan and failed to address transportation beyond that of motorized vehicles. The basic plan was developed when much of the county was undeveloped. As such growth, changing land use patterns, and other modes of travel (excluding bicycle trails) have not given more than lip service. This in mind I would say that there should be questions regarding vision, identifying needs, and implementation as part of this survey.</p> <p>I feel the "better angels of our nature" reside at our MPO. The MPO staff is a constant source of inspiration, optimism, and encouragement. I don't know if this is true in other regions, but our MPO is a true partner in making the world a better place.</p> <p>Individual politics plays such an important role in this process and there is no logic in politics. Our region has two states, 40 cities, 8 counties all with elected officials that have their own answers that generally differ. Probably will not change.</p> <p>This is a pretty superficial survey. You didn't ask about the adequacy of the MPO's processes, for example, or how closely they are adhered to. MPOs are all about process, you know. I have long had a very high regard for our MPO, though on a range of matters (some related to stimulus programs with short timelines) there has been some short-</p>

Internal Metrolina MPO and RPO Comments	External Peer MPO Comments
<p>Formula. Larger metro regions in other states do not have to work thru such a centralized DOT with a formula that spreads funds to non-metro areas. The MPO process has very little impact on project delivery. MPO's/RPO's in NC are mostly funding authorization arms for NCDOT. The ability to make decisions and shape policy is limited by the legislative authority of MPOs or lack thereof in NC versus the actual size of the organization. The Goldsboro MPO is as anonymous as the Charlotte MPO to lawmakers. Folks in Raleigh and DC tend to look to the desires/interests of the major cities, which is what has boosted the clout of the NC Metro Coalition. MPOs/RPOs do not share this level of influence even thru their respective statewide associations.</p>	<p>cutting. And while our MPO values consensus above all, that sometimes gets in the way of doing things that really need to be done. The region has been struggling with how to get its outward growth under control for literally 20 years and progress has been painfully slow.</p> <p>Our MPO has made a great deal of progress over the past 10 years and they have become a much bigger player on the local political scene. They have a great website and also have progressive goals and policies and high expectations for member jurisdictions and themselves.</p> <p>The role of the MPO should not be to deliver transportation projects. They are a planning agency not a public works or DOT. Land Use Planning is a local issue with regional impacts. They should coordinate education of the various local agencies on these impacts. The local agency does a reasonable job of coordinating with State &amp; Federal agencies.</p> <p>MPO should focus less on single agency need and give higher credibility to multi-jurisdictional projects.</p> <p>Since a regional transportation planning organization is essentially made up of regional cities with a board of elected officials from those cities, it is important that the organization staff not attempt to pursue an agenda/policy as it relates to land use in member jurisdictions that would be in conflict with the existing land use policies and practices in a jurisdiction even if the existing policies and practices may not be the most efficient in terms of transportation options/costs.</p> <p>Local government should be able to access STP funding when it becomes available, without waiting on the state DOT to release the projects. The MPO does an excellent job in ranking projects within each UZA, and working with local governments to determine timelines for the expenditure of STP funds within the TIP timeframe. In addition, the process to complete federally funded projects is extremely cumbersome, and many steps should be eliminated in order to accomplish timely project starts. If the project is in the TIP, it fits within the financial constraints that the MPO forecasts, and shouldn't be delayed by a DOT or the current process for federal funding. The end result is unspent STP funds, which cause the appearance of a lackadaisical approach to projects by local government, which is not the reality.</p> <p>Goals should be realistic. General public looks at short term successes in 3- to 5-year increments. Maybe transportation planning needs RTP for 5-10 year increments. General Public has problems accepting 10 to 30-year goals as being attainable for transportation plans.</p>

While caution should be shown summarizing open comments, some themes can be culled from them. First, there is a tendency to highlight barrier issues to and concerns with consolidation of MPOs or MPO/RPO decision-making expressed by the Metrolina constituents. However, there are also a number of statements that clearly support more region-wide planning and improved coordination with the State DOT. Similarly, the external framework survey respondents voiced a number of concerns, ranging from cronyism, ineffective DOT-MPO relationships, inability to curb sprawling development patterns, and a need for better regional cooperation. Positive statements about staff, prioritization processes, progressiveness, and statements about the need for more regional cooperation are represented in a number of comments.

## 6.0 Additional Policy Considerations

Federal and state actions may also have an influence on the future operations of metropolitan planning organizations. Both MPOs and RPOs are recognized in Articles 16 and 17 of Section 136 of the North Carolina General Statutes, but the legislation was only adopted in 2000, thirty years after MPOs were originally defined in federal law. The following is a description of recent or proposed actions at the federal, state and local levels that may influence the organizational directions of the Metrolina MPOs and RPOs.

### ***Federal Reauthorization of Transportation Spending Bill.***

The review of this legislation was performed on the Oberstar draft bill (not yet introduced) dated June 22, 2010 as well as conversations with Rich Denbow and DeLania Hardy (both with the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations.) This bill contains important revisions to the MPO planning process, notably in the areas of greenhouse gas (climate change) and performance measurement. Importantly, the bill would, for the first time, recognize Rural Planning Organizations. The minimum size threshold for new MPOs would change from 50,000 population in the urbanized area to 100,000 if this bill were to be passed as it read in June of 2009. The only potential impacts from this draft bill to the Metrolina area that might influence coordination decisions are:

- The formal recognition of RPOs, as mentioned;
- The emphasis on performance measurement may influence the performance outcomes for certain factor areas such as emissions, congestion, and so forth that would differ in a consolidated reporting scheme for performance as opposed to an unconsolidated scheme; and
- The change of “encourage” to “require” for coordination across state lines.

Clearly, changes in the composition of Congress as a result of November 2010 or subsequent elections would have a major impact on the viability of this bill as it reads currently. However, it seems likely that the performance measurement requirements would survive in some form based on an increased across the board there is an increased interest in applying performance standards in federal and state government notably beginning in 1993 with the passage of the Government Performance and Results Accountability Act and continuing through today with NCDOT’s performance “dashboard,” as one example.<sup>14</sup>

### **Quick Summary**

*Section 6 provides a cursory examination of current legislation and policy issues that may influence the future organizational effectiveness of the Metrolina MPOs and RPOs.*

- *The next Federal Transportation Reauthorization Bill, if adopted, could impact transportation planning and funding by recognizing RPOs; allow infrastructure banks to increase MPO funding; and place more emphasis on climate change and performance-based planning could influence outcomes on certain issues (e.g., emissions and congestion).*
- *S910 provides for additional funding mechanisms for nonattainment areas that contain one MPO. As currently written, the bill requires each county in the consolidated area to both raise revenue and receive a share of the revenue raised.*
- *The most recent organizational changes at NCDOT emphasize performance-based planning which may obviate some of the need for individual local prioritization systems, for example.*
- *If the Metrolina MPOs were to be fully merged, there is a potential loss of planning funds unless a reformulation of these funds is undertaken by NCDOT. There may also be some additional revenue gains for transit projects in certain situations.*

**Senate Bill 910 (Act to Reorganize The Statutes Relating to Regional Public Transportation and to Authorize Units of Local Government to Create Regional Transportation Funding Agreements and to Provide for Financing).** The contents of this bill introduced by Senator Daniel G. Clodfelter (D-Mecklenburg) contain a number of specific provisions for the consolidation of MPOs as well as providing direct opportunities for generating new revenue sources for those MPOs that do consolidate within a single US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air quality conformity study boundary area. These additional revenues, through a five-cent gasoline sales tax and ½% sales tax, would only be available to those MPOs that consolidate and sign into a Regional Transportation Funding Agreement (RTFA). Projects funded by the new revenues would not include any administrative monies for the operation of the Regional Transportation Authority, and would have to show measurable reductions in air quality and congestion while being completed within a seven-year time frame.

**Eight Planning Factors from Federal Law (§23 Part 450.306 Scope of the metropolitan transportation planning process)**

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- Promote efficient system management and operation; and
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

**Other Policy Actions in North Carolina.** North Carolina and the State Department of Transportation have undertaken some policy initiatives that, while not always embodied directly in legislation, have similar impacts given the level of ownership that the State has in the transportation system. An example is the statewide initiative to prioritize transportation projects. The State DOT has adopted a system whereby MPOs and RPOs provide lists of projects that are scored based on a number of factors, although scheduling and financial constraints still play a role in the final listing of projects. This effort is part of an overall reform effort that mimics the federal discussions that emphasize performance-based planning and operations. The state-level efforts in project prioritization potentially have the long-term consequence of standardizing performance measures statewide, including for MPOs and RPOs.

A second example is the reformation of the state’s historical ownership of roadway facilities, dating back to the 1930’s when the State took over construction and ownership of the roads throughout North Carolina. This position was only recently changed to allow for the conveyance of state-owned roadways back to the counties, although no additional counties have accepted that proposal as yet (three counties in North Carolina had previously received enabling authority to own and maintain roadways). While county ownership and maintenance of roadways has not been viewed favorably by the majority of counties, such an action would provide a closer connection between the land development in those counties and the transportation systems that service them as the counties would own the ramifications of land use decisions directly.

A third area of interest for any discussion of MPO / RPO consolidation is how that consolidation impacts formula funding channeled through the State DOT. Current allocation formulas, if left unchanged, would slightly decrease the regional total of PL 104(f) funds, the basic tool for conducting MPO planning exercises. Table 8 illustrates how these funds might be reapportioned used the most recent allocation data procured from NCDOT. An 18% loss of PL funds is potentially caused by the redistribution of the hold-harmless funding component of the current formula, which nevertheless could be changed by NCDOT in cooperation with NCAMPO without resorting to legislative action.

**Table 8. Sample PL 104(f) Funding Redistribution**

<b>Current PL 104(F) Funding Scenario</b>					
MPO	Hold-Harmless	Population	Population Percentage	Population Apportionment	Total
Gaston	\$130,000	141,407	4%	\$129,557	\$259,557
Cabarrus-Rowan	\$130,000	115,057	3%	\$105,415	\$235,415
Mecklenburg-Union	\$130,000	758,927	20%	\$695,329	\$825,329
Remainder of State (14 MPOs)	\$1,820,000	2,769,629	73%	\$2,537,533	\$4,357,533
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,210,000</b>	<b>3,785,020</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$3,467,834</b>	<b>\$5,677,834</b>
<b>Consolidation PL 104(F) Funding Scenario</b>					
MPO	Hold-Harmless	Population	Population Percentage	Population Apportionment	Total
Gaston-CR-MU Consolidated	\$130,000	1,015,391	27%	\$930,301	\$1,077,634
Remainder of State (14 MPOs)	\$1,820,000	2,769,629	73%	\$2,537,533	\$4,600,195
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,950,000</b>	<b>3,785,020</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$3,467,834</b>	<b>\$5,677,829</b>
	<b>Apportionment:</b>	\$5,677,834			
	<b>Total PL Funding Currently</b>	\$1,320,301			
	<b>Total PL Funding Consolidated</b>	\$1,077,634			
	<b>Difference (Current-Consolidated)</b>	\$242,667	-18%		

The PL funds are supplemented frequently by Surface Transportation Program Direct Allocation (STP-DA) funding for the Mecklenburg-Union MPO; however, it is not clear how these funds would be affected under a single MPO scenario. The STP-DA funds are a particularly valuable source of revenue due to their flexibility for use in financing different types of projects.

Transit formula funding is allocated through different pools for different purposes. [Table 9](#) presents descriptions of each of the major section formula funds and the other funding sources discussed previously. According to a representative of the NCDOT Public Transportation Division, this unit of the State DOT is very much in favor of consolidation of transit systems, and generally will try to find ways of holding those systems harmless from funding decrease (or reward them with additional monies; e.g., some additional 5311 funds). Rural area allocations are based primarily on county applications so a consolidation is generally irrelevant. Examples of how the rural and urban funds can be used more flexibly in consolidated rural and urban areas are the MPOs in Rocky Mount, which uses both rural and urban funding for transit systems; and Hickory (Western Piedmont) which receives 5307 and 5311 monies for five rural counties after these systems recently consolidated. According to the Public Transportation Division, it is thought that savings through efficiencies of not duplicating services made the service consolidations worthwhile, as did access to operating assistance previously unavailable.

Some funding sources are allocated directly to operators or are managed/allocated by the MPO. In these situations, it is likely that the funding impact could be negotiated fairly readily through modifications of existing allocation formulas, negotiations with NCDOT, or would simply have no impact. In those cases where competitive grant applications are required, a single grant preparation authority could significantly increase access to funding for small urban and rural areas that might be having difficulty locating the resources to prepare an effective and coordinated application.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 9. Summary of MPO/RPO Funding Source Impacts Due to Consolidation**

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Use</b>	<b>Match (F/S/L)*</b>	<b>Consolidation Impact</b>
PL104(F)	MPO planning	80/0/20	18% loss; zero change if funding allocation formula altered by NCDOT
STP-DA	MPO planning, projects	80/0/20	Likely no impact or impact managed at MPO level
RPO Planning	RPO planning	0/100/0	Unknown; subject to negotiation
Section 5311	Rural transit	80/10/10 capital 0/85/15 maint.	Probable increase if transit system management was consolidated; allocation is application-based
Section 5310	Rural or urban transit elderly & disabled services	80/10/10 capital 0/50/50 operating	Possible greater access by rural or smaller transit systems if a single grant preparer were utilized; otherwise, no change (requires a locally coordinated transit plan)
Section 5309	Usually urbanized transit systems and New Starts programming	80/10/10 typ. 50/25/25 for New Starts	Allocations are based on competitive grants directly allocated by FTA. Possibly greater access to these funds by rural areas under a more regional planning scenario; otherwise, no change
Section 5307	Urban transit systems	FTA assigns monies based on population, then MPO allocates to transit operators; Small urban areas get direct FTA allocations	The MPO(s) would decide the allocation of funds, so the impact is managed at that level. Probably no change in funds going to a consolidated MPO compared to individual MPOs.
Section 5303	Transit planning and program administration	NCDOT allocates based on urbanized area population	Probably no change in a consolidated MPO
ROAP	Rural Operating Assistance Program	90/10/0 depending on one of three funding subcategories	Since the allocation formula is based on rural area population, number of disabled, and number of elderly, there is likely no change under a consolidated MPO/RPO structure
SMAP	State Maintenance Assistance Program for urban transit systems	0/100/0	Used for urban transit operating assistance; likely no change under consolidated scenario

The next section will summarize the findings of the preceding assessment, and present recommendations for addressing the issues identified in this study of performance.

## 7.0 Findings and Future Directions for Consideration

This study has conducted both an internal and an external examination of the workings of the North Carolina-based metropolitan and rural planning organizations of the Metrolina Region as well as seven other MPOs across the country that were thought to have useful practices that could inform the organization strategy of the Metrolina MPOs and RPOs. The objective of this study was not to make hard recommendations concerning the future organizational structures of the Metrolina MPOs, since any changes would have to come in collaboration with the technical and policy boards of each MPO as well as an extended period of collaboration with each MPO. Instead, the recommendations and findings are statements of observed fact from both inside the five agencies comprising the Metrolina regional transportation framework and from seven peer metropolitan planning organizations across the country, as seen through the eyes of various participants in the planning process. The study itself lasted approximately six months, from May through October of 2010.

Specifically, the study sought to identify the current performance of the MPOs and RPOs inside the Metrolina Region (note: while the Rock Hill-Fort Mill MPO was consulted and observed this study, it did not participate directly in it). The study was tasked with identifying significant policy differences between Metrolina MPOs/RPOs that might hinder better regional decision-making. Some of the questions asked of the Metrolina MPOs/RPOs were also asked of other, national peer organizations identified by the Steering Committee and Centralina Council of Governments. These seven MPOs provided an external set of comparisons with which to compare and contrast the perceived performance of Metrolina's regional transportation planning organizations. The result of these analyses would be to (a) identify the performance gaps perceived by the Metrolina planning organizations and their constituent members, and (b) to suggest potential courses of action to address performance gaps, especially those performance shortfalls that were noted against peer organizations.

A number of technical exercises were conducted during the course of the study to achieve its objectives. First, an internal survey of MPO technical and policy boards was carried out via an Internet and paper-based survey program. This internal framework survey

### Quick Summary

Section 7 discusses the principle findings of the study, and identifies a menu of actions to elevate the regional planning performance of Metrolina.

- The study identified, through both internal and external interviews and surveys, several areas where, as a region, the Metrolina MPOs and RPOs could improve over their current performance.
- National peers are doing a better job at regional planning. This is partially explained in some regions due to state requirements that mandate that such planning be done.
- A full consolidation of MPOs/RPOs in Metrolina would result in a small loss in planning funds due to NCDOT's hold-harmless formula unless the formula is reorganized; additional transit funding might be available as well as greater leverage over prioritizing existing funds would also develop.
- A menu of concepts is presented to strengthen relationships with NCDOT and the public; improve the potential for financing options; and creating a regional authority to manage the regional system components.
- The RTA would be served by a staff position that would coordinate with area MPOs, RPOs, and NCDOT to improve and solidify relationships with these agencies, as well as with the general public.

addressed questions about membership composition of the survey respondents; areas of performance and performance satisfaction; and how performance of the Metrolina transportation planning agencies might improve or decline if some or all of their functions were merged. This survey effort was often conducted as part of a focus group, of which there were eight conducted. Five of these were MPO/RPO staff and technical and policy board members. The other three concerned transit operations, environmental issues, and private sector business interests. A review of existing and proposed state/federal legislation that was available was also conducted, along with reviews of the bylaws, charters, and planning documents adopted by each MPO and RPO. Finally, the study contacted seven metropolitan planning organizations from around the country to gather information about the planning process and performance at each of these agencies. The questions asked during this external framework survey and the internal framework survey at Metrolina were very similar, allowing a more direct comparison between Metrolina's MPOs/RPOs and the seven peer agencies.

### Five Regional Metrolina Agencies

- Cabarrus-Rowan MPO
- Gaston MPO
- Lake Norman RPO
- Mecklenburg-Union MPO
- Rocky River RPO

### Seven Peer MPOs

- Atlanta (ARC)
- Austin (CAMPO, Texas)
- Kansas City (MARC)
- Minneapolis-St. Paul (Metropolitan Council)
- Nashville, Tennessee
- Pinellas County, Florida (Tampa-St. Petersburg)
- San Diego (SANDAG)

Central to the steering of the project was the Study Advisory Committee formed of MPO and RPO staff and elected officials, as well as representatives of Centralina Council of Governments and the NC Department of Transportation. The Study Advisory Committee met four times prior to the release of the draft document. A larger group consisting of participants from the full technical and policy boards of the MPOs and RPOs as well as the business community was also present.

## 7.1 Principal Findings

The findings of the Metrolina Transportation Framework study were derived principally from the internal reviews and surveys completed for the five regional transportation agencies in the Metrolina Region. Over the course of this study, a number of important findings were indicated, as outlined below.

- MPOs and RPOs have much the same mission and governing policies. A review of the policies and charter documents that form the basis of the MPO and RPO structures indicated relatively few differences among Metrolina's regional planning organizations. The MPOs and RPOs have backgrounds that are similar, although the former group has more diversified practices due to the longer period of their existence. RPOs are similar to each other, but lack the federal requirements that undergird the MPO missions. Additionally, the RPOs in Metrolina are not fulfilling all of the intended state-level requirements currently, notably the creation of a long-range transportation plan. While some differences in voting and member representation do exist, such differences are relatively rare or minor in the day-to-day operations of the MPO or RPO missions.
- The regional transportation planning staff support is highly valued. Without exception, the MPO and RPO staff was seen as extremely valuable to the member agencies that were the subject of technical and policy focus groups. Staff support is highly valued in every MPO/RPO; clearly performing a meaningful service to their constituencies including transit service planning; functioning as a liaison to NCDOT; coordinating with outside agencies on federal and state requirements; and serving as a forum for addressing transportation issues that pierce traditional

government jurisdictional boundaries. In some cases, concerns were raised about consolidating functions if that consolidation might lessen the effectiveness of the current staffing contingent.

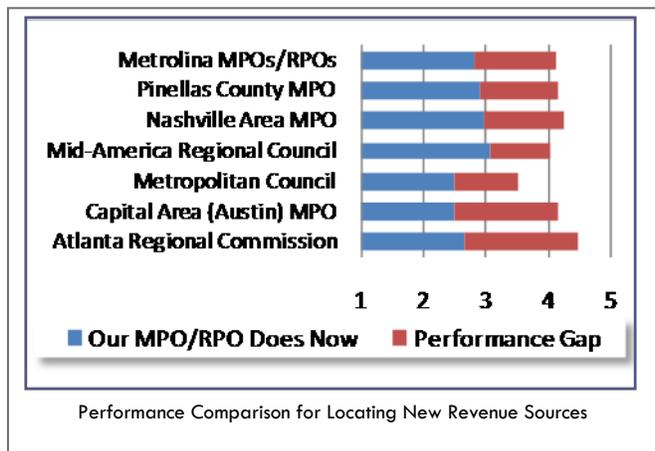
- Regional cooperation occurs now at a technical level proactively, but policy-level coordination occurs only reactively. Staff at MPOs and RPOs typically get along with each other and have engaged in productive actions such as air quality conformity and regional travel demand modeling. The CRAFT partnership has produced a system of regular meetings of technical staff of the MPOs but the elected officials had not met in over 18 months at the time of this writing. The probable reason for this level of cooperation at the technical staff level is that the mandates of federal and state regulatory practices are well-defined. Political conditions are less clear-cut, and are prone to more frequent and subtle shifts of policy direction. Several interviewees noted that the political relationships “come together when they need to” in order to resolve major issues.
- The participants in the internal framework survey identified some gaps in performance. The timely delivery of projects; lack of financing options, creating meaningful public engagement opportunities; need to increase collaboration and provide direction on regional issues; and proactively planning for regional land use/transportation issues are shortcomings identified in the survey. The largest group of respondents identified themselves as technical committee members for a RPO or MPO, municipal or county staff, or elected officials. Developing a multimodal transportation system; regional rail system; coordination with other agencies as well as the region’s planning organizations; and mitigating air quality issues were identified as issues that are addressed more effectively with more regional coordination.

The findings from the external framework study contrasted the responses provided by seven MPOs against the performance responses of the Metrolina RPO/MPO survey respondents. Additionally, the chief of staff of each of the seven MPOs agreed to an interview that typically lasted 60 to 90 minutes. Questions asked of each MPO included financing, cooperation/collaboration, decision-making (including voting structures), and regional engagement issues. It is important to note that with any case study exercise, the importance of understanding differences in contextual variations cannot be overstated. Other states in the U.S. have more rigorous laws regarding comprehensive planning than does North Carolina and other states have more flexibility with respect to the level of authority that local governments can legally exert over their own planning environments. Differences in the policy environments do not negate the findings of peer reviews, but the results should be considered in light of those variations. In the instance of this study, peers were identified not just for their similarity (in terms of size, complexity, and organization) to the Metrolina MPOs and RPOs, but because they may have valuable lessons to impart to our Region.

Keeping in mind this state-to-state variation, as well as the variation in the responses of the individual MPOs, there are relevant findings from the interviews. MPOs nationally share some of the same issues as their Metrolina counterparts, notably difficulties effectively engaging the public and developing financial options. However, Metrolina’s national peers appeared to generally fare better with their DOT relationships, engaging some of their smaller government members, and addressing regional-scale issues including land use/transportation integration. All of the MPOs surveyed had undertaken a large-scale land

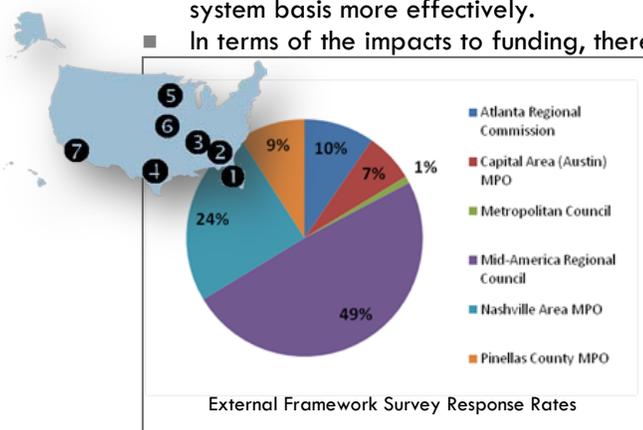
use/transportation integration exercise and/or had state laws that required the development of comprehensive plans or sustainability elements in the MPO long-range transportation plan.

Just as the results of the external framework interviews have to be understood in their own unique contexts, so should the external survey be understood from the standpoint of who responded to the survey. The survey contains a large response (over half) from one MPO (Mid-America Regional Council), a very small (2) response from another (Metropolitan Council), and none at all from a third MPO (SANDAG). Neither the internal nor the external framework



survey can claim inferential statistical accuracy, since the participants were selected in a non-random fashion. Additionally, significantly higher rates of return on the external framework survey were noted for elected policy officials and bicycle/pedestrian advocates than was the case for the internal framework survey, which had higher numbers of self-reported municipal staff. However, like the qualitative information gleaned from the interviews, the external framework survey component of the study contains information necessary to establish performance benchmarks. These findings are the perceptions of those people that are a part of the planning process, although some categories of respondents probably view themselves as more allied with the MPO/RPO mission and objectives than do others (e.g., environmental, policy, and advocacy organization representatives).

- The state matters. As already noted, state-level policy contexts are important considerations when comparing national and Metrolina MPOs/RPOs since some states in the peer group, notably California and Minnesota, have more expansive planning requirements or the states have granted more enabling authority to local governments to finance transportation projects through bond referenda. States have facilitated the maturation of their MPOs and regional planning efforts through legislation that makes planning a legally-binding priority, resulting in regional planning bodies that are notably more comprehensive in scope and more responsible for the implementation of projects and services. North Carolina’s legislature has shown a willingness to support both metropolitan and rural planning organizations as has its federal counterpart, although major legislation is still pending at both levels of government that would influence the discussion of consolidation of services or functions.
- The national peers are doing comprehensive regional planning more successfully. The MPOs in these external peer cases still have important issues and problems in creating their plans, but the baseline of planning practice that they start from is noticeably higher in some of the larger bodies such as Mid-America Regional Council, Metropolitan Council, and SANDAG. Although the Atlanta Regional Commission has had its share of well-publicized problems managing land use, air quality, and transportation issues, their programs and practices are considerably more comprehensive and speak more directly to regional issues than appears to be the case in Metrolina. With the possible exception of the CAMPO (Austin, TX) MPO, the level of regional cooperation appears to be greater and more successful than is the case in the Metrolina MPOs.
- Public engagement and engaging nearby partners may not be perceived as important – or successful – activities in many MPOs. Both the level of expectations and the level of performance in two areas, engaging the public and engaging nearby MPO/RPO partners, ranked as highly for the peer group (and Metrolina MPOs/RPOs) as other performance factors.
- Several of the national peer agencies presented a greater confidence in their ability to direct revenues towards their priority projects than did their Metrolina peers, or at least to have a better working relationship with their state departments of transportation to identify common priorities. This may be due to differences in the ownership of the transportation system elements or because some MPOs have direct control over dedicated funding. A second point on overall funding is that a consolidated planning function would be able to leverage resources and priorities on a regional system basis more effectively.
- In terms of the impacts to funding, there is no reason to believe that a consolidation of functions or organizations would present a loss of planning monies, provided that a minor formula adjustment is made to resolve a small decrease in the hold harmless allocation component of PL 104(F) funds. It is likely that the area would realize a small increase in Section 5311 (transit) funding if transit services were consolidated under one management authority.



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- The national peers present some good examples of formal consolidation structures that don’t compromise local responsiveness. Some MPOs, notably Nashville, TN and Pinellas County, FL, have created “umbrella” organizations through interlocal agreements that are

effective at improving regional planning and integrating land use/transportation decision-making. The Pinellas example requires each of six MPOs in the partnership to “host” the regional body (Chairs Coordinating Committee) for three months, preparing a meeting agenda and hosting a meeting of this regional board. This board has been successful in promoting a regional agenda, adopting a regional transportation plan, public participation plan, and adopting a clear charter of purpose and operations. The second example is the Mayor’s Caucus, which was started much more recently in 2009, represents 10 counties in and around the Nashville MPO planning area, including some rural areas outside of the MPO. The objectives of the Mayor’s Caucus extend to promoting a positive image of the region as a place to live, work, and play; promoting economic success; advocating sound public policy; and creating an opportunity to meaningfully engage the public on important regional issues.

Full consolidation of existing MPOs / RPOs is vanishingly rare, and not all regional bodies are successful. The Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) in the Atlanta region was developed to address regional land use/transportation integration issues in that area, but has suffered some setbacks in terms of transit funding shortfalls. Originally begun in 1999 and supported strongly by both then-Governor Roy Barnes and the Atlanta business community, GRTA has carried out its policies of helping to manage regional development and starting a regional transit service, but budgetary concerns and the continuing forces of sprawling development have not made the mission easier to accomplish. While some MPOs have vestigial remnants of an earlier consolidation (Hampton Roads, VA still has a bi-cameral policy structure, and Wasatch Front, UT has two technical committees, both reminders of previous consolidations), there are no recent examples of two or more MPOs dissolving to form a single MPO serving in its place. Discussions are happening about significant structural changes for some MPOs in Florida and Indiana, for example, and the number of MPOs reconsidering their organizational structure is likely to increase in the next decade, with or without federal interventions because of operating budget concerns or simply because they are under pressure to do so from their constituents or federal and state partners. However, full consolidation of the four MPOs (including South Carolina) and RPOs would take a considerable amount of time, involve a significant risk of total failure, and may result in a loss of local autonomy and staff attentiveness that the regional planning organizations enjoy today.

Based on these findings, performance areas in the Metrolina Region that could be addressed by a more coordinated regional organizational structure include public engagement (including traditionally underserved populations); regional coordination on land use-transportation decision-making; leveraging revenue sources; and engaging local and state partnering agencies. Any actions taken to address these issues should strive to respect local authority on local project decisions, as well as the quality level of service that each MPO/RPO is receiving now from their staff.

## 7.2 Future Directions

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The purpose of this study was not principally to identify a specific set of recommendations that would take the MPOs and RPOs in the Metrolina Region down a path of wholesale or even partial consolidation, but rather to identify the barriers that keep us from more effective regional planning. Once those issues were identified, a set of recommendations – really a menu of actions – can be discussed by the regional transportation planning agencies and their partners to determine a course of action that improves the current standard of operations while minimizing the negative consequences to successful practices being employed today. The range of potential consolidation actions can be thought of as a continuum, with a disaggregated group of disassociated MPOs and RPOs at one end and a fully consolidated, regional Transportation Management Authority at the other end. While a simplistic and subjective definition, the chart in [Figure 18](#) and the following information on MPO association “levels” provide some insight on the range of association and regional cooperation.

Note that these categories of regional cooperation and organizational structure do not speak directly to operational performance. However, at some point as MPOs and RPOs grow in number and size in the same spatial proximity daily commuting patterns, business opportunities, and governmental inter-relationships grow to the point where a higher level of association becomes important to accomplish goals as a region that cannot be achieved easily at one of the lower levels. For established MPOs/RPOs in a

single geographic area, the occurrence of mutually disassociated or fully consolidated organizations has historically been very rare; for example Hampton Roads (Virginia) in the mid-1980s. None of the peer agencies has undertaken a full consolidation two or more MPOs.

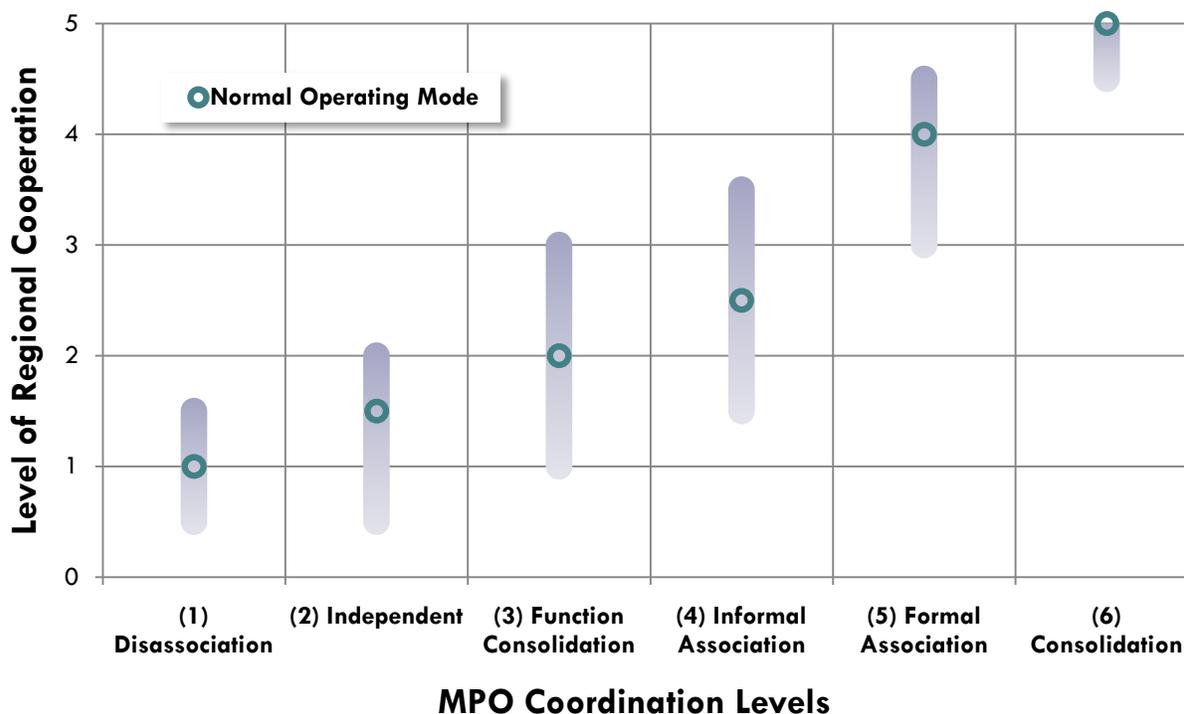


Figure 18. MPO Coordination and Level of Regional Cooperation

- (1) *Disassociation: MPOs/RPOs may actively avoid communication with each other and seek to minimize cooperative opportunities either because of distance from a neighboring MPO or RPO, or due to a history of non-collaborative behavior. For these MPOs/RPOs, collaboration occurs only when forced to do so by external requirements to resolve a single, immediate issue. Joint meetings of policy boards do not happen and forward-looking planning or implementation exercises that look beyond the individual MPO/RPO boundaries generally do not happen. Examples: Most geographically isolated MPOs*
- (2) *Independent: MPOs/RPOs are fully independent, and have no long-term arrangements to work share but collaborate when it makes sense to do so by internal or external forces. Joint meetings of policy boards happen infrequently and without a specified schedule. Example: CAMPO (Austin, TX) MPO*
- (3) *Function Consolidation: Similar to Independent (2) but some functions, such as air quality conformity analysis/reporting or travel demand modeling, are conducted through long-term formal or informal agreements. The short- and long-term operations of these functional groupings are primarily carried out at a staff level with little intervention from the policy members of each MPO/RPO. Joint meetings of policy boards (or board chairs) happen at least once every two years, but without a scheduled periodicity. Example: Triangle Region of NC MPOs (Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro and Capital Area)*
- (4) *Informal Association: The MPOs/RPOs in a single region have created a working group that regularly meets to discuss various issues; the policy boards (or board chairs) may still only meet infrequently but might be on a regular schedule. Typically only a minimal and perhaps informal working agreement is set down on paper without many specific requirements of the member agencies. This arrangement typically has little or no authority independent of MPOs/RPOs.*
- (5) *Formal Association: Same as the Informal Association, except that the policy and technical boards (or board chairs) meet multiple times per year on a regular schedule with detailed meeting protocols set out in a mutually adopted and binding interlocal agreement. It is likely that the decisions of this formal association, which will have its own named title, will carry weight for projects of regional impact while local decisions are still conducted autonomously by each MPO/RPO. Examples: Pinellas County MPO; Middle Tennessee Mayor's Caucus; Piedmont Area (NC) MPOs*
- (6) *Consolidation: MPOs and perhaps RPOs have dissolved their organizations and have created a single planning entity. This new, larger MPO may still retain district-level committee structures that are reminiscent of previous MPO boundaries to afford some degree of distinct geographic representation. Examples: Wasatch Front MPO; Hampton Roads MPO*

The table on the following page describes the specific set of actions and a logical sequence for their implementation, starting with the creation of a new regional transportation authority that fills the current gap in regional-scale planning activities that exists today while still maintaining local authority and responsiveness to member agencies. Each of the structural actions and work items described in Table 10 are intended to address performance gaps noted in the preceding assessment, notably public engagement, closer regional cooperation, and the provision of financing options.

For example, in the first phase of development a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) would replace the existing CRAFT organization in order to represent a new starting point in a regional dialogue. The purpose of the RTA would intentionally avoid contact with local decision-making and staffing arrangements, since these were priority concerns expressed by RPOs and MPOs during the course of this study. However, for major regional corridors and projects the RTA would assume a preeminent authority. Additional process details ensuring adequate review and involvement by local and MPO/RPO staff on technical positions would need to be incorporated into the RTA charter to be created and adopted by the MPOs, RPOs, and NCDOT. Important work plan elements during these initial phases of work would focus on creating a regional transportation system that the RTA would address through existing and new revenue sources. Such an authority would require state enabling legislation to authorize contracts and legally represent its regional constituency. The formation of the RTA, although it shares the same name as Senate Bill 910, would still allow MPOs to have the dominant voice dealing with sub-regional projects and programming, as well as the major voice in the composition of the chairing committee.

Not all Phase I/II activities require a different regional structure to implement, although a regional organization would greatly facilitate all aspects of regional planning. Starting regular dialogues as a group with the relevant NCDOT Division and project development branches, as well as twice-yearly legislative updates, are possible now through the CRAFT vehicle or by cycling the hosting responsibilities through the MPOs and RPOs. Although the RTA can be staffed through a rotating “host” MPO for the first 1.5 to 2 years, the group should create a permanent Stakeholder Engagement Officer (SEO) position towards the end of this period to help staff the RTA, prepare public engagement materials for use regionally, and take the lead on maintaining regional databases of outreach listings for the general public, traditionally underserved populations, and transportation partnering agencies such as public transportation operators, private providers, freight distribution facilities/companies, and limited English proficiency (LEP) populations, minority community representatives, and low income representatives. Unlike a traditional public involvement officer, the SEO position should devote a portion of time staffing and advising the Regional Transportation Authority and therefore be well-versed in the operations of metropolitan and rural planning organizations and municipal governance.

Still-later phases of work (Phases III and IV) would see the RTA shift from a new planning authority to one that has the power to raise and steer revenues. The input and resources of an involved legislator’s office would be beneficial to consult throughout the development of the revenue options. However, it is critical that all subject counties and the municipalities represented by the RTA have access to the discussions to ensure that these governments have adequate voice in what will be a controversial discussion. The project-level priorities for this funding would be developed jointly by the MPOs/RPOs in coordination with NCDOT.

As mentioned earlier, a full consolidation of the MPOs and/or RPOs in the Metrolina Region is not suggested at this time due to the desire to support a mutually acceptable framework that respects the level of staff responsiveness and control over local or sub-regional decisions. However, the menu of potential action items discussed herein would not preclude that option, should the parties in the Region decide to do so at a later time.

## Acronyms

- RTS: Regional Transportation System
- RTA: Regional Transportation Authority
- SEO: Stakeholder Engagement Officer
- KPI: Key Performance Indicator

Table 10. Possible Actions for Improving Regional Performance

Structural Actions	Work Program	Timeframe
<p><b>Dissolve CRAFT Organization</b></p>	<p><b>Establish a Regional Transportation System (RTS)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The RTS includes all cross-jurisdictional transportation corridors, including Interstate, Numbered State Routes; fixed route public transportation services; and cross-jurisdictional greenway facilities</li> <li>■ Develop a base map of the RTS facilities</li> <li>■ RTA adopts RTS v.1.0</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Create Interlocal Agreement for Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Three times/year meeting schedules</li> <li>■ Addresses regional transportation system issues only, with binding authority on regional transportation system components</li> <li>■ Establish Regional Policy Board with 4 urban, 4 small urban and 4 rural representatives, plus 1 advocacy representative each for freight, environmental stewardship, NCDOT, public transportation, and citizen</li> <li>■ Quorum requires two of each representative group (urban, small urban, rural and advocacy)</li> <li>■ One person, one vote</li> <li>■ RTA charter created and adopted by MPOs, RPOs, and NCDOT</li> </ul>	<p><b>Initiate Regional Dialogues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Start and maintain an annual legislative work session devoted to transportation project status and priority needs</li> <li>■ Maintain a biannual (every six months) half-day work session with NCDOT to discuss regional priorities, projects, and planning status updates and initiatives.</li> </ul>	<p>PHASE I (12 months)</p>
<p><b>Creation of a RTA Stakeholder Engagement Officer (SEO) Position</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Each MPO plus NCDOT pays for proportional share of SEO position</li> <li>■ Develops materials specific to the regional transportation system, and common materials that can be easily modified for use by each MPO/RPO according to a two-year work program</li> <li>■ Additional functions will be to serve as staff to RTA; liaison to local / state governments; management of outreach databases, partners, and contacts.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Develop a Regional Transportation Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Develop a technical summary of each RTS corridor, its purpose, and significant engineering, land use, and environmental challenges and resources</li> <li>■ Develop purpose-and-need statements describing anticipated demands and issues to be resolved for horizon year time frame</li> <li>■ Each MPO/RPO adopts RTS map as a part of the LRTP and CTP documents</li> </ul>	<p>PHASE II (12 months)</p>
<p><b>Seek Referendum and Authority to Expand Revenue Options</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Working through state legislative or Governor's office to develop authority of RTA to steer funds for projects on RTS</li> <li>■ Referendum prepared by counties for new revenue source</li> </ul>	<p><b>Conduct Corridor Resolution Studies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Based on the project summaries in the RTS Plan, develop typical cross-sections, wayfinding (greenways), intersection analyses/conceptual plans</li> <li>■ RTA proposes corridor-level ultimate build out scenarios, including anticipated land use and transportation options</li> <li>■ RTA adopts Corridor Resolution Studies</li> <li>■ Each MPO/RPO adopts RTS map as a part of the LRTP and CTP documents.</li> <li>■ Coordinate with MPOs/RPOs/NCDOT to identify project priorities</li> </ul>	<p>PHASE III (18 months)</p>
	<p><b>Develop Five-Year Work Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Assess SEO position for continued funding</li> <li>■ Determine project categories</li> <li>■ Determine funding requirements and sources</li> <li>■ Establish Key Performance Indicators and monitoring system</li> <li>■ Establish formal dialogue and project capacity to develop long-term land use and transportation build-out vision</li> </ul>	<p>PHASE IV (6 months)</p>

Additionally, a five-year work program would be created by and for the RTA that includes a system of measuring both external system performance and internal organizational performance. This KPI (key performance indicator) monitoring system would be updated annually and managed by the SEO position, ultimately being used to track performance and steer administrative and even planning decision-making. An important achievement of the RTA would be to lead the region to a consensus on an integrated land use and transportation plan that describe the principal directions for future growth based in part on the capacity of the transportation systems in the Region.

The original purpose of the Metrolina Transportation Framework Study was to create an environment where more effective regional planning decisions occur in a proactive fashion. While this set of recommendations is only based on a single study and will need to be detailed and refined to accommodate the needs of Metrolina's regional organizations, it does provide a starting point towards improving the performance areas discussed in this report to foster a more influential and effective regional decision-making structure in the Metrolina Region.

## Appendix A. North Carolina Transportation Planning Statutes for MPOs

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### *§136-66.2. Development of a coordinated transportation system and provisions for streets and highways in and around municipalities.*

- (a) Each municipality, not located within a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) as recognized in G.S. 136-200.1, with the cooperation of the Department of Transportation, shall develop a comprehensive transportation plan that will serve present and anticipated travel demand in and around the municipality. The plan shall be based on the best information available including, but not limited to, population growth, economic conditions and prospects, and patterns of land development in and around the municipality, and shall provide for the safe and effective use of the transportation system. In the development of the plan, consideration shall be given to all transportation modes including, but not limited to, the street system, transit alternatives, bicycle, pedestrian, and operating strategies. The Department of Transportation may provide financial and technical assistance in the preparation of such plans. Each MPO, with cooperation of the Department of Transportation, shall develop a comprehensive transportation plan in accordance with 23 U.S.C. § 134. In addition, an MPO may include projects in its transportation plan that are not included in a financially constrained plan or are anticipated to be needed beyond the horizon year as required by 23 U.S.C. § 134. For municipalities located within an MPO, the development of a comprehensive transportation plan will take place through the metropolitan planning organization. For purposes of transportation planning and programming, the MPO shall represent the municipality's interests to the Department of Transportation.
- (b) After completion and analysis of the plan, the plan shall be adopted by both the governing body of the municipality or MPO and the Department of Transportation as the basis for future transportation improvements in and around the municipality or within the MPO. The governing body of the municipality and the Department of Transportation shall reach agreement as to which of the existing and proposed streets and highways included in the adopted plan will be a part of the State highway system and which streets will be a part of the municipal street system. As used in this Article, the State highway system shall mean both the primary highway system of the State and the secondary road system of the State within municipalities.
- (b1) The Department of Transportation may participate in the development and adoption of a transportation plan or updated transportation plan when all local governments within the area covered by the transportation plan have adopted land development plans within the previous five years. The Department of Transportation may participate in the development of a transportation plan if all the municipalities and counties within the area covered by the transportation plan are in the process of developing a land development plan. The Department of Transportation may not adopt or update a transportation plan until a local land development plan has been adopted. A qualifying land development plan may be a comprehensive plan, land use plan, master plan, strategic plan, or any type of plan or policy document that expresses a jurisdiction's goals and objectives for the development of land within that jurisdiction. At the request of the local jurisdiction, the Department may review and provide comments on the plan but shall not provide approval of the land development plan.
- (b2) The municipality or the MPO shall provide opportunity for public comments prior to adoption of the transportation plan.
- (b3) Each county, with the cooperation of the Department of Transportation, may develop a comprehensive transportation plan utilizing the procedures specified for municipalities in subsection (a) of this section. This plan may be adopted by both the governing body of the county and the Department of Transportation. For portions of a county located within an MPO, the development

of a comprehensive transportation plan shall take place through the metropolitan planning organization.

- (b4) To complement the roadway element of the transportation plan, municipalities and MPOs may develop a collector street plan to assist in developing the roadway network. The Department of Transportation may review and provide comments but is not required to provide approval of the collector street plan.

**§ 136-200. Definitions.**

- (4) "Metropolitan Planning Organization" or "MPO" means an agency that is designated or redesignated by a memorandum of understanding as a Metropolitan Planning Organization in accordance with 23 U.S.C. § 134.

**§ 136-200.1. Metropolitan planning organizations recognized.**

Metropolitan planning organizations established pursuant to the provisions of 23 U.S.C. § 134 are hereby recognized under the law of the State. Metropolitan planning organizations in existence on the effective date of this section continue unaffected until redesignated or restructured in accordance with the provisions of and according to the procedures established by 23 U.S.C. § 134 and this Article. The provisions of this Article are intended to supplement the provisions of 23 U.S.C. § 134. In the event any provision of this Article is deemed inconsistent with the requirements of 23 U.S.C. § 134, the provisions of federal law shall control. (2000-80, s. 4.)

**§ 136-200.2. Decennial review of metropolitan planning organization boundaries, structure, and governance.**

- (a) Evaluation. – Following each decennial census, and more frequently if requested by an individual metropolitan planning organization, the Governor and the Secretary of Transportation, in cooperation with the affected metropolitan planning organization or organizations, shall initiate an evaluation of the boundaries, structure, and governance of each metropolitan planning organization in the State. The goal of the evaluation shall be to examine the need for and to make recommendations for adjustments to metropolitan planning organization boundaries, structure, or governance in order to ensure compliance with the objectives of 23 U.S.C. § 134. The Secretary shall submit a report of the evaluation process to the Governor and to the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee.
- (b) Factors for Evaluation. – The evaluation of the area, structure, and governance of each metropolitan planning organization shall include all of the following factors:
- Existing and projected future commuting and travel patterns and urban growth projections.
  - Integration of planning with existing regional transportation facilities, such as airports, seaports, and major interstate and intrastate road and rail facilities.
  - Conformity with and support for existing or proposed regional transit and mass transportation programs and initiatives.
  - Boundaries of existing or proposed federally designated air quality nonattainment areas or air quality management regions.
  - Metropolitan Statistical Area boundaries.
  - Existing or proposed cooperative regional planning structures.
  - Administrative efficiency, availability of resources, and complexity of management.
  - Feasibility of the creation of interstate metropolitan planning organizations.
  - Governance structures, as provided in subsection (c) of this section.
- (c) Metropolitan Planning Organization Structures. – The Governor and Secretary of Transportation, in cooperation with existing metropolitan planning organizations and local elected officials, may consider the following changes to the structure of existing metropolitan planning organizations:

- Expansion of existing metropolitan planning organization boundaries to include areas specified in 23 U.S.C. § 134(c).
  - Consolidation of existing contiguous metropolitan planning organizations in accordance with the redesignation procedure specified in 23 U.S.C. § 134(b).
  - Creation of metropolitan planning organization subcommittees with responsibility for matters that affect a limited number of constituent jurisdictions, as specified in a memorandum of understanding redesignating a metropolitan planning organization in accordance with the provisions of 23 U.S.C. § 134.
  - Formation of joint committees or working groups among contiguous nonconsolidated metropolitan planning organizations, with such powers and responsibilities as may be delegated to such joint committees pursuant to their respective memoranda of understanding.
  - Creation of interstate compacts pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 134(d) to address coordination of planning among metropolitan planning organizations located in this State and contiguous metropolitan planning organizations located in adjoining states.
  - Delegation by the governing board of a metropolitan planning organization of part or all of its responsibilities to a regional transportation authority created under Article 27 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, if the regional transportation authority is eligible to exercise that authority under 23 U.S.C. § 134.
- (d) **Optional Governance Provisions.** – In addition to any other provisions permitted or required pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 134, the memorandum of understanding, creating, enlarging, modifying, or restructuring a metropolitan planning organization may also include any of the following provisions relating to governance:
- Distribution of voting power among the constituent counties, municipal corporations, and other participating organizations on a basis or bases other than population.
  - Membership and representation of regional transit or transportation authorities or other regional organizations in addition to membership of counties and municipal corporations.
  - Requirements for weighted voting or supermajority voting on some or all issues.
  - Provisions authorizing or requiring the delegation of certain decisions or approvals to less than the full voting membership of the metropolitan planning organization in matters that affect only a limited number of constituent jurisdictions.
  - Requirements for rotation and sharing of officer positions and committee chair positions in order to protect against concentration of authority within the metropolitan planning organization.
  - Any other provision agreed to by the requisite majority of jurisdictions constituting the metropolitan planning organization.
- (e) **Effect of Evaluation.** – Upon completion of the evaluation required under this section, a metropolitan planning organization may be restructured in accordance with the procedure contained in 23 U.S.C. § 134(b)(5).
- (f) **Assistance.** – The Department may provide staff assistance to metropolitan planning organizations in existence prior to January 1, 2001, that are considering consolidation on or after January 1, 2001. In addition, the Department may provide funding assistance to metropolitan planning organizations considering consolidation, upon receipt of a letter of intent from jurisdictions representing seventy-five percent (75%) of the affected population, including the central city, in each metropolitan planning organization considering consolidation. (2000-80, s. 5.)

**§ 136-202. Metropolitan planning organizations.**

- (a) Each Metropolitan Planning Organization shall base all transportation plans, metropolitan transportation improvement programs, and conformity determinations on the most recently completed regional travel demand model.
- (b) Each Metropolitan Planning Organization shall update its transportation plans in accordance with the scheduling requirements stated in 23 Code of Federal Regulations 450.322 (1 April 1999 Edition).

- (c) The Department, the metropolitan planning organizations, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources shall jointly evaluate and adjust the regions defined in each regional travel demand model at least once every five years and no later than October 1 of the year following each decennial federal census. The evaluation and adjustment shall be based on decennial census data and the most recent population estimates certified by the State Budget Officer. The adjustment of these boundaries shall reflect current and projected patterns of population, employment, travel, congestion, commuting, and public transportation use and the effects of these patterns on air quality.
- (d) The Department shall report on the evaluation and adjustment of the boundaries of the area served by each Metropolitan Planning Organization to the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee and the Environmental Review Commission no later than November 1 of each year in which the regions are evaluated and adjusted. (1999-328, s. 4.10; 2004-203, s. 5(k).)
- (c) From and after the date that the plan is adopted, the streets and highways designated in the plan as the responsibility of the Department of Transportation shall become a part of the State highway system and all such system streets shall be subject to the provisions of G.S. 136-93, and all streets designated in the plan as the responsibility of the municipality shall become a part of the municipal street system.
- (d) For municipalities not located within an MPO, either the municipality or the Department of Transportation may propose changes in the plan at any time by giving notice to the other party, but no change shall be effective until it is adopted by both the Department of Transportation and the municipal governing board. For MPOs, either the MPO or the Department of Transportation may propose changes in the plan at any time by giving notice to the other party, but no change shall be effective until it is adopted by both the Department of Transportation and the MPO.
- (e) Until the adoption of a comprehensive transportation plan that includes future development of the street system in and around municipalities, the Department of Transportation and any municipality may reach an agreement as to which existing or proposed streets and highways within the municipal boundaries shall be added to or removed from the State highway system.
- (f) Streets within municipalities which are on the State highway system as of July 1, 1959, shall continue to be on that system until changes are made as provided in this section.
- (g) The street and highway elements of the plans developed pursuant to G.S. 136-66.2 shall serve as the plan referenced in G.S. 136-66.10(a). (1959, c. 687, s. 2; 1969, c. 794, s. 3; 1973, c. 507, s. 5; 1977, c. 464, s. 7.1; 2001-168, s. 1.)

***Rural Transportation Planning Organizations.***

**§ 136-210. Definitions.**

As used in this Article, "Rural Transportation Planning Organization" means a voluntary organization of local elected officials or their designees and representatives of local transportation systems formed by a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Transportation to work cooperatively with the Department to plan rural transportation systems and to advise the Department on rural transportation policy. (2000-123, s. 2.)

**§ 136-211. Department authorized to establish Rural Transportation Planning Organizations.**

- (a) Authorization. – The Department of Transportation is authorized to form Rural Transportation Planning Organizations.
- (b) Area Represented. – Rural Transportation Planning Organizations shall include representatives from contiguous areas in three to fifteen counties, with a total population of the entire area represented of at least 50,000 persons according to the latest population estimate of the Office of State Planning. Noncontiguous counties adjacent to the same Metropolitan Planning Organization may form a Rural

Transportation Planning Organization. Areas already included in a Metropolitan Planning Organization shall not be included in the area represented by a Rural Transportation Planning Organization.

- (c) **Membership.** – The Rural Transportation Planning Organization shall consist of local elected officials or their designees and representatives of local transportation systems in the area as agreed to by all parties in a memorandum of understanding.
- (d) **Formation; Memorandum of Understanding.** – The Department shall notify local elected officials and representatives of local transportation systems around the State of the opportunity to form Rural Transportation Planning Organizations. The Department shall work cooperatively with interested local elected officials, their designees, and representatives of local transportation systems to develop a proposed area, membership, functions, and responsibilities of a Rural Transportation Planning Organization. The agreement of all parties shall be included in a memorandum of understanding approved by the membership of a proposed Rural Transportation Planning Organization and the Secretary of the Department of Transportation. (2000-123, s. 2; 2002-170, s. 2.)

**§ 136-212. Duties of Rural Transportation Planning Organizations.**

The duties of a Rural Transportation Planning Organization shall include, but not be limited to:

- (1) Developing, in cooperation with the Department, long-range local and regional multimodal transportation plans.
- (2) Providing a forum for public participation in the transportation planning process.
- (3) Developing and prioritizing suggestions for transportation projects the organization believes should be included in the State's Transportation Improvement Program.
- (4) Providing transportation-related information to local governments and other interested organizations and persons. (2000-123, s. 2.)

**§ 136-213. Administration and staff.**

- (a) **Administrative Entity.** – Each Rural Transportation Planning Organization, working in cooperation with the Department, shall select an appropriate administrative entity for the organization. Eligible administrative entities include, but are not limited to, regional economic development agencies, regional councils of government, chambers of commerce, and local governments.
- (b) **Professional Staff.** – The Department, each Rural Transportation Planning Organization, and any adjacent Metropolitan Planning Organization shall cooperatively determine the appropriate professional planning staff needs of the organization.
- (c) **Funding.** – If funds are appropriated for that purpose, the Department may make grants to Rural Transportation Planning Organizations to carry out the duties listed in G.S. 136-212. The members of the Rural Transportation Planning Organization shall contribute at least twenty percent (20%) of the cost of any staff resources employed by the organization to carry out the duties listed in G.S. 136-212. The Department may make additional planning grants to economically distressed counties, as designated by the North Carolina Department of Commerce. (2000-123, s. 2; 2002-170, s. 3.)

## **Appendix B.1 Internal Framework Survey Instrument (paper-based version)**

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The following survey was also distributed in an electronic format.

- Please identify the agency or organization that you most accurately represent with respect to dealings with Metrolina transportation agencies (metropolitan and rural transportation planning organizations). You may choose up to two (2) selections.

- Member of a MPO Technical Committee
- Member of a RPO Technical Committee
- Member of a MPO Policy Committee (TAC)
- Member of a RPO Policy Committee (RTAC)
- Environmental Resource Agency or Advocacy Organization
- Public Transportation Provider
- Airport / Aviation Service Provider
- Bicycle / Pedestrian Advocacy Group or Committee
- Freight Industry
- NCDOT Division Office
- Other NCDOT Office

- Elected Official
- Appointed Official (not elected by popular vote)
- Law Enforcement Agency
- Minority or Low Income Advocacy
- Limited English Proficiency Advocacy
- Mobility Handicapped Advocacy
- Municipal Staff
- County Staff
- MPO or RPO Support Staff
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- Please check each county that you think is a part of our Region. Check all that apply.

- Cabarrus
- Gaston
- Iredell
- Lancaster
- Mecklenburg
- Rowan
- Stanly
- Union
- York
- Other Counties in Our Region: \_\_\_\_\_

- On which functions SHOULD a regional transportation planning organization focus its attention? Rate each answer on a five-point scale.

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
Locating and implementing new revenue options	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordination with our state department of transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordination with local government agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Educating and engaging the public on transportation matters	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Adhering to federal and local requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Addressing air quality issues	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordinating efficient regional land use and transportation choice to reduce costs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordination with nearby metropolitan and rural planning organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>				

- Which functions do you think our regional transportation planning organizations do effectively now? Rate each answer on a five-point scale.

	Most Effective	2	Neutral	4	Least Effective
Locating and implementing new revenue options	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordination with our state department of transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordination with local government agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Educating and engaging the public on transportation matters	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Adhering to federal and local requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Addressing air quality issues	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordinating efficient regional land use and transportation choice to reduce costs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordination with nearby metropolitan and rural planning organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>				



- If our regional transportation organizations cooperated more fully or more often, how would that affect important issues that affect you and your organization? Please read each statement CAREFULLY and state your level of agreement or disagreement with each one on a seven-point scale.

	Disagree			Neutral			Agree
Large, regional-scale transportation projects would advance more quickly.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
The projects or services that I care about will get lost in the shuffle.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
The area will be just too big to manage effectively.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
There is too much dissimilarity between the different areas in our region to reach agreement on important issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Regional land use and transportation decisions will work in concert more often.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Transportation projects will take even longer to fund, design, and complete.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Our region will spend less time and money doing the same work for transportation planning.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
We will less effectively engage the public in transportation decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Our federal and state transportation authorities will pay more attention to what we have to say.	<input type="checkbox"/>						

- Please tell us if you have other comments or concerns not already addressed in this survey.

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## **Appendix B.2 External Framework Survey**

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The following survey was distributed exclusively as an electronic document completed through an interactive survey software on the Internet.

## Transportation Framework External Peer Review Survey

The following survey instrument is intended to gather consistent information from peer metropolitan planning organization members. The study is being sponsored by the Centralina Council of Governments (Charlotte-Metrolina Region) and the North Carolina Department of Transportation. The survey is very brief, and the results cannot be linked to a particular respondent. Results will be presented in a summary format. Please email or call the survey administrator shown at the bottom of this page if you have any questions whatsoever. Thank you.

Please use the contact information at the bottom of each page to post questions to the survey administrator.

- 
- Please identify the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) in your region.

Atlanta Regional Commission	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metropolitan Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nashville Area MPO	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mid-America Regional Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Capital Area (Austin) MPO	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pinellas County MPO	<input type="checkbox"/>
San Diego Association of Governments	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Please identify the agency or organization that you most represent with respect to dealings with your regional transportation agency (metropolitan planning organization). You may choose up to two (2) selections.

Member of a MPO Technical Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Member of a MPO Policy Committee (TAC)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental Resource Agency	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public Transportation Provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Airport / Aviation Service Provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bicycle / Pedestrian Advocacy Group or Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Freight Industry	<input type="checkbox"/>
DOT Division / District Office	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other DOT Office	<input type="checkbox"/>
Elected Official	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appointed Official (not elected by popular vote)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Law Enforcement Agency	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minority Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low-Income Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited English Proficiency Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mobility Handicapped Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Municipal Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
County Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
MPO Support Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental Advocacy Organization	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

- On which functions SHOULD a regional transportation planning organization focus its attention?

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
Locating and implementing new revenue options	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordination with our state department of transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordination with local government agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Educating and engaging the public on transportation matters	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Adhering to federal and local requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Addressing air quality issues	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordinating efficient regional land use and transportation choice to reduce costs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordination with nearby metropolitan and rural planning organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Delivering transportation projects	<input type="checkbox"/>				

- Which functions do you think OUR regional transportation planning organization(s) do effectively now?

	Most Effective	2	Neutral	4	Least Effective
Locating and implementing new revenue options	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordination with our state department of transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordination with local government agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Educating and engaging the public on transportation matters	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Adhering to federal and local requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Addressing air quality issues	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordinating efficient regional land use and transportation choice to reduce costs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coordination with nearby metropolitan and rural planning organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Delivering transportation projects	<input type="checkbox"/>				

- Please tell us if you have other comments or concerns not already addressed in this survey.

## **Appendix C. Complete Focus Group Summaries**

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The following is the agenda presented to the eight focus groups conducted for the Metrolina Transportation Framework Study, followed by a complete summary of each meeting.

## Metrolina Regional Transportation Framework Study

### Focus Group Agenda

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<b>5 Minutes</b>	<b>Introduction and Study Purpose</b>	<b>Centralina Council of Governments</b>
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<b>25 Minutes</b>	<b>Survey Administration and Review</b>	<b>Scott Lane</b>
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<b>60 Minutes</b>	<b>Facilitated Discussion:</b>	<b>Led by Scott Lane</b>
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- What do we really like about our MPO operations? What really works well?
- What do we like/find frustrating about transportation planning and project delivery in our MPO area, and in the larger metro region?
- How do we think collaboration across MPO/RPO boundaries works? Are there things that we wished worked better? What are they?
- Would it make a difference if it happened at the policy level as well as at the staff level? If so, what difference?
- What would we really like to know about the regions against which our region will be benchmarked? Accomplishments? Funding? Authority? Other?
- What regions would we find it interesting/relevant to be benchmarked against? Why those?

<b>30 Minutes</b>	<b>Questions from the Group and Next Steps</b>	<b>Everyone / Scott Lane</b>
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*For more information:*

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<http://tframe.pbworks.com/>

## **Regional Transportation Planning Study**

**Meeting Notes: Environment/Livability Focus Group**

**Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**Mecklenburg County Air Quality Offices, Charlotte, NC**

### **Participants:**

See attached sign-in sheet.

### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Rebecca Yarbrough introduced herself, thanked Mecklenburg County for hosting, and all participants introduced themselves. In the course of the introductions, a number of members described their interest in the project including the following:

- Air quality
- Land use and making good use of resources
- Environment, natural resources, quality of life
- Development and transportation, as a member of the Turnpike Authority
- Air quality, and particularly mobile source emissions
- Planning and development as it relates to transportation
- Regional transportation and how the region can be better connected to make it possible to get around the region
- Growth corridors and sustainability
- Linkage between economic development and transportation

Rebecca also thanked everyone for attending and introduced the study background, including regional growth, upcoming census changes, legislative changes such as federal reauthorization, state legislation such as Senate Bill 910, and air quality standard changes. She also noted the feedback from CCOG Board members who traveled nationally and had ongoing frustrations about regional needs versus regional funding. CCOG undertook the study not to solve the question of what to do but to put quality information out for consideration by elected officials as they face these questions and others. The study is designed to get local input for benchmarking against other regions in the country—to look at how we might get further down the road in the direction we want to go. She also introduced Scott Lane with the Louis Berger Group.

Scott introduced himself and opened the discussion with a quick overview of MPOs and RPOs, including structure and functions. He noted MPOs as a creature of the federal government, and RPOs as a more recent state addition; noting that MPOs have “higher standing” as federally recognized. RPOs tend to be more advisory in nature. He referenced the 3 MPOs and 2 RPOs in the North Carolina portion of the region, and the MPO in Rock Hill, which is observing the study and will be providing information.

A question was asked as to why COGs and MPOs are separate in North Carolina and not in most other states. Scott replied that NCDOT associated MPOs with cities from the time they were begun; only 2 are associated with COGs. In NC, one has been associated for a long time and the other is fairly new. In most parts of the country, COGs are MPOs or are co-located. A speaker indicated that it seemed that that was a better solution since it did not appear to tie funding decisions to staff located in a single jurisdiction in the MPO, and also provided a strong link between transportation and other regional planning.

There was also a question about funding and how MPOs were funded; Scott responded that there is a federal funding formula for MPOs administered by NCDOT, with a portion of funds allocated equally to each MPO. Larger MPOs receive Direct Allocation funds which allow them to provide project monies. RPOs receive state funding.

The question was asked about what MPOs are accountable to the federal government to do, and the list includes: public involvement, preparation of an annual work program, a Long-Range Transportation Plan, a Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program coordinated with the State Transportation Improvement Program, and, if in an air quality non-attainment area, do transportation conformity. There are criteria for all of these, and also a federal certification review for the big MPOs (TMAs), and there are also self-reviews for the smaller ones. MPOs that don't perform potentially can be decertified, but to Scott's knowledge, this has not happened.

Scott reviewed the purpose of the day, which is to provide baseline information through the discussion and the survey, and to help to direct the benchmarking portion of the study. The question in light of all the changes coming is to provide decision makers with good information, based on the concerns of existing MPOs and RPOs and stakeholders outside the direct process. He also described concerns heard thus far about "voice" and how are the voices of all communities heard. Scott summarized the study as having three main parts: an internal assessment, external benchmarking, and reporting. The study will not be set up to include recommendations on what the region should do, but instead will reference potential courses of action to achieve performance comparable to benchmarked regions, if it is determined that their performance is "better." The internal portion of the review is in draft working paper stage, and indicates significant similarity in the organization and operations of the MPOs in the region, at least in most respects.

The survey was administered and taken by focus group participants. Three questions were asked:

- Do questions about coordination include staff and electeds? It is much easier to ensure coordination and communication with local government staff than with governing boards, in most cases.
- The extent to which some questions were fact-based versus opinion based, and it was noted that the questions about "what would happen" could be based on "what might be" versus "what will be," and the question is intended to get survey respondents' best opinions on "what is likely to happen" given current political climates. One person commented that there's a possibility that the structure could be totally controlled by people from Charlotte, which would not be good regionally.
- The extent to which economic development and air quality might be at odds with each other, since so much of our economic development is road-based. This engendered a discussion of conformity and its impact on economic development, particularly if conformity is not met. One person indicated that perhaps a larger regional perspective would help to address the air quality issues, especially from an economic development standpoint. Scott discussed Hickory's experience with fine particle pollution. In response to a meeting, Scott noted that the wood stoves in the area were not as large a contributor as a broad range of factors including monitor locations.

In the broader discussion, the following questions were asked and answered:

#### **How do things work now? What works well?**

- There's a reasonable consensus among MUMPO members, even with Charlotte being the big dog.
- I think in MUMPO, there's a lot more consensus here than in other places I've worked, especially in areas where there are a large number of equal size competing jurisdictions. MUMPO jurisdictions tend to come together more, like on issues around how to make I-485 come to a head, and issues surrounding mass transit.
- MUMPO's had very good leadership which has helped a lot with this. There's been leadership that kept "what's good for all" or at least "what's good for most" at the forefront.
- A good example is I-485 and the Monroe Bypass, where everyone swung their weight to those projects over Independence Boulevard, which would have benefitted Charlotte, and the Monroe Bypass, which had Huntersville support although it didn't benefit Huntersville.
- Cooperation is really pretty good.

### What doesn't work so well?

- It's still taken 20 years to get projects funded—we can be cooperative with each other on things like I-485, but we still can't get projects moved forward in a timely way that would really stabilize our transportation system.
- One thing that hasn't work well is that we don't have a very good funding model, and another is that it's easier for us as a region to fund projects that support new development rather than those that support the infrastructure we already have.
- We also tend to "spread projects" out over the whole region whether that's what called for or not. It may be politically appropriate, but it's not always logical—and may keep us from getting some really big projects done. It's "so and so hasn't gotten anything in awhile so let's fund them."
- That may also be behind what I see up in the Northern end—things go into the ground to support certain projects, but there's no consideration of long-term impacts, what's good for the region. It's very short-term, "help this project" thinking.
- There's not any real linkage of transportation dollars with land use decision-making.
- Who's "us"? We do a really poor job of educating the public about transportation and decisions and their impacts. Scott discussed public engagement practices and requirement, highlighting Miami as an excellent example of public engagement in a bi-lingual environment.
- Probably nobody would say that we've done a good job in educating the public about Providence Road as it goes from Charlotte into Union County, even though there's been a lot of interagency discussion and planning on it. There was agreement on this.
- We're not part of the MPO in my area, but we tend to think that land use and transportation are disconnected. There's just absolutely nothing going on to connect them.
- Economic development is what drives too much of our catch-up decision-making—nothing about environment and quality of life. We've covered the region with interstates that are used by commuters.
- The public is not educated about cause-and-effect, long-term effects, cost-benefits, environmental impacts—the whole concern is "where do I live and how am I going to get where I want to go," and transportation is driven by that, rather than by holistic planning.
- I think that's a real trigger point—we need to find ways to engage groups of people through MPOs and the region to reach out to people who are suspicious of institutions, to help them to better understand the impact of what's happening in transportation.
- I'm concerned about air quality and we got a grant from MUMPO to help retrofit school buses. It's so complicated—it seems like there's a numbers game going on somewhere. We do support one MPO or regional transportation planning group so that we can make sure that there's more connection between transportation and land use and air quality. We think it would help. But that whole numbers thing--the public's totally unaware of it.
- The big problem is getting the public to WANT to know about this...when you have a public meeting for a plan, the people who come are the people on the committee. It's very disturbing, and hard, on something so complicated as this.
- We even had a vote where road bonds were passed by only 10,000 people voting on it, because it was a primary election.
- Sometimes we game the system to ensure that important issues go on the ballot when only true believers will turn out. That sounds cynical, but it happens.
- Education and awareness isn't mandated anywhere to the point that people consider it important. If we had some type of mandated education it might help, because people don't get it.
- The other thing is, people have to see progress. That's one of the great things about Pennies for Progress—people can SEE what's being done with their money and in their neighborhoods. When people see it, like in that case, support went from a few hundred votes to overwhelming support the second time around. If you do that with a big regional MPO, "here's what you wanted, here's what we did," you'd get support.
- You never get anybody at meetings—I've been fighting that battle for years. We need to address this at a very high level, and constantly keeping issues out there, maintaining a steady flow of information.

- You have to take information to them and be very strategic in how you approach people. You have to go to the groups that meet.
- It's not even meaningful even then, sometimes. It's very hard to get follow-through, to get people in seats that support you.

Rebecca asked the group if they wanted to put out the message about land use, transportation, and environment, what message would you want to put out? The responses were as follows:

- You have to connect the dots on the three in a really simple way.
- You have to apply it to their neighborhood.
- It can't be one message—it has to be multiple messages, all of the time. It has to get people in seats, what's going to get people to vote, and what's going to get people to be supportive of something. That takes lots of different strategies for messaging. When I lived in Southern California, SCAG had tons of messaging going on all the time.
- We maybe have one message going at any one time, and we don't do a very good job of presenting ourselves even "inside the beltway."

Scott asked if this could be done better by a regional group?

- Yes.
- But you still have to take the message back home, because the people in Statesville and Gaston County have to see what's in it for them. You just can't address things at a high level, you have to bring it to the community level also. You can talk about "and by the way, it's also making it easier for you to get to the beach," but you have to talk about their neighborhoods and what's important to each community, also.
- The fundamental value proposition is that this has to come from the people in terms of what they want. If people feel being done to, then they will continue to distrust the process. We need to look at this from their point of view.
- We know people care about air quality and quality of life, so we need to find out what about that is valued in Statesville, and elsewhere, and find out how to express things in those terms.
- People think institutions are lying...even when they have great staff and clear messaging.

Scott discusses the challenges of public engagement and the whole "Citizenship 101" approach which does get people out, but it takes years to educate a community. Key is going where people already are going to be, like festivals and surveys, and make it easy for them. We need to use new technology—we do Wiki sites and Facebook now.

#### **Would the consolidation idea help this problem?**

- May have efficiencies
- May have less local credibility than local folks
- Will be an issue if people perceive that Charlotte controls it
- Hard for a larger institution to be more responsive than a smaller one.
- Would need to maintain local contacts.
- Would need to find active ways to engage people on environmental and other issues about which they are passionate—there are those big organizations that do it.
- It's also about marketing ourselves as a region—as a region, "we're this," with a lot of jurisdictions that still have their own identity, because you have to preserve that.
- Every big regional organization has this challenge—it can become a negative pretty easily unless you work hard to make sure that it doesn't.
- Having worked in a community outside Birmingham, the regional organization there provided lots of resources to all communities and we didn't ever think about Birmingham getting more, because we had what was perceived as a fair voting structure and because they had really good staff and leadership who took an active role in making sure the organization wasn't overwhelming. They had the money to get really good staff to be sure everyone was well-served with resources.

- I think that's what's at the heart of the land use-transportation-air quality discussion—this is not news, Neil Peirce has been writing about this for years. Mary Newsom writes about this every week. When are we going to break the back on being able to have the conversation out loud? The conversation about how we steer, or don't steer, development, and so we make really bad decisions about development and then transportation has to catch up. There's no consideration of regional impacts.
- If this idea of consolidation could help to bring those issues out into the fore, that would be excellent, and if this helps it, that would be excellent. If it makes it worse, it would be terrible.

Scott discussed GRTA (not funded after Gov. Barnes left office), which wasn't very effective. Big MPO areas still circle this same issue—this is an ongoing issue, but this conversation hasn't taken place anywhere in the state.

- Mooresville's new CTP tied land use to transportation after extended conversations with NCDOT. Mooresville will be well-served by this, but it was a big political decision to go this route, because it was very innovative and tackled some hard issues. There was discussion of how bad things had to get to get people to consider this approach, and it was agreed that it had to get bad.
- People have that passion for protecting their home town and making sure their voice matters. We should look at this—people do care, and we need to connect to that.
- We should look at potential consolidation through a carrot approach rather than with sticks. Things that would be beneficial:
  - More impact in getting resources from the State, better lobbying
  - Better resource deployment
  - Better more effective staffing
  - Better air quality measures

Things that would be intimidating locally:

- Doing things with land use, which is so much a local decision

Given that, would it be possible to create a more collaborative regional framework that provides incentives to get people to buy in? Rewards for playing regionally? Would that be better than creating an organization like GRTA that just doesn't work?

**Would a regional organization help this land use-transportation-air quality linkage or hurt it, in your opinion?**

- Yes (all)
- And transit—you can't do rail any way other than regionally.

**What else do you want to know in benchmarking, in addition to the LU-TRAN-AQ link, and public engagement?**

- How successful their air quality measures have been
- What IS the physical linkage between transportation and land use decision-making? Do they have the wherewithal to actually carry out any type of decision related to that? What works? Funding? Authority?
- That hits the nail on the head...and how do you get local governments to buy into that idea, because you're usurping authority from them.
- It could be that you give local jurisdictions more economic development aid, so people don't have to drive to Charlotte to work, which is better for air quality.
- And it's also about marketing. MPO folks are really smart, but they generally can't explain things in terms the public can understand. It doesn't have to cost a lot of money (per Scott) but it does have to be strategic.
- To what extent do they link multiple forms of transportation planning in their work? Are they serious about it?

- Are they serious about land use and transportation planning using an approach like Corridors and Wedges?
- And rural versus urban issues—how do they make sure that community values are respected, in their decision-making? That’s really important, that you address the needs of both kinds of communities, plus suburban.

Scott references the Minneapolis-St. Paul area where revenue-sharing among jurisdictions assists with the palatability of some planning decisions. There’s another that requires an APFO to get your project prioritized.

Rebecca said that notes will be put on the website, and asked all to finish survey before they leave and/or do it on line. She encouraged the group to send any additional questions. She also identified some potential benchmark areas as Denver, MARC in Kansas City, Florida collaborations, Atlanta (because we don’t want to be like them).

Feedback from the group included possibilities for Nashville, Indianapolis, and the need to look at regions with “real cities” around the urban core. Other possibilities are Austin and Phoenix, and potentially Las Vegas. These may be too isolated by terrain. Possibly Colorado Springs, but it’s smaller than we are, or Portland, because they are the only regional government and do interesting things. Some said we should hit ahead of the curve. Another is East-West Gateway in St. Louis, and Chicago.

Rebecca closed the meeting by thanking the group for their time and thoughtfulness.

## Regional Transportation Planning Study

### Summary Meeting Notes: Rocky River RPO Focus Group

Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Crutchfield Campus, Stanly Community College, Locust, NC

#### Participants:

See attached sign-in sheet.

#### Welcome and Introductions:

Dana Stoogenke introduced herself as RPO Coordinator, thanked Locust for hosting, and all participants introduced themselves. Dana also sent regrets from Mayor Allen, the TAC Chair.

Rebecca Yarbrough thanked everyone for attending and introduced the study background, including regional growth, upcoming census changes, legislative changes such as federal reauthorization, state legislation such as Senate Bill 910, and air quality standard changes. CCOG undertook the study not to solve the question of what to do but to put quality information out for consideration by elected officials as they face these questions and others. The study is designed to get local input for benchmarking against other regions in the country—to look at how we might get further down the road in the direction you want to go. She also introduced Scott Lane from the Louis Berger Group and Anne Morris from PBS&J, and thanked Dana for her active participation and guidance as the study has progressed to date.

Scott and Anne introduced themselves and the purpose of the day, which is to provide baseline information through the discussion and the survey, and to help to direct the benchmarking portion of the study. Scott summarized the study as having three main parts: an internal assessment, external benchmarking, and reporting. The study will not be set up to include recommendations on what the region should do, but instead will reference potential courses of action to achieve performance comparable to benchmarked regions, if it is determined that their performance is “better.” The internal portion of the review is in draft working paper stage, and indicates significant similarity in the organization and operations of the MPOs in the region, at least in most respects.

He opened the discussion with a general question about transportation and what those present thought of how things were being done now. Comments included:

- NCDOT does not know how to design urban streets; they require superelevation where none is needed.
- Why do we have so many paved roads that are basically farm-to-market roads? We are second in miles of paved roads only to Texas, and we tend to treat farm roads the same as roads that we want to use for economic development. If you place industries strategically, then that should impact how and where your transportation dollars go. If you want to change transportation planning, you need to focus on how and where the jobs go and how do you attract them.
- This is a big concern in Stanly County—we have water and sewer and workforce but only now are getting a 4-lane road. We have what should attract industry but we don't have a road that provides good interstate access to bring in supplies and carry out product. That's what we need—the RPO is working on it. We as a state are still in the mindset of trying to create farm-to-market roads that we were in the 40's and 50's, but things have changed since then.
- Politics of counties in the past directed much of who has the best roads, because so much of the decision-making was based on politics.
- Highways matter a great deal, to help us recruit the industry we're otherwise set up for.
- Public transportation is a community service system, but I'm concerned about politics because you have to talk with Raleigh and the local politicians to decide where and how the roads go and what goes to public transportation. Public transportation is not adequately addressed.

- A good example of disconnects is Highway 49, which is in multiple divisions and funding regions. You have to negotiate between divisions to get a project done, because everyone's got a different funding pot and different set of priorities.
- We do public transportation like the neighboring county does, but the RPO deals mainly with highways and planning. We're encouraged to work with them, but everyone who's there is mainly there to talk about highways, and we need to be sure that public transportation isn't lost.
- We have an advisory committee, but we need to ensure that the needs of public transportation don't get lost. Staff is great and helps when we ask, but public transportation is not at the forefront of everyone's mind.
- A major concern is making sure areas are fully represented. Our bylaws may look similar, but even if they don't seem vastly different they are—for example, RRRPO only has two towns that have populations over 5,000, and if only communities with populations over 5,000 come to the table, then everyone except Albemarle and Wadesboro is left out.
- Another concern is weighted voting, and we'd have a problem with it because we wouldn't get any real voice because Charlotte is such a big dog. I don't want my towns getting lost in the shuffle and getting their needs overlooked because we have as many issues and needs and value as the larger cities.
- We can always learn and do better and there are some politicians who think that if we do a merger we're somehow going to get out of non-attainment, and that's just not true. We meet a lot about it and work fairly well to meet federal conformity requirements, but there's not a quick fix to our air quality problems to be gained through a merger.

Scott Lane noted that voting is a real issue everywhere and some places do have ways to mitigate and ensure that everyone's voice is heard. He used examples from MUMPO and Raleigh of different ways to determine quorum, and MUMPO's policy of requiring agreement of affected jurisdictions on projects, as examples.

In further discussion, the following points were made:

- There will be a real issue for RPOs after the census, because of the RPO legislation which requires 3 contiguous counties for an RPO to be formed. Union is likely to be all within MUMPO, but because of travel patterns it makes no sense for Stanly and Anson to align across the Pee Dee River with Montgomery or Richmond.
- I just want to make sure we have a seat at the table and that we're not overshadowed by our urban counterpart. RPOs are new, rural areas always tend to take a back seat, and we need to be sure our views and voices are heard.
- I think that the comments around are pretty much on mark...hope to see planning organizations' recommendations are listened to and taken seriously by NCDOT, because it looks like even MUMPO can't get their programs through without being overturned. The better organized we are may make a difference.
- We're small, but we matter, and I like the idea of the RPO being stronger so that the voice can be stronger.
- The organized approach for flow of information which RPO provides is really worthwhile.
- What's good for Albemarle is good for Locust—there's power in numbers. The RPO does a good job of bringing smaller communities together and helping people recognize the importance of projects that might otherwise be lost, especially if we go into the larger area.
- The MPO in Rowan isn't as interested in Granite Quarry, Rockwell, or Faith in their area—an example is getting something done with US 52, which is a major network to I-85 as well as Stanly and Anson. It's just not as important as I-85 to the larger group.
- As far as RPOs and MPOs working together, we need to collaborate but remain separate entities.

The people who had not responded to the updated survey on line, then took the paper survey. While they were doing this, Anne continued the discussion using the agenda questions and related questions:

**What do you like (and what don't you like?) about current operations?**

- I haven't been super-involved, but what's good is collaboration and bringing broader ideas before everyone in the county. (Anne then shared information about the Bluegrass Monopoly methods of project prioritization across a larger area).
- I don't work with this thing every day, I'm the alternate, but I see ours as one that's been very cooperative among ourselves; the group has tended to gel.
- Nothing I don't like about our operations...we're sticking together to avoid what we think might happen—someone's regulations swooping down on us because they think we need to be in a bigger group. We don't have air quality problems over here.
- Don't consider myself to be a politician—I like the fact that we actually get a lot of information that allows us to see total picture of OUR region and also the larger region...air quality information, etc.
- I sometimes think that bigger municipalities tend to attract industry, and part of what we need to do is look at the big picture and see if we need to find ways to create job centers elsewhere (outside the big municipalities) so we don't have to drive so many miles.
- I'm also not in favor of too many roads because it causes too much sprawl. If you make it to where everybody including the farmers live on farm to market roads, then you get too much traffic and that's bad for air quality.
- I'd like for us to think bigger but not get lost in the shuffle. We work well together.
- I think the RPO has worked well since its inception and the 3 counties have been very considerate of each other...and of the areas outside of the RPO, like in the MPO in Cabarrus. Our support for the Highway 49 bridge in Mount Pleasant before widening began in Stanly County is a good example. We have done a good job of looking at projects outside of our area that we knew would impact our area—an example of our unselfish way of working.

Anne asked a question about support for public transportation and whether they felt lost in the shuffle.

- Regarding public transportation, we've always been lost in the shuffle. I went to an NCDOT workshop several years ago and it was all about building roads—not one word was said about public transportation.
- What's our need? Money...we have to serve everyone, by on-demand service.
- Most people don't know about the service unless they see the bus, and then they don't know who's being served—we need to raise the profile of the service through our own communities. We put our name out there, again and again, but since we don't have bus stops we're not as visible.
- People don't want to know about us til they need us, because they'd rather drive their car out there.
- We go everywhere, we go to other counties, we pick up on relays from other carriers. We can coordinate, but you don't have to combine everything. We work with all the surrounding counties, meeting them somewhere and you don't have to be a huge conglomeration to make it work.
- 18-20% of our ridership is general public, instead of the human services population, which is HUGE. We have a route now in Locust where we're here one day a week. But we're almost out of ROAP money for this year so we really can't take any more clients.
- If you have to pay the public fare to go to Charlotte, it's \$50-\$100 because you generally have to wait for folks. So your money gets eaten up in a short period of time.
- We get 1% of the transportation money and we're expected to work with everybody and do it all and coordinate with everybody; we're doing a lot of things.
- They'd rather talk about adding a lane to go to Charlotte rather than making people ride public transportation.
- We've been fighting for money for a long time. And now business is booming because gas is going up and we're cheaper than driving a car.
- It's clear that in the time I've been here, there's a lot of growth in need and this is a very needed service.

**What do you think would be the impact of a different organizational structure?**

- We're sensitive to others' needs, and we're becoming aware of needs in our own area because we're a manageable area. Not that we keep our head in the sand—we're aware of what's

going on elsewhere...but I don't see what would be gained in efficiencies but it would probably water down our participation to be merged.

- Having the division office in Albemarle is a great plus for the RPO because TCC meetings are held there, and we'd lose this strong connection between our communities and the division if that [merger] were to happen. We get their close attention, and we have built a strong relationship with them, and they are very responsive on the spot even on things like cones being out. We wouldn't want to lose that—it may not be lost, but it's important to not be lost.
- The RPO plots maps for us, and they were quick, and we may not be able to get done as fast by someone else. Dana is a good advocate for us.

**Do you have facilities that you need? Do you have backup? What needs do you have?**

- If the present organization were torn down, I don't know what we'd do, we have a very knowledgeable person, she listens well. She doesn't participate in the discussions but listens well and is a good leader for this organization.
- I think I have what we need, but NCDOT's cut us to the bone, and that would be very difficult if they cut us further. At end of year we're saving...we have very little wiggle room.
- It's a big problem to not allow us to purchase consulting services, when we could really benefit from that (i.e., cost-benefits for TIP analysis). We don't have the expertise to do everything, but we can't contract (per NCDOT) for what we sometimes need.
- Our elected officials are great—our group works really well together.
- Funding is not the same for every RPO. All the RPOs don't have to deal with the air quality issue, but since we have to deal with it we have to do more work, and that takes us away from other matters.
- If we didn't have the air quality issue in this region, we might not even be in this discussion right now about merger, because that seems to be what is driving it. But most RPOs don't have to deal with this. We lose a lot of time for that.

**What is the logic behind everyone coming together (merging) for air quality?**

- I don't know what the logic is, because I don't think that air quality can be solved by all the MPOs and RPOs coming together.
- We've been able to do our conformity analysis for years. (Rebecca described having heard the comment made at one regional meeting with the explanation of making it easier to expand regional transit.)
- I can't imagine that it's going to really be feasible to get transit region-wide—it would take massive behavior change.
- We need better mileage, less driving, lower speed limits.
- Someone should ask the Southern Environmental Law Center, why they think as they think.

**What would happen if for some reason further State cuts occurred?**

- I think that speaking for myself and my town that if the State cuts funds we'd probably ante up more money to fund the RPO, because we're so happy.
- We're also fortunate for Division 10 being so good and being right here.

**What would you want to look at in looking at other communities in the country as part of benchmarking?**

- Issues of voice for smaller communities--how do smaller communities' voices get heard? How do they manage that?
- How much time do you have to go over all the issues?
- How do the issues get prioritized?
- Who gets the lion's share of the money and do the small towns only get the leavings?
- There might be some cost savings, but I don't know that there'd be good representation.
- If you combine these, who gets to go to the table? Right now everybody gets to have a voice.
- You're becoming so large if you get everybody at the table—you can't sit around the table and talk like we're talking today, because there's a time limit. How is that handled?

- What's in it for us; what's been in it for smaller communities that have become part of larger organizations?
- When you go to the bigger system, you have to quantify things. I kind of like the new state system where everything's quantified, but someone has to decide how the factors are weighted. Who gets to make that decision?
- Everybody wants a voice and wants to be heard—don't know how you do that. (Scott shares Detroit example of “clicker” voting that allocates over 2500 votes, and Albany example of all decisions by consensus.)
- I don't want to be modeled after Detroit.
- When we vote it's always unanimous because we've talked it out and worked it out and it's always pretty much take a vote that we all agree on, and then move on. The larger you get, and the more complex you get, the less supportive it is of conversation, debate, compromise. I think those are why RPOs exist—if you dump us into one big pot, then why have it?
- I don't want a “checking the box” kind of input.

**Is there collaboration across boundaries at the policy level?**

- Yes.
- If you're in a county or an RPO you can't accomplish anything if you're tugging with your neighbors. If you join with a bigger thing would you lose the ability to speak with one voice about things that you're all familiar with?
- I think you would lose that, especially if we feel like it's pushed down our throat, and especially if you don't know anybody.
- It's nice to know folks and to have a sense that you have a county-wide communication and cultural similarities—culturally we're different from Mecklenburg.
- We look for win-wins. Why would we not all want to support things that are of value to any part of our community, such as the road to the Stanly County airport?
- We know those needs. And we also know how to get around our own areas.
- I think the spirit will be lost. We're pretty much all non-partisan.

**Are there times that you could see benefitting from outside support for your projects?**

- If we could convince them of the importance of it, and they would give us the time to listen, maybe, but I can't see that happening.
- For example, the Wadesboro Bypass is the last piece of US 74, and it's an important project, but it'd never compare with I-485. I understand that, from their viewpoint, but I don't know if they understand it from our viewpoint.
- The blade of being affiliated with Charlotte cuts both ways...would we be more hurt by being affiliated with them because NC doesn't like Charlotte? Politics is how business gets done.
- Look at eastern NC –look at all the road-building going on down there but NOT here. It's all politics. You can drive for hours on US 70 and not see a car going to Greenville. Then try to drive from here to Clanton Road in Charlotte.
- Commutes into Charlotte from here are easier than commutes around Charlotte.
- They have so much traffic, it's hard to see how our issues mesh with their issues.

Scott Lane said that it sounds like the RPO's been effective in many ways but not with funding for moving projects forward more quickly or obtaining funds. He summarized it as, “We like how we work together, we like what we're doing, but we're still not getting what we need.” Is that right?

- YES from multiple persons.
- All the top projects on the SPOT list were in Charlotte—I didn't hear anybody whining, but...we've learned to be patient and we're going to continue to push.
- Charlotte people--they're all about money and power and going up the ladder and we're still about quality of life.
- I just can't see how our projects would be very high on the list out of MUMPO, and how they'd help us get things on the list. They've probably got a huge list themselves.

- If you talk to the small eastern Rowan towns...find out how they think they're being treated by their MPO.
- [There was some discussion of Harrisburg that was garbled.]
- We're beginning to plan ahead, if you're not planning 15-20 years out you're spinning your wheels.
- NCDOT's changed and if you can keep the politics out it'd be good.

Scott again noted that meeting notes would be sent out and thanked everyone, and indicated that their input will be critical in helping to pick benchmarked communities. He then asked:

**Was this a good way to provide your input?**

- This was very constructive. An effective way to speak and be heard.
- It will be useful to get some objective results on the table to see if there's a way to get more voice for the whole area without taking away anybody's individual voice.
- This is why this is a great conversation...have had some conversation about what our concerns are with boundaries, but we're taking direction from Conti who says wait til 2012. There will be a different situation.
- That's what I'm thinking about...tell me how I'm going to be better, because if we are, then we'd be open to it. But we need to determine the extent to which we'd be giving up our own destiny! We can't plan for our own destiny if we can't control it!
- 

There was some discussion of how results will be presented (a large meeting to which all MPOs and RPOs will be invited, as well as a Power Point that can be shared with all groups). There was also some discussion of how boundaries would be changed.

The focus group adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

## Regional Transportation Planning Study

### Summary Meeting Notes: Gaston Urban Area MPO Focus Group

Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Gastonia Police Department Community Room, Gastonia, NC

#### Participants:

See attached sign-in sheet.

#### Welcome and Introductions:

Chairman Joe Carpenter introduced himself and opened the meeting, calling on Rebecca Yarbrough and Scott Lane to lead off.

Rebecca Yarbrough thanked everyone for attending and introduced the study background, including regional growth, upcoming census changes, legislative changes such as federal reauthorization, state legislation such as Senate Bill 910, and air quality standard changes. CCOG undertook the study not to solve the question of what to do but to put quality information out for consideration by elected officials as they face these questions and others. The study is designed to get local input for benchmarking against other regions in the country—to look at how we might get further down the road in the direction you want to go. She also introduced Scott Lane from the Louis Berger Group and thanked the Chairman, Jack Kiser, and Hank Graham and Bernie Yacobucci for their assistance as the study has progressed to date. She also asked all members of the focus group to introduce themselves.

Scott introduced himself and the purpose of the day, which is to provide baseline information through the discussion and the survey, and to help to direct the benchmarking portion of the study. Scott summarized the study as having three main parts: an internal assessment, external benchmarking, and reporting. The study will not be set up to include recommendations on what the region should do, but instead will reference potential courses of action to achieve performance comparable to benchmarked regions, if it is determined that their performance is “better.” The internal portion of the review is in draft working paper stage, and indicates significant similarity in the organization and operations of the MPOs in the region, at least in most respects.

He opened the discussion with a general question about transportation and what those present thought of how things were being done now. The discussion points which follow document comments of the participants:

#### What do we like?

- The TAC
- So many municipalities in Gaston County have worked together and have wonderful cooperation, internally within the group.
- The opportunity to all come together is important and valued.
- I’ve been on the MPO for almost 15 years, and we do a pretty good job of planning.
- It takes effort to sustain the effort long-term, but we really do have elected officials meeting regularly to discuss these issues.

#### What don’t we like?



- Elections sometimes produce results that not only create significant changes on the policy board in terms of membership, but can also produce significant changes in direction.
- Sometimes it is frustrating to not be part of a decision if you are not an elected official.
- We are not the “Good Roads State” any more—how much of that is due to politics?
- Sometimes we could be more collaborative.
- The local paper doesn’t cover MPO deliberations.
- Public input is insufficient; for example, a session on the Garden Parkway was not well attended when public input would have been constructive. Public input wasn’t timely but reactive when things appeared to be going a direction the public didn’t like—and late public input is disruptive to projects.
- Sometimes Gaston is the subject of bad jokes, and the river acts as more of a divider than it should.
- Would be great if a regional system could bring us together on larger projects, but for local projects, we still need a mechanism for local decision-making (local MPO).
- People are not getting their money’s worth out of our requirements and expenditures on public participation, and it isn’t because staff isn’t trying.
- I’ve been on the MPO for almost 15 years, and even though we do a good job of planning, we have problems implementing.
- We have to focus on crisis points because there’s no way to get ahead of the curve, given the allocations.
- We have roads on the map for 25 or 30 years, and conditions change over that time, so that the projects, by the time they are funded, actually may not have the same level of need that they did when they were first proposed. A Bessemer City road project is a good example of this—actually the project was first proposed in 1975. Do other states take this long?
- Revenue is an ongoing challenge and it’s very frustrating to not have enough money to do what needs doing.
- We have 3 developments on the table for which developers cannot afford to build infrastructure.
- How we fund interstates is also a problem.

### **What would we like to see changed?**

- Wish improvements could be made in securing rights of way.
- Need a Pennies for Progress program, that could raise funds to leverage more dollars, and would be particularly effective if it were region-wide.
- Every jurisdiction needs to decide how it wants to grow. How a region wants to grow [based on local inputs?] should be first, and then transportation projects should be developed to support the desired land uses.
- Transportation projects should be multi-modal—bike, ped, etc.
- A corridor study for the Garden Parkway concerning land use is important; if there is water and sewer that area could grow far beyond what is appropriate. The current UDO and land use plan is probably not enough to manage growth in this area.
- Bessemer City has adopted an urban growth boundary, with strong public involvement, to protect the rural areas and support town growth—but we didn’t call it a growth boundary, but part of our land use planning process.
- We can’t build our way out of congestion—but if we don’t sprawl, how will we ever get NCDOT to build us a road? Without growth, you don’t get roads or other funding for transportation.
- Senate Bill 910 provides for a regional sales tax for projects, which is good since property taxes won’t work. I have questions, though, about how the revenue is divided, but the bill would give us more say in how the money is divided and what projects get funded.
- We should look at a VMT tax.

- Denver's tax for transit is a good example of what we should be looking at.

#### **What would we gain or lose if we consolidated?**

- I like what we've got, but could we benefit from being part of a larger entity to have more power to look for funding? If so, it'd be worth going for.
- More power in Raleigh would be the driver, but more power in Raleigh may not be achievable.
- Are there MPOs out there who take an active role in revenue-raising?

#### **How do we collaborate now across MPO/RPO boundaries?**

- We collaborate a lot at the staff level, but not at the policy level except through the Regional Roads Committee. They're the group that talks to the powers that be to create change. They worked with the CCOG to do the Regional Roads Committee study to identify roads of regional significance and funding needs.
- We have actually collaborated some with MUMPO at the policy level. Examples are the Pedestrian Bridge across the Catawba, that is part of the Carolina Thread Trail, and the Garden Parkway.
- We also do some coordinating on CMAQ and Enhancement funds and share consultants.
- Most collaboration occurs at the staff level.
- Gastonia works with CATS on the express bus. Gastonia and Belmont fund most of the match, but are concerned because riders come from elsewhere in the county outside those jurisdictions, and they'd like to share the match burden with other jurisdictions.
- Working with CATS on the express bus is not an issue—it's a good partnership that we want to grow.

#### **Does CRAFT have "legs?"**

- It's run at the staff level.
- It was supposed to include elected officials from each MPO and RPO, thinking they'd take on big regional projects.
- Elected officials' meetings are very infrequent; the last good one was on funding at Stowe Gardens some time back.
- The greatest communication in this region is about the Regional Travel Demand Model. It's staffed and housed at MUMPO and is funded by the transportation partners. It also includes RFATS in Rock Hill.
- Work on the model is staff-driven, but if it doesn't work well policy-wise, it's a mess for the elected officials.

#### **What questions would we like to ask regarding benchmarking?**

- How do large ("mega") regions communicate? How do they talk? We don't talk in this region.
- Ask smaller communities in large regions what the benefits are for them, and did they get lost in the shuffle.
- Did they get more money?
- How do staffs work? How do they feel? How did any transition occasioned by merger or consolidation impact them? Are there any subregional staffs?
- Are there areas with separate mechanisms for dealing with large regional projects separately from smaller community or local projects? If so, what is typically the focus of those projects?

- How multi-modally-oriented are the regions that will be looked at? Are there real linkages between modes (i.e., you can take a train, then get a bus, and safely walk from a bus stop to a destination.)?
- How will the census impact the region? It may not include Cherryville (in Gaston County) but may include Shelby (in Cleveland County).
- What changes will come to Gaston MPO if they become a TMA, as is likely?
- We really dislike the fact that we don't push for added revenue sources in our region and in the county. We need to be doing that and wonder how others do it.

Rebecca Yarbrough again thanked everyone for their participation and interest, and the focus group concluded at 6:30 p.m.

**Regional Transportation Planning Study**  
**Summary Meeting Notes: Lake Norman RPO Focus Group**  
**Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010**  
**Lincoln County Citizens Center, Lincolnton, NC**  
**Participants:** See attached sign-in sheet.

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Andrew Bryant introduced himself as RPO Coordinator, thanked everyone for coming, and introduced Rebecca Yarbrough and Scott Lane.

Rebecca Yarbrough thanked everyone for attending and introduced the study background, including regional growth, upcoming census changes, legislative changes such as federal reauthorization, state legislation such as Senate Bill 910, and air quality standard changes. CCOG undertook the study not to solve the question of what to do but to put quality information out for consideration by elected officials as they face these questions and others. The study is designed to get local input for benchmarking against other regions in the country—to look at how we might get further down the road in the direction you want to go. She also introduced Scott Lane from the Louis Berger Group, and thanked Andrew for his active participation and guidance as the study has progressed to date. She asked everyone present to introduce themselves.

Scott introduced himself and the purpose of the day, which is to provide baseline information through the discussion and the survey, and to help to direct the benchmarking portion of the study. Scott summarized the study as having three main parts: an internal assessment, external benchmarking, and reporting. The study will not be set up to include recommendations on what the region should do, but instead will reference potential courses of action to achieve performance comparable to benchmarked regions, if it is determined that their performance is “better.” The internal portion of the review is in draft working paper stage, and indicates significant similarity in the organization and operations of the MPOs in the region, at least in most respects.

He opened the discussion with a general question about transportation, including what worked well and what could work better. The following summarizes the responses to these and other questions:

**What do you like about current operations?**

- I like the size—our TCC group is a good size for discussion. We usually have 13-15 present.
- Our elected officials participate well and are interested.
- I like the fact that we plug into regional transportation issues from our local governments, and focus on trying to make our region a better place.
- Hot issues for us are the I-77 FAST Lane Study, the ULI Study for the Lake Norman Transportation Commission, and Mooresville’s participation in that with the three North Mecklenburg towns. We need collaboration.
- We like the SPOT program as one example of clearing that up—taking more politics out and letting need drive the priorities.
- The SPOT rankings were good and pretty common-sense.

**What’s frustrating/what don’t you like?**

- We are frustrated with the lack of funding and the allocation of funds statewide.
- The RPO has really tried hard to get the public involved, but transportation issues don’t come across well in print. And it’s so hard to get people to comment until two weeks before a project opens, and then it’s too late.

**How has collaboration worked across RPO/MPO boundaries?**

- There are lots of other disparate groups, like CRAFT, the Chambers’ Regional Roads Committee, the Lake Norman Transportation Commission.
- The RRC isn’t official but tries to influence transportation, looking at it from economic

- development and growth, moving people and goods. They're not always aligned with the policy groups.
- We do participate in CRAFT but it's mostly staff, not a functional policy group. We haven't really looked at it.
- We probably need to have more linkage with some of these groups and with other MPOs and RPOs, and they need to hear from our TAC and TCC, and we need to hear from them.
- We also need more linkage with the RRC and Chamber.
- Perhaps we could have workshops with them to talk about aligning priorities to achieve goals. Even twice a year would be helpful.
- The NC 73 Council of Planning annual meeting is very helpful. The original study was done in 2004, along the corridor from Lincolnton to Concord/Kannapolis, and the MOU that was put in place after the study was done has been maintained. CCOG manages it, and the study will have a continued life and be a guide. Local governments along the corridor have all adopted it. The really good part of it is that it matched the corridor design along the entire corridor to the various jurisdictions' adopted future land use plans.

The discussion took a turn into the relationship between land use and transportation planning, based on participant comments. The following reflects the comments made during that discussion:

- Division staff has worked hard with planners to work on things with developers and smart land planning, to try to correct "the sins of the fathers."
- The land planning issues makes transportation an element of a much greater challenge—
- NCDOT will always be behind the 8-ball unless we get a handle on land use. We have to cooperate on land use to mitigate the need to constantly upgrade facilities.
- Land use and transportation hasn't come up in the RPO, that one person was aware of. But it does come up in the sense of sharing plans and writing transportation provisions into ordinances.
- A big positive is that the group works very well together. We look at each others' site plans, site designs, not only from transportation but also from a land use perspective. In terms of learning, it's very positive.
- Regular involvement in the socio-economic projections has been very helpful in terms of looking at growth. We've had both TAC and TCC involvement.

**What do you think would be the impact of a different organizational structure?**

- I wonder if a larger group would impact interest, participation, and attendance?

**What would you want to look at in looking at other communities in the country as part of benchmarking?**

- How do they coordinate across modes?
- How do they make priority-setting work across modes?
- How do you change the mindset that you can build your way out of the mistakes that land use planning causes?
- We pretty much know how to collaborate on highways, but what about multi-modal? How do we do it with rail? Transit?
- The ULI North Mecklenburg Panel was great—how do we get people on board with larger, regional projects that extend out from one RPO or MPO?
- We need to look at what's done with transit—things like Rapid Bus, vanpools. There's a challenge of losing the Lincoln-CATS Express Bus Service; once you lose it, it's hard to re-start.
- There was also CATS' unwillingness to reduce the number of trips to save money; it was presented as an all-or-nothing option.
- We go through JART funding for local demand-response, but cuts appear to be a matter not of philosophy but of economics. What do other regions do?
- How do you facilitate communication and technology transfer across regional entities?



- We'd like to benchmark against a region that does Multi-Modal REALLY well.
- How do MPOs compete and procure funds?
- Are there any RPOs that can procure funds or get Direct Allocation funds?
- Are there good "Pennies for Progress"-like programs in other states? We should look at that as a model. It would really help in Gaston if we could leverage it with the State's money. South Carolina has a great approach, and York County was able to leverage funding. What role to MPOs and RPOs play in arrangements like that?
- How do you engage the general public? How do you educate the public if they don't show up? Who does a really great job of it?
- We should also be sure to select a region that includes towns that are somewhat separated, not all in an urban cluster.
- We should look at an area that has done well with rail.
- We should also take a look at an area that has done well with private sector engagement, particularly public-private partnerships to move projects ahead.
- We need to look at best practices on tolling, bringing in the local business community.
- We need to look at what other practitioners do, particularly in terms of educating the public, workshops around issues such as money coming into the region, and costs of projects.
- We also need to look at how areas move smaller projects forward, as well as the large ones.

Rebecca and Scott thanked the group for their input, as it was now past time for the LNRPO meeting to begin. The focus group adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

## Regional Transportation Planning Study

### Summary Meeting Notes: Cabarrus-Rowan Area MPO Focus Group

Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Cabarrus Regional Chamber Conference Room, Concord, NC

#### Participants:

See attached sign-in sheet.

#### Welcome and Introductions:

Chairman Bill Feather introduced himself and opened the meeting, calling on Rebecca Yarbrough and Scott Lane to lead off.

Rebecca Yarbrough thanked everyone for attending and introduced the study background, including regional growth, upcoming census changes, legislative changes such as federal reauthorization, state legislation such as Senate Bill 910, and air quality standard changes. CCOG undertook the study not to solve the question of what to do but to put quality information out for consideration by elected officials as they face these questions and others. The study is designed to get local input for benchmarking against other regions in the country—to look at how we might get further down the road in the direction you want to go. She also introduced Scott Lane from the Louis Berger Group and thanked the Chairman and Phil Conrad for their assistance as the study has progressed to date. She also asked all members of the focus group to introduce themselves.

Scott introduced himself and the purpose of the day, which is to provide baseline information through the discussion and the survey, and to help to direct the benchmarking portion of the study. Scott summarized the study as having three main parts: an internal assessment, external benchmarking, and reporting. The study will not be set up to include recommendations on what the region should do, but instead will reference potential courses of action to achieve performance comparable to benchmarked regions, if it is determined that their performance is “better.” The internal portion of the review is in draft working paper stage, and indicates significant similarity in the organization and operations of the MPOs in the region, at least in most respects.

The meeting opened with overall comments from those present. These included:

- Phil noted that the CRMPO has a current population of over 200,000 and functions as a TMA.
- Concern was expressed over the CCOG study. It was noted that Cabarrus and Rowan Counties have both voted to withdraw from CCOG membership, as have Concord and Spencer [Spencer has since voted to remain in CCOG.]
- The CRAFT meeting that one CRMPO member attended was “taken over” by Charlotte, leading the person to wonder what closer collaboration/consolidation would really look like.

#### What do we like?

- Because CRMPO is in two separate NCDOT divisions (Rowan in Division 9, Cabarrus in Division 10), each county selects their own priorities.
- The MOA and other documents spell out CRMPO functioning.
- We’re very happy with our lead agency and our contract with Mobility Solutions.

- I don't know that the structure can improve.
- There may be ways to accomplish what we want to accomplish without consolidating.
- To move away from the way CRMPO works would be difficult; we like the availability and we like the results.
- Getting good service is important, and we get good service.
- I'm concerned about the word "weighted" in the voting schemes that some MPOs have. Here, everyone's vote is equal and we like that.
- There's good communication with NCDOT in Rowan, good staff, and good planning.
- We like the fact that the MPO focuses only on the needs of the two counties.
- We very seldom have split votes, and have very good participation.
- We generally have quarterly meetings with good elected official participation and state elected representatives as well.
- If there's a conflict, a Cabarrus vote can't outweigh a Rowan vote, especially on a Rowan issue. For example, only Rowan County representatives voted on Highway 52 issues.
- We get good and frequent information from staff.
- We like their delivery of services, such as the Rowan Express.

#### **What don't we like?**

- It still comes back to NCDOT and the equity formula.
- If there's anything we wished worked better it would be NCDOT communications with Cabarrus County (Division 10).
- NCDOT Division 10 tends to get pulled off to work on Mecklenburg projects; CRMPO area tends to be neglected.
- The only negative is lack of adequate funding for projects. That was the case before the economic downturn, and it's an equity formula issue.
- It just takes so much time between when something is conceived and when it's actually delivered.

#### **How do things work across MPO/RPO boundaries? How do you work regionally now?**

- CRAFT is the answer; air quality is handled through CRAFT, which "we have tended to staff."
- The travel model is integrated.
- Have not had problems except for Charlotte-Mecklenburg "attitude;" CRMPO has had its plans completed but been held up by Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
- We got it done, but the problem has been that MUMPO has been late. We have asked to be separated from the region for attainment because of the Motor Vehicle Emissions Budget issue.
- MUMPO's LRTP was late; it took 5 years on a 4-year cycle. This caused us all to be at the end of a grace period lapse. There was concern that this would delay the Yadkin River Bridge project, but that did not happen.
- CRAFT has functioned primarily at the staff level. There is a "general agreement" that the policy board does not meet unless there is something to talk about.
- There is no "carrot" to get anybody to work together; there's no reason to meet, and there's no policy-level debate.

#### **What would you like to ask other regions?**

- How they handle issues such as:
  - Allocation formulas from the state
  - Sharing division staff with larger entities
- How do they handle funding? How does their funding come to them?

- We don't know what would happen to any of our projects if we consolidated with someone larger with more needs.
- We'd need to have more money coming into the area to make it worthwhile and would ONLY want to change if that increased the funding coming into the area.
- How do larger MPOs interact with smaller jurisdictions, with counties and "county" roads?
- Do smaller jurisdictions feel that they are "helped" by being members of a larger organization, and if so, how?

**Would you want to do something, possibly some other system that would treat you fairly, to attract more money into the region?**

- If CRAFT could draw more money in, we'd like to see/hear about it. The problem is, there's nothing out there to go after.
- The budget's not looking good right now, and if any resources went to support consolidation we'd see less services and won't allow that to happen.
- The Rowan Express is a good example of an implemented project of benefit to our smaller towns. It provides public transportation down the Highway 52 corridor to connect to Salisbury and the Concord-Kannapolis Transit System. It was done by our staff, completely organized by them from coordination through implementation. We don't want to lose the availability of that service that impacts lives. Does someone in Charlotte care about that? We don't think so.
- Rockwell got a state road paved they'd been working at for 5 years.
- We get more out of our staff, and don't know that other people feel that they get as much. They might, but we know we do.
- The Rowan Express happened with the support of the whole group.
- We are not unwilling to work with different groups, but we are worried that you'll destroy what you've got.
- We're worried about our funding and that it will go to larger areas.
- The CRMPO response to Senator Clodfelter's bill was negative, although we didn't get into the meat of it.
- We have excellent relations with NCDOT; at our Wednesday meeting, Sec. Conti will attend. This is the second time he's been here. He attended a CRAFT meeting at some point and received a very negative reception from some MPOs, but we provide a chance for NCDOT to share accomplishments and receive feedback.
- We have an excellent working relationship with our legislative delegation and staff has a great deal of contact with Sen. Fred Steen, as well as Lorene Coates.
- People come to our meetings because it's very much an input session.
- Our TCC meets regularly and we have an even more regular working group. Our meeting schedule suits adoption deadlines, and we send out a call for agenda items a week in advance.
- It all goes back to information and communication—we're kept informed, get information and are prepared.
- Staff from municipalities are a big help in getting information together, and the local staff communicates with the elected officials so they are never caught off-guard.
- It is important that there be a diversity of benchmarking regions, and at least one area of Florida should be included. [Scott indicated that Indianapolis, Mid-America, and Atlanta are candidates, and that a candidate list will be sent out.]
- CRMPO also believes it's important to look at a diversity of staffing arrangements.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Rebecca and Scott again thanked everyone for participating. The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:30 p.m.

## Regional Transportation Planning Study

### Summary Meeting Notes: Mecklenburg-Union MPO Focus Group

Thursday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, Charlotte, NC

#### Participants:

See attached sign-in sheet.

#### Welcome and Introductions:

Bob Cook introduced himself as RPO Coordinator, thanked everyone for coming, and introduced Rebecca Yarbrough, Scott Lane, and Anne Morris.

Rebecca Yarbrough thanked everyone for attending and introduced the study background, including regional growth, upcoming census changes, legislative changes such as federal reauthorization, state legislation such as Senate Bill 910, and air quality standard changes. CCOG undertook the study not to solve the question of what to do but to put quality information out for consideration by elected officials as they face these questions and others. The study is designed to get local input for benchmarking against other regions in the country—to look at how we might get further down the road in the direction you want to go. She also introduced Scott Lane from the Louis Berger Group and Anne Morris from PBS&J, and thanked Bob for his active participation and guidance as the study has progressed to date. She asked everyone present to introduce themselves.

Scott introduced himself and the purpose of the day, which is to provide baseline information through the discussion and the survey, and to help to direct the benchmarking portion of the study. Scott summarized the study as having three main parts: an internal assessment, external benchmarking, and reporting. The study will not be set up to include recommendations on what the region should do, but instead will reference potential courses of action to achieve performance comparable to benchmarked regions, if it is determined that their performance is “better.” The internal portion of the review is in draft working paper stage, and indicates significant similarity in the organization and operations of the MPOs in the region, at least in most respects.

Members present took the survey if they had not taken it on line.

Scott and Anne opened the discussion with a general question about transportation, including what worked well and what could work better. The following summarizes the responses to these and other questions:

#### What do you like about current operations?

- We get a lot of really good staff support in the MPO, across the board. They've help us be well-prepared.
- Have “extraordinary” staff and consultants.
- We get to work with national experts who have the “best practice” ideas.
- Staffs across the MPOs and RPOs are very collegial; there appear to be very few turf issues as long as you're willing to sit down and roll up your sleeves and work (despite some different perceptions of relationships).
- Elected officials work well with staff members in the TAC setting.
- MPO orientation sessions that started this year have really helped; wish it had been started earlier.
- We do a great job of implementing really good engineering ideas.
- We do listen to the public, but you can always do more.
- Staff is great—do a tremendous job, and are willing to go out of their way to help you get educated if you're willing to spend the time. Bob even came to my office.
- We have done some good things—the fight over I-485 was a good professional fight, with good discussion of the issues, good staff support, and good organization.

- Could we come up with a better way to prioritize roads? Yes, probably, but our process does get better over time.
- I'm very happy with staff—they keep us organized and up to speed.
- The TCC also does an excellent job.
- Elected officials seem to be very engaged and for the most part have good understanding.
- I've worked in 3 states, and of all my experiences this is the most collegial TCC I've seen, very open and transparent.
- We do have some split votes but it's very professional and we're able to disagree without being disagreeable. The TAC is the same.
- My role on the TAC is one of the most important things I do as an elected official.
- I think that it's very important that if you come, you have ONE FULL VOTE for your town, no matter how large or small you are. Weighted voting is not a problem if you're larger—but everyone should have ONE FULL VOTE at least.
- I've seen the staff role expand, and the staff become increasingly respected and take a bigger voice, since I've been on the MPO (a plus in most ways).
- Staff does an excellent job handling public input, even unfriendly public input! Does a great job involving the public.
- We talk about Charlotte sucking up all the money—but that's not really true, because most of the projects that take most of the money are the projects that take you into and out of the suburbs.
- MUMPO staff after our MPO 101 session asked for educational needs, and now there's a workshop before every board meeting. Attendance is spotty.
- People like Charlotte and say it's a great place, and so we need to keep that happening. We are turning into a more diverse community, and it's going to take top-down, bottom-up planning.
- Members of the policy board do the very best job they can; sometimes they get on a soapbox, but we don't have a lot of argument.
- We've been working with the State so long, we may be learning how to maneuver the State.
- I think we all have good working relationships with the NCDOT divisions—the Board of Transportation is less powerful that it was five years ago, and that makes for more transparency.

### **What's frustrating/what don't you like?**

- My only concern is that we may be too staff-driven without enough digging in by members.
- We only meet every 2 months, and there's a steep learning curve on this topic. We're a pretty austere group, and transportation is one of the most complex areas I deal with as an elected official. I feel so strongly about this I'd even come to a monthly meeting!
- There's a lot of turnover of elected officials and a continual need to re-educate.
- I've gotten indications from my manager that I as an elected official shouldn't go to the TCC.
- Some elected officials come in with a deep distrust of government and staff, and start "hammering" instead of asking for help to understand issues.
- It's very hard to participate in discussions as a new person, because you need background to understand the issues.
- We don't do so much work on implementing a structured way of linking planning and transportation issues.
- We've not made the connection yet, that our past LRTPs envisioned a future we can't pay for. This last one was more realistic, but it was also a shock.
- We tend to do an LRTP because we have to, and then walk away from it.
- We're impacted by regional transience, the "I'll only be here for a few years" mindset that makes it hard to get people to become invested in long-term processes.
- I kind of disagree that we need more meetings—because the pot's so small that we can't execute! We've planned and planned, but we can't execute.
- We did a beautiful small area "Long Range Transportation Plan" but I don't expect to see even one project implemented in 20 years.

- I've been on Council for a long time; we built 6,000 square feet of retail on 2-lane roads, assuming that projects would handle the traffic. We should have known better.
- The whole region has the same type of issues—how is a small town ever going to get a nickel?
- We don't have enough collectively in Union County to have "weight."
- How do you ensure that people get the projects they need without constantly taking away from someone else who's in need?
- Our project ranking works fairly well, but our allocation is broken. There's got to be some way to address this.
- The tendency is for large projects to take up all the funds so that there is NOTHING to spend on smaller projects for years.
- The problem is the "bucket" that large-project funds come out of the same bucket, to a great extent, as smaller projects. Earmarks don't do you any good, either, because they're not new money.
- All this leads to a distrust of the process, because earmarks especially cause a shift in priorities without adding money.
- Charlotte's the "hub," but we need to find a way to make allocations equitable so that everyone sees progress and so people don't distrust the process.
- The conversations of complexity and difficulty are probably an indicator that we need to do more TAC and policy-level training, and also do a better job of clarifying the roles of the MPO and NCDOT.
- We need to have a real educational program about how we develop (grow) and how we build infrastructure—we're behind in that. We know how to grow, and we see it as an industry but we have to grow in the right way if we're not going to continually outstrip our infrastructure. We don't know how to do that.
- We tend to go for "Big Splash" projects like I-485 that suck up money. We might spend the money differently if we really thought about how we want to grow.
- We don't have the breadth of revenue sources we need, and don't have home rule to get creative. That doesn't create the most stable environment for long-term decision-making, but we have still made them and worked hard to make them work.
- I'm not sure our elected officials are as involved even in their own communities as they were in former years—and elected officials certainly don't know the whole MUMPO region. Some of them don't have enough knowledge of the region to know where the roads go, and to be able to make decisions on some of the projects.
- Smaller areas should have SOME opportunity for projects in their lifetime, but I-485 and other large projects have sucked a lot of those dollars away. At some point, we've got to get back to providing funding for smaller projects that handle a lot of our local traffic.
- Most MUMPO members haven't driven the whole area, and when you don't do that, it's hard to know what's going on.
- The transient nature of our board is a challenge, and also the fact that nobody is from here—I'm the only one on the MUMPO Board from North Carolina!
- Peirce and Johnson say that people have come to look at their communities as "consumables" rather than investments, so it's hard to convince them to invest transformationally in those communities when they won't be there to see the changes. The long-term mindset is hard to develop.
- "If it doesn't benefit me and my kids" is a very sad mindset.
- Previous NCDOT board members had way too much power—they could exert influence even after they'd been removed for cause, and that's not right.
- The prescriptiveness of having to spend on greenways, etc. (and I do like greenways) makes it hard to really have full latitude of decisions. When we voted for the greenway project the other night, one that links the University and shopping, I was thinking, are you really going to walk to a WalMart SuperCenter on a greenway?
- The other part of the problem is that the MTIP isn't included as required by federal law in the STIP—the equity formula and NCDOT's funding regions make it almost impossible to work as the feds intended.

- We need more choices for local funding sources.
- Are there funds being spent that aren't being accounted for?
- I also get frustrated that the funds that get rescinded, when there's a rescission, are the funds that MPOs are most likely to control, not the funds that the State controls.

**Lots of comments have focused around members wanting to “see projects.” Does this mean that the MPO should have a role in implementing projects?**

- Some legislators seem to feel you need a regional implementation body, such as the Regional Roads Committee, and Sen. Clodfelter. I haven't heard anyone articulate how that gets done.
- We also need to exercise some discipline in making sure that the projects that get funded are the ones that need to be funded.

**How has collaboration worked across RPO/MPO boundaries?**

- I'm not asking for a pot of money for Charlotte and a pot of money for everyone else, but would like a formula that at some time starts to give money back to the communities that also contribute to the revenue.
- We need a formula at some point that doesn't reward you for NOT finishing your projects, like the current formula does. That's where I get aggravated.
- We really have one MPO in North Carolina, and that's the Board of Transportation, because unlike MPOs in other parts of the country, we don't make the final decisions.
- We need to have growth discussions on a region-wide basis, with public input—and we don't even do it in our own MPO.
- We do a good job with air quality, getting the plans in and keeping the money flowing.
- We have a great effort at MUMPO, and with staff across the region, to work together to pull technical data. The question is, can we do it from a policy perspective?
- We don't have enough money coming into the region to keep pace with plans, and we don't have the breadth of revenue sources we need (local and regional issue).
- We're not quite mature enough as an MPO and regional planning body to get to know what makes the region really tick, and to work that into implementation.
- I don't know that a mega-county MPO planning group would be so hot. I know some of the surrounding counties, I've learned a lot about them, and it would be strange, even in terms of what the next census will likely do.
- And yet, in some ways we already do a lot of working outside our own “region;” the 3 North Meck towns work with Mooresville, they all rewrote codes together, the mayors at one time were all brothers, and it's quicker to get to Mooresville from where I live, than Charlotte.
- Things will be changing in this state—the feds assume that MPOs will have more influence than they currently do in NC. I expect to see much more reliance on MPOs, and the desire is to ready us for change.
- The NC 73 Corridor Study is a good example and a good mode—has led to more funding. Maybe the way to approach this is to do more corridor planning groups, maybe create “corridor associations.”
- I would hate to see us bifurcate the region that way (referencing corridor associations).
- As City staff we've tried to work more with regional groups; it's made us all want to try to work together, but we can all still pull some lulu's.
- The challenge in this region is that the promise of money is so far off, that the impetus for collaboration just isn't there! [in response to Anne Morris's description of Bluegrass Monopoly effort]

**What do you think would be the impact of a different organizational structure?**

- Part of the challenge is that NC never chose to absorb the full US Code intent in developing and using MPOs. The project prioritization/development process now is too slow and too open to change; would a different organizational structure impact that?
- People are still willing to invest time and energy if there's a compelling vision/reason to do it—but we've got to get them there.

- I would hesitate to change, because we might lose what we have now. I've figured out how to make what I have work.
- We need some type of equity formula, but not the way it works now. The equity formula will never support big, regional projects, and we need some statewide project funds.
- The Piedmont should plan together how we attack this [funding issues] and we all need to speak with one voice.
- The census will have major impacts.
- If the census doesn't do anything with reducing the number of planning organizations it won't be good—there will be more work to do with less money per organization to do it!

**What would you want to look at in looking at other communities in the country as part of benchmarking?**

- How do they coordinate across modes?
- How do they make priority-setting work across modes?
- How do you change the mindset that you can build your way out of the mistakes that land use planning causes?
- We pretty much know how to collaborate on highways, but what about multi-modal? How do we do it with rail? Transit?
- The ULI North Mecklenburg Panel was great—how do we get people on board with larger, regional projects that extend out from one RPO or MPO?
- We need to look at what's done with transit—things like Rapid Bus, vanpools. There's a challenge of losing the Lincoln-CATS Express Bus Service; once you lose it, it's hard to re-start. There was also CATS' unwillingness to reduce the number of trips to save money; it was presented as an all-or-nothing option.
- We go through JART funding for local demand-response, but cuts appear to be a matter not of philosophy but of economics. What do other regions do?
- How do you facilitate communication and technology transfer across regional entities?
- We'd like to benchmark against a region that does Multi-Modal REALLY well.
- How do MPOs compete and procure funds?
- Are there any RPOs that can procure funds or get Direct Allocation funds?
- Are there good "Pennies for Progress"-like programs in other states? We should look at that as a model. It would really help in Gaston if we could leverage it with the State's money. South Carolina has a great approach, and York County was able to leverage funding. What role do MPOs and RPOs play in arrangements like that?
- How do you engage the general public? How do you educate the public if they don't show up? Who does a really great job of it?
- We should also be sure to select a region that includes towns that are somewhat separated, not all in an urban cluster.
- We should look at an area that has done well with rail.
- We should also take a look at an area that has done well with private sector engagement, particularly public-private partnerships to move projects ahead.
- We need to look at best practices on tolling, bringing in the local business community.
- We need to look at what other practitioners do, particularly in terms of educating the public, workshops around issues such as money coming into the region, and costs of projects.
- We also need to look at how areas move smaller projects forward, as well as the large ones.
- How do you provide benefit for all the attendees who come to the meetings so that they feel that their participation has worth?
- How do you promote a regional perspective that recognizes big regional needs over strictly local needs—how do you strike the balance?

Rebecca and Scott thanked the group for their input, as it was now 7:00 p.m. The meeting adjourned.

## **Regional Transportation Planning Study**

**Summary Meeting Notes: Business/Economic Development Focus Group**

**Friday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**Rowan Chamber of Commerce, Salisbury, NC**

### **Participants:**

See attached sign-in sheet.

### **Welcome and Introductions:**

At the beginning of the meeting, all present were invited to complete the stakeholder survey. There was considerable discussion about the “what is a region” question, with the resolution that each person was asked to define it on the basis of their work. There was also the question of the “regional transportation planning organization” effectiveness also raised questions, with one participant noting that none of them are truly regional. Scott noted that it should be based on the MPOs and RPOs as they exist today. Another participant noted that locating and implementing revenue sources were really two very different functions. Another also noted that this is a matter of public concern, and so he would not think that it could be done in any manner beyond a recommendation to elected officials, without some legislative change. It was noted that “implementing” can take many different forms.

Rebecca Yarbrough introduced herself as Assistant Director of Centralina, thanked everyone for coming, and invited Bob Wright of the Rowan County Chamber to welcome everyone to Rowan County. She then introduced Scott Lane and Anne Morris. All present introduced themselves.

Scott then introduced himself and the study, which he noted has three main parts: an internal assessment, external benchmarking, and reporting. The study will not be set up to include recommendations on what the region should do, but instead will reference potential courses of action to achieve performance comparable to benchmarked regions, if it is determined that their performance is “better.” The internal portion of the review is in draft working paper stage, and indicates significant similarity in the organization and operations of the MPOs in the region, at least in most respects. The focus groups will raise awareness, and help to hone in the benchmarking process. A critical part of the selection of the regions against which this region will be benchmarked is identifying the characteristics regional stakeholders want to look at and believe are important for this region’s transportation success.

In response to a question, Rebecca noted the changing environment as a primary driver for the study, in terms of frustration over funding, the census changes, federal transportation reauthorization, state legislation such as Senate Bill 910 and county road responsibilities, and air quality standard changes. A participant discussed the fact that on the air quality issue, it’s a catch-22, because you can’t implement the projects that would help you meet conformity if you can’t meet the conformity tests. Another indicated that’s an important reason to be sure that benchmarked regions have air quality issues or had dealt with them. In response to another question, CCOG undertook the study not to solve the question of what to do but to put quality information out for consideration by elected officials as they face these questions and others, because there are many opinions out there. CCOG has never said we need to merge MPOs. Another speaker said that although there were some who felt strongly that that was the proper approach, that it was important to look at what could be achieved by coordination and what form should that coordination take to be most effective. The benchmarking will be key in terms of helping to inform these points of discussion.

A speaker asked if anyone knew what happened with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Committee. It was replied that they were seriously impacted by the recession, so recommendations have not moved forward yet despite their coming up with some very creative recommendations.

One participant talked about his participation in the Governor's Logistics Task Force, and that the group had had a number of intense discussions all over the state focused on the improvement of efficiency of transportation/logistics for business attraction, and that the direction appeared to be doing so through the expanded use of ports and regional hubs. If the industry is moving in that direction, if different MPOs in a region don't collaborate, our state will be at a disadvantage. He noted that Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton has actively participated, that the State is very serious about these discussions, and that his (the speaker's) personal sense was that the future development of the industry was toward regional hubs, with the next step further study and discussion of how to implement them. He also said that NCDOT did a number of presentations on their priority systems, which made it clear that coordination on supporting stronger priorities was important. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of coordinated, staged planning and implementation of projects, including an integrated approach, for major regional projects such as I-85, so that there are not gaps between improvements. We need to establish a mechanism to do that; it will establish more convincing arguments for our major projects.

A former elected official agreed, but said that at the local level, people really wondered what was going to be done to improve local roads. "Am I going to get Oates Road paved?" is a local question. At some point, you can see authorizing counties to do some things, like Oates Road, but it's going to take a much more regional body to be able to focus on those large projects, to make the hard regional decisions that will allow us to grow and prosper in the region. People are going to have to agree on a decision matrix for those projects versus Oates Road, and then swallow the results of that decision. We need to base decisions on what data we have that shows what we need to grow and prosper.

A speaker said, "My region includes that Charlotte Regional Partnership counties, and then some to the Northeast." You'd get a differing flavor when you talk about trans-state, interstate projects, versus so many projects that don't cross our region. Even the Monroe Bypass is more local, until you talk about Wilmington. What do other regions and states do with those HUGE, statewide-significance projects?

85% of the economic activity in North Carolina is along the I-85 corridor, with the addition of Wilmington. We impact the economic health of the whole state. Are state "superprojects" like I-40 and I-85 segregated out of regional discussion and should they really be addressed at even a higher level?

**What really matters to you regarding how transportation links with your work, impacts your ability to grow business and prosper your communities?**

- There are a couple of things—Charlotte has several interstates that come out from Charlotte and are finished closer in but not further out. In Rowan, if you look at the business growth, we've got I-85 incomplete both to the north and to the south, you've got US70 incomplete. You don't have the transportation system to move in and out of Rowan County complete at all. It makes it very hard to recruit business.
- It also restricts traffic going through, much less traffic that has an origin or destination here.
- That's got to be fixed. If I were a new business that had to do a lot of transportation, I would not come to Rowan County at all for those reasons. We need to find a way to get that completed.
- We're looking at transportation from both a freight and passenger vehicle viewpoint, as well as for air quality. When you stop the traffic, you create more air quality problems.
- It's all interrelated.
- If you've got congestion, you're trapping both commuters/business people and trucks in the traffic.
- If you're looking at economic development, and you've got a good system, where you can ship goods quickly and efficiently, you've got a real attractant for business.
- Asheville is more interested in connecting to the Port of Charleston—what really matters when you're planning for the logistics industry is where your key connections are, and sometimes those are in other states.
- Road conditions also matter—if you depend on tourism, you don't want to have bad roads. And if you depend on tourism, it matters whether you consider peak or average volumes, or seasonal volumes.
- The key issue for economic development and logistics is that if you only consider local issues and roads, you'll probably not be highly effective.

- It is about time of goods being on the road, but it's not just about that. It's also about attracting workforce. You have to be able to offer a range of lifestyle options—such as for someone to work in Charlotte but live in rural Rowan County—to attract the workforce, because people like to have such choices available.
- I believe that I-85 is unique in the number of trucks per traffic volume—I think it's double the national average—so in this corridor, it's really both freight and passenger vehicles because of the incredible amount of traffic. We lost a seafood distributor who had to sit in traffic for 2 hours trying to get over the Yadkin River Bridge—they said, “We can't do this,” and went elsewhere.
- The same thing is true if you're describing getting to Greensboro and Charlotte airports—but we can't talk about it being only 40 minutes any more. Now it's over an hour regularly, and even at mid-afternoon on a Thursday you can be doing 30 miles an hour on the interstate. It takes a real tool away from us.
- I've seen it go from an occasional Friday afternoon slow day, and now it's every day, 3-7, from I-485 to past China Grove, that you go 35-40 miles an hour. That's a real obstacle to moving people and goods effectively, and being able to promote economic development.
- My two main concerns are ensuring that we have capacity—it has been seriously reduced over the past five to ten years. And a lot of that's due to the fact that so much of the current formula goes to maintenance. We need to find way to elevate projects that promote economic development and business growth or retention. We need to add tax base to our communities, so that we will have additional funding for transportation projects (and maintenance, and turning lanes for schools). We have projects with interchanges that can open up thousands of acres for new business, but we can't get them funded. We really need to identify and promote the true economic development projects.
- Adding to that—the problems that we have with major economic development projects—such as I-85—aren't problems with the MPO structure, they're problems with NCDOT. I-85 has been a priority for our local MPO for 20 years. The funding for projects comes from NCDOT—so that problem is not solved by a bigger MPO that has that as its top priority.
- The fact that the Yadkin River Bridge is now being addressed is because everybody in our region recognizes that I-85 is a major national priority, and the Regional Roads Committee, the Chambers, and others in the region all made such a noise about this during the last campaign the Governor had to address it.
- That's a collaborative example of how we've collaborated on a project, and I-85 is another example throughout the region. I'm a strong advocate of that. I think that's absolutely what we need to do—to collaborate on projects that matter to all of us. But I have yet to be convinced that a super MPO is going to accomplish more than a structure where all the MPOs collaborate more closely and more successfully. All the MPOs are working together anyway; they're doing it out of necessity.
- In this region (area), we're apprehensive about all the funding decisions being made by one super body.
- What I would advocate for, and I put this in my written comments, is a structure where there's collaboration, put in its purpose, and that there's a regional revenue source that's divided among the MPOs, and then each MPO makes its own local decisions about how the money is spent.
- You answered my question, which was going to be would you be comfortable with an objective analysis of regional needs, something that your project goes through to rise up high enough to get funded?
- I like a bi-cameral system...We all agree on some things that have to be done for the benefit of the whole region, but then we each have our individual needs, that may need to be done for need or politically. I don't think it has to be black or white, that you have to submit local control over final decisions, to arrive at a better model of regional collaboration.

**Rebecca asked Robert to harken back to his time in Stanly County and discuss his work trying to do economic development in a county with no four-lane roads.**

- Not having any 4-lanes was a huge challenge. We're still property owners there, and connectivity still matters. You can track real estate prices with a 100% to 120% increase in sale prices based on whether or not they have connectivity to a 4-lane road.
- You CAN do economic development in the county, but it was at the end of a 4-lane road. Those prices were \$60,000 per acre; elsewhere in the county, they were \$20,000. You can't move the land elsewhere. We had land with good water, good power—certified sites—no takers. You can't get \$10,000 or \$11,000 an acre for them. But yet, you put in a 4-lane road, and it happens.
- Lately, since there's a 4-lane road, even though it doesn't go all the way through—the projects they've been able to get have been directly tied to road improvements. It's not even an interstate, but it ties them to an interstate...and for a community like that, not having that connection was a real challenge. It really is a very powerful thing.

#### **The discussion turned back to funding.**

- But it comes back to something that we hate to admit—we can get better communication, we can consolidate MPOs, we can have better communication about development, we can communicate all we want, but we don't have the money to build the projects. The real problem lies in the funding. That's been one of my concerns about this conversation.
- It's the same way it is in our lives—it's about the allocation of scarce resources. You can build a dirt road, you can spend it on 4 lanes, but somebody has to make that decision. There's just not enough money to do it all.
- We formed the Lake Norman Transportation Commission—Cornelius, Mooresville, Huntersville, and Davidson. We don't have a dime. We're all in MPOs or RPOs. But we laid down all our land use plans, and for the first time we had four communities linked together whose land use plans were combined. So we looked at the impacts, and we know what we need to do. We don't have any money to do anything about it, but we know where those impacts are.
- My point here is that collaboration will get you to a certain point, but what do you do to get beyond that point and actually implement a solution that gets you to the greater good? Which in our area, we're talking about the economic vitality of our communities.
- In Mooresville, we've got Lowe's Corporate Headquarters, and we've got people coming from 18 counties to get there. For them, the issue is how to get my workforce there and get them there on time. Then we've got the Carolina Blonde people who don't make beer any more but make Red Bull, and their issue's different. They've got to get 2,000 trucks on the road every week. They care about getting their 300 people there, but they really care about moving those 2,000 trucks, and how do we serve both?
- At some point, we've got to be able to say we can sit down at the table, and agree on what the model is, and accept the outcome of a model we believe is objective. I may not like the fact that I can't get Oates Road paved, but I do like the fact that I'm going to be able to get someone from Rowan to Iredell, or to Charlotte, to add to the economic vitality of the region. Somewhere, that's got to happen.
- The overriding thing is getting it off paper and into asphalt, and to try to take the politics out of it to the extent possible. (Laughter), but we've reached the limits of what we can do at the MTC too, wouldn't you say?
- The implication here is that what we really need is a new revenue source—Yes.
- So what work is being done to actually go back and focus on just that aspect of the problem, across all these organizations? This is just business development. What I'm hearing is it's great to talk, but I can't do anything if I can't get the infrastructure in. I've worked with Lowe's on a variety of projects, and they wouldn't be what they are without consideration of those factors. What are we doing to talk about that as a goal across all those MPOs? What conversations are we having across MPOs about how much new revenue we're bringing in, about what is being done to drive it? The rest of it, I think you need to start driving.
- A little bit of that has to do with structure. Whether we like it or not, our revenue base comes from the State, through NCDOT and our elected officials and the Governor deciding how to spend that money. We can sit here and plan, and I think we do a good job of that, and we can communicate,

and we do a pretty good job with that, better with Charlotte than with Greensboro or Winston-Salem. I think we all know the major roads that need improvements. If we can work together on those major structures, to get those, that would be a first step, to really look at those on a regional level. I'm not talking just about I-85 but I-77 and I-40 and others that are part of that interconnected system. I think planning on that level needs to be done a little differently than it's done on the local level. We still need to have local input, because we all have roads in our back yard that are important, and that communication has to be there. But maybe planning for those major roads could be a different method of doing that, a different communication level.

- What other ways are there to get funding? Does the revenue HAVE to come from the State?
- Well, there's been talk about that. There's talk about tolling--I think Charlotte has a toll project now.
- That's in Union County.
- And there's talk on I-77 North about creating a High-Occupancy Toll Lane as a managed lane. And the Garden Parkway and Monroe Connectors are toll roads.
- So it sounds like there are lots of different sources for new funding, tolls and there have got to be private funds.
- Well, there are...and it's going to take all of them to meet our needs.
- And it is taking all those sources...that's how we're getting I-85 done, with new money brought to the table (well, it's not new money but it's money to be replaced later, but that's another conversation). But that's Sen. Clodfelter's point—that we've been beating up on the legislature for so long to give us the money, and they don't have it at the State level. His idea is to give us the ability to raise money to fix roads—revenues that we control—then I want to incent you to do something to affect air quality. He thinks we need to agree to do things differently, either the way he wrote it or differently, but we've got to do things a different way, a way that's better for air quality.
- What he's talking about really includes large elements of change management—bringing separate organizations together to function in a more blended way. It's about understanding what brings everybody together, what everybody can agree on, what everybody's drivers are, and then you can start talking about other things. It's about being creative.
- Well, it is about being creative. This region, better than any in the State—well, the only one in the State that's ever gotten together and put together a list, with the help of the CCOG, of the transportation projects in this region that are regionally significant that need to be affected, and they put a price tag on it, which was really high. Four years ago we had them update that study, and we hadn't made a lot of progress. And over that time we have business people and elected officials over 13 counties making contacts from an advocacy perspective, collaborating to bring those funding needs to the attention of the legislature. And that's why we have some of these projects, that's why we have a toll authority, that's why we're doing a public-private partnership on I-485 and I-85. It's because of that collaboration that Raleigh's thinking differently. Raleigh wouldn't have gotten there without that [input from a collaborative group]. And Raleigh's getting the first toll project out of it, because we said we've got to do things differently.
- All that private approach makes sense to me—there is a big potential for incenting private investment in roads, and it's about take out my cost or increase my revenue and I'll help you out. And you can do that by proposing projects that help to get more trucks on the road faster.
- So what is Sen. Clodfelter proposing? How much is it?
- I think it's a one-cent sales tax. I think it's for each county that agrees to come into a single MPO. According to the way he wrote it, it would be a local option for each county, a referendum, for each county, but each county would have to vote for it or it doesn't go into effect. The benefit of it is, that NCDOT doesn't get to tinker with what the decision is on how to spend the money.
- Does each county get to decide how the money is spent?
- Well, not exactly, as the bill is written now.
- It's sort of like Pennies for Progress—it needs to have specific projects spelled out with a finite time, so that people can see exactly what they're getting. That's what South Carolina does—it's got a 7-year sunset. They say what projects will be supported with the funding, it's voted on, and

the projects are built. I think that's an effective way of taxing people. People can see where their money went. And then they can vote for another set of projects and a re-up of the tax.

- That's an alternative. But I think what Sen. Clodfelter wrote is a "put your money where your mouth is" kind of bill. Each county already had the authority to do a half-cent, and most counties hadn't even enacted the half-cent.
- But what county is going to enact a tax knowing that they don't have authority over where the money is spent?
- They don't have control over how tax money is spent today.
- But they do...we just passed a tax to build a new jail.
- But state law gives the county the ability to spend it on something other than a jail.
- Yeah, but they're not going to do that...(general agreement).
- But nobody's going to approve a tax where they have to say, "pass this, oh, and by the way, we don't get to decide how the money's spent."
- Well, and I think that's probably where there's room for creativity—because there's nothing that says that you couldn't use a Pennies for Progress approach and spell out at the beginning where and how the money will be spent. If you ever wanted to go further....
- I think Sen. Clodfelter didn't put this out here because he thought this was the perfect plan. The bill is really something to get the conversation going, that if we have a better idea, he'd like to hear it.
- There's a hidden factor here. NCDOT's fund is raided every year by the legislator, and one of the items that we have to tell the legislature is to quit raiding the fund and give us what is rightfully ours as far as transportation is concerned.
- I totally agree, that the legislature should stop raiding the Highway Trust Fund, but it isn't enough money. It isn't enough money even for just Rowan County.
- It's \$72 million, and it was a hold-harmless.

#### **What do you want to know from other regions, as we do the benchmarking?**

- I want to know how other communities do referenda to get funding, how they create a politically-appealing project list (York County does this really well), how does a multi-county region make sure that Rowan County folks are as satisfied with a tax increase as Mecklenburg County residents would be, because they know they're going to get taken care of. How do they deal with a project list to keep people at the table?
- And the more people involved, the more difficult it is, because we're competing. The more difficult it is to create consensus.
- And I'd like to know how they accomplished this, whether it was a collaborative structure, or a consolidated structure, and what were the benefits, what were the disadvantages.
- And I'd like to hear them talk about public transportation as well as roads.
- It's got to be included, rail, air...it's got to be multi-modal. And it's not right now.
- In our area, we just finished paying ULI to conduct a study that said that congestion and mobility issues were the top factors in limiting our economic prosperity in the future. But another factor they mentioned was air quality. If you look at the new proposed non-attainment map, you see that there's a crescent in NC, where the highest concentration of economic activity in the state is jeopardized by non-attainment issues. You know this... that if you're in an air quality problem area, you can't even build a hospital without a permit for the diesel generator. This can be very costly to our future, and has got to be a component of what we benchmark to.
- Anne noted that in Denver, which was a non-attainment area, Denver had issues identifying who was creating the problem. It was noted that here, we know what's creating the problem, but it seems to be considered the State's problem. And EPA doesn't consider cost; they're not allowed to consider cost, and that defies reality in the world we live in. Until we get them to start to consider cost-benefits that include economic development, and start looking at marginal rates of benefit (i.e., cost of going from 84 to 70 and then going from 61 to 60), we're going to have problems and incur huge costs for marginal benefits.

- What isn't being said is that EPA's own estimates show that we won't even be able to meet 70 by the deadlines.
- What are other regions doing to prioritize what gets done, locally, regionally, statewide? What are their criteria—is it political? Is it based on public input? I don't know how the State of North Carolina prioritizes.
- What you're saying is really important, but you have to keep it in context. There are only two states that have the kind of structure we have in North Carolina. If you compared us with Ohio, it would be very different. They can build roads at any level, and they can tax you on any level, they can make any decisions locally they think make sense for them. We can't—we're a Dillon's Rule state, and we have to have permission from the legislature to do anything. We have to capture that in the benchmarking.
- That has to be in the consideration of what we're looking at. What you're saying is very correct. Where I grew up in Pennsylvania, the township took care of the roads. The State took care of some, but that was limited. Pennsylvania was very good at toll roads, as are other states in that area, and it is a totally different structure from here.
- What happens on the local level is that the MPO gives a list to NCDOT, and they've just gone to a system where NCDOT models the projects and then that changes the priority level. It's yet to be foreseen what that does, and how does that impact what happens at the local level? Nobody knows how this will work out, because it's only been in effect for a few months. That's got to be considered. Are the MPOs superceded by the State? Is that the case in the other parts of the country?
- In other parts of the country, the MPO receives direct funding, and MPO decisions aren't changed by the state. That's a different structure from what we're in.
- In other parts of the country, earmarks are added money, but in North Carolina, it's taken out of your allocation so that it represents a shift in funds, not new money.
- The equity formula is a part of the reason the Yadkin River Bridge hasn't been done yet.
- Even now as it sets, unless funding comes from other sources, the Yadkin River Bridge project will come out of Garvee bonds, which is money that is borrowed against the future, and will have to be paid back. That means there won't be any other projects in Rowan County for 12 years. I-85 is being funded to the south, but what most people don't understand is that there's still a 3-mile stretch of road north of the bridge in Davidson County that won't be improved; it'll still be two-lane, and that's a regional issue. We really need to understand what people have control over and how they are able to manage their resources, and what they are not able to manage.
- I think what you just said about the Yadkin River Bridge is true of any major project anywhere in the region—once you've secured funding for it, you've pretty much wiped out your ability to fund any other projects for years.
- That's why Independence Boulevard isn't done yet—we'd have to decide whether it's more important than all the other projects we need. (other projects mentioned as well)
- That's why the Governor proposed the Mobility Fund, which would not be subject to the equity formula. Projects of significance like the Yadkin River Bridge would be funded from that, and the transfer money would be used to see the Mobility Fund.
- Anne asked if this meant that we might be looking at some kind of segregation of funding?
- I think if you're going to look at some type of bringing the MPOs together to do something, you've got to have some teeth if you're going to do anything; it's got to have something to do with money and funding and more control, because that's what would make a difference.
- I think If there was legislation for a super MPO that we all went into, that got direct federal funding, funding that didn't go to NCDOT, I think we'd all feel differently about it.
- You're absolutely right.
- Or if the equity formula was done away with, and your statewide priority was what your funding was based on.
- That's another discussion—the Transportation Secretary doesn't even want to mention it!
- The Secretary is very pleased with getting the Yadkin River Bridge moving; he's very pleased with looking at new funding tools.

- I think he's really interested in this and is looking for how to come up with some additional funding. I think he's really looking for this, possibly through reprioritizing funds that are already there, which is of interest to me, because we all know that it's a project of regional interest.
- We have a great relationship between our LNRPO staff and MUMPO's staff. They get along great. But at the political level, we've got the widening of I-77 as our #1 project, and it's #83 on MUMPO's list. You've got a divergence of political perception because of the nature of the parties involved.
- That makes me nervous.
- Where is it prioritized by NCDOT?
- That's a key issue, why we need to collaborate with each other, so that we have more consistent prioritization.
- That's a really good question, because if you're looking at the priority lists and the fact that that project changes funding regions between Division 10 and Division 12. We have the same thing between Division 10 and Division 9. And it's a problem if we're in not only different divisions but different funding regions.
- What does NCDOT do with that?
- If you go to the State's website, it shows both our priority lists, and shows the discrepancy, and doesn't attempt to resolve it.
- We don't know how the SPOT process will impact that.
- And who does that disconnect benefit, that two different transportation planning agencies have such different priorities for the same piece of roadway? NCDOT, because they can say, "Well, you don't have consensus on this project, so we'll put our money somewhere else."
- Modeling is something that companies sometimes use to justify their decisions—I know that behind that curtain, I can tweak the model.
- We need to know how other regions get their money—is everybody this dysfunctional?
- It's confusing. But their staff does a great job. Yes, they do.
- I can't see that our chamber would ever support Senate Bill 910, and maybe we want to concentrate on re-writing it. Maybe MPOs need to sit at the Regional Roads Committee and see what they do, where the Chambers come together.
- Do you need something like BRAC? Where you either vote for
- Who are the organizations who make decisions and then act on them?
- What is Texas doing differently? People brag about Texas being able to move projects forward quickly.
- You need to look at people who really have a handle on doing what you want to do, and then figure out what you can borrow/learn from them. You gotta shake something up, and quit beating your head against the same wall. If the Yadkin River Bridge got built because everyone raised the volume on the project, what can you learn from that? Find another Yadkin Bridge...
- That project has shaken things up and made us look at a whole lot more thought processes than we had talked about before. We're talking about tolls, the Mobility fund; we really didn't talk about that before.
- They're even talking about bypassing the equity formula.
- So how did they get there, and why? If you can find a way to express the benefits of change in terms of jobs, what you could accomplish and particularly what you could accomplish in terms of economic development (read: revenue generation) by change, you'd get people to take notice. Like Lowe's coming in...
- They do have their own interchange.
- Because Lowe's had to request that, and they've done a great job to get things that they wanted.
- We need to get more creative also with looking at innovative things. In LA, semi's run in off-peak hours.
- We have a lot of through traffic also, and we need to look at MPOs that are hubs for logistics and distribution, as well as those that are "end points." But we're not an end point, and we need to keep that in mind.
- The other part of the problem is that the whole region uses interstates for local roads. We need to change that behavior.

- We need to find a way to incent that behavior—provide a carrot. It's the American way.
- We don't have local authority, even in counties where we know what we need, and where our citizens need to know what's going to be done and how it will affect them. That's why Pennies for Progress is such a good model.
- What we DO NOT want is control and to have to pay for TRANS-STATE roads...that ought to be the State's responsibility, for funding, and we can work with them on prioritizing.
- You guys are going to need to do something transformational, but it can be done.

Anne Morris concluded with an explanation of the Strings and Ribbons “Bluegrass Monopoly” as an example of a successful consensus “large region” priority-setting process.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

## **Regional Transportation Planning Study**

### **Summary Meeting Notes: Public Transportation-Multi-Modal Focus Group**

**Monday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010**

**Centralina COG Conference Room, Charlotte, NC**

#### **Participants:**

Randy Bass, Cabarrus County  
Jack Flaherty, NCDOT- Transit  
Dave Cable, Carolina Thread Trail  
Martin Zimmerman, Charlotte Area Bicycle Alliance  
Angele Schlottman, Centralina Area Agency on Aging  
Jon Barrett, Gaston MPO  
Bernie Yacobucci, Gaston MPO  
Larry Kopf, Charlotte Area Transit  
Lindsey Duneant, Carolina Thread Trail  
Cornell Gray, Lake Norman Transportation Committee

#### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Rebecca Yarbrough introduced herself and Scott Lane, consultant for the study, and opened the meeting. She also asked all present to introduce themselves.

#### **Study Background:**

Scott provided background information on the role and responsibilities of MPOs and RPOs in transportation planning. He provided a brief history of the origin of MPOs and RPOs, and noted that although their role is expanding now into involvement in land use, special needs, etc., they always do so through the lens of transportation. He gave the example of cross-regional commuting, as well as expanded transit services, and reported that these and other factors led to the study as a time to review the functionality of existing planning, given the changes that have taken place and will be coming after the 2010 census. He also noted that North Carolina's system was quite different from most others in the nation, in that in most other states there were "county roads," whereas in North Carolina, counties were just recently authorized to enter the "road" business.

#### **Discussion:**

Rebecca also noted that one area that the study wanted to be sure to include was the area of public transit and also multi-modal uses. A great deal of attention is being paid to road projects, but increasingly, MPOs and RPOs are being asked to address these issues, and a number of towns are actively concerned with creating walkable/bikable/transit-oriented neighborhoods. She asked Carroll Gray if he'd be willing to discuss the work of the Lake Norman Transportation Commission, which has looked at both rail and road transportation in the communities of Huntersville, Cornelius, Davidson, and Mooresville.

Carroll described the arrangement as each town having two votes, with several non-voting members including the Chambers. The group has also invited David Howard to participate as head of Charlotte's Transportation Committee. They are working to get the area's leadership involved, including having recently hosted a ULI Panel chaired by former Orlando Mayor to look at connectivity/road/rail ideas. Their focus is on transportation and overall mobility. He noted that the ULI Panel really focused on their potential for Transit-Oriented-Development (TOD), and its potential to create new jobs. The North Corridor Commuter rail line is both planned and engineered.

In the discussion which followed, these points were made:

- We only build about 40% of what we plan, due to funding constraints.
- High-density/mixed-use projects related to transit expansion for the North Corridor, based on data from developers post-recession, show \$31 million per year in new taxes for Mecklenburg County at build out. This would be estimated at up to \$50 million if all of stops go in, over 15 years. The LNTC is pushing this message, working with MTC/CATS/City on this information. The problem is that there is lots of debt on both transit and roads.
- Is there a roads versus transit conflict? There does not need to be if you combine the planning for roads and transit, but this doesn't go down well with some folks. There's also a perceived conflict between the larger and smaller communities in Mecklenburg, but nobody wins if you don't have mobility.
- A huge problem is challenges with east-west access across I-77, but now north-south access up and down I-77 is also a barrier to commerce and transportation.
- We need to plan a whole lot more holistically, because land use drives a lot of things, including vehicle miles traveled.
- Suburban areas are coming to the table late, but the process of organizing has been made easier by very capable staffs. Transportation is highly staff- driven because it's very complex.
- MUMPO's priority system needs updating, because it doesn't adequately capture the needs of suburban areas. It gives points for proximity to the center city, and it's true that priority rankings need to recognize the representation of a major city. But how do you capture the needs of the outlying areas where land use patterns don't readily support transit now?

Martin Zimmerman of the Charlotte Area Bike Alliance talked about his work with CABA, and his work in transportation, having written on Vancouver's system. CABA's work has mostly been with MUMPO, CDOT, NCDOT, and Becky Carney. They also lobby with the national bicycle association. He noted that the federal legislation that is likely to succeed SAFETEA-LU will represent a mammoth shift to multimodal approaches.

In the discussion which followed, these points were made:

- At the state level, the enemy is NCDOT which has been the builder of lots of roads, but they don't understand how urban streets are different from rural roads. The complete streets project at NCDOT was based on Charlotte's Urban Street Design Guidelines.
- The complete streets concept is based on the idea that everybody who uses streets has a right to use them safely.
- There is a big culture change going on at NCDOT from "build it bigger faster" to looking at things more holistically, and this is good.
- Transportation planning is always long-range, so we shouldn't let a recession tie our hands.
- Down times make people/communities/agencies reevaluate and we can shift our thinking to how we reevaluate our spending. We can advocate complete streets at the local level through city council, and we should stay on top of NCDOT to ensure they don't lose sight of its importance.
- Dave Cable of the Carolinas Thread Trail said that to him, it seems to make so much sense to do transportation planning on a multi-modal basis, and to do it regionally. There's obviously a need for better coordination across boundaries and across disciplines; we need to look at the region more holistically. He indicated that it appeared to him that unless we'd do this, we'd be wasting a lot of time; it seems like the right thing to do.

In the discussion which followed, the points below were made:

- The Carolinas Thread Trail looked to try to hook to a single transportation organization to serve the entire CTT area, but there really isn't one. They are now incenting collaborative planning through a grant process requires that grantees align with other communities, and using this means, are developing an interconnected web of cross-jurisdictional trails.
- The region is not addressing its transportation problems effectively.

- Randy Bass with Cabarrus County said that service provider roles and relationships come into play and affect planning. Sometimes MPO's/RPO's don't ask us what our needs are, they just tell us what we get.
- There is a great deal of territorialism, including among elected officials who don't play well with others and view things as threat. They don't see that change has already occurred because of interstates and growth.
- People love highways and discussion has always been around highways, but we can't build our way out of congestion; we just can't build enough lane miles.
- Air quality is an issue too, and we need to focus on choices that help move people from Point A to Point B, such as carpools, vanpools, bus and rail.
- Rail is sexy but very expensive, and rail stays where you put it. It becomes an issue of how do you feed people to rail?
- The CATS South Corridor parking deck in Pineville fills up every day. The public is really now open to suggestions and we lag behind in giving them choices.
- County boundaries are real barriers, and there seems to be a "thou shalt not cross" commandment. Demand-response services have taken this on by coordinating passenger trade-offs, so that a person may ride several different services to get from one county to another.
- They work hard to coordinate this.
- There is a need for a regional call center – how do you figure out how to get to Charlotte if you're in Albemarle or Hickory (or Fairmont) and don't own a car? Roads are available statewide, but true public transit isn't.
- We (public transit agencies) could and should collaborate better. We've been trying to do it on our own, because the MPOs are so focused on roads.
- Where could we start small and show success? Perhaps with the CATS expresses and vanpools, by growing those.
- Cabarrus County and others need to find a dedicated revenue source and join the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) as full voting members; they need to find a way to come to the MTC with a vote. H.B. 148 allows for transportation sales tax; there may be more communities that would go for it now.
- Larry Kopf with CATS indicated that it's steady work to keep elected officials informed about CATS' express service. Because of turnover in elected officials or concerns about where the express bus ridership is originating, or because of the 50% local-50% CATS funding split, some turn it down. And CATS can't justify offering the service without local contributions.

The following points were made in discussion:

- We all have to continually start the education process over every time there's a change in elected officials.
- We also need to educate the public—COGs and MPOs do as well.
- We need a centralized call system and a way to address the mismatch of services.
- You can't build yourself out of congestion, but we could still use roads, and we do need transit.
- Experiences such as the Gulf spill will help us to wean off dependence on cheap gas. Transit's best days are ahead.

There was some discussion about transit incentives, and Rebecca noted the emphasis on transit in the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Advance NOFA. In the discussion which followed, the points below were made:

- Transit bleeds into roads, because if we want to get people out of SOVs, we have to find a way to make it attractive (i.e., something like HOV lanes).
- Five years ago there were talks about regional multi-modal systems, and there was a request for local commitment to that. At the time, Cabarrus was interested, but no one else was. No one wanted to be in a regional system where they would be a small fish in a big pond.
- You've also got differing political views—one liberal community which will contribute to transit, and a conservative community in the same county that won't, but decision-makers in many cases

need to get elected county-wide. The same situation is at work in many counties, where the local staff work well together but not the politicians.

- Light rail/commuter rail/bus—we need to be looking at all options because more options are better.
- When you can't get gas, transit saves us. Remember the Katrina experience?
- The problem is, very few people just go to work and then go back home; everyone runs errands.
- People are afraid transit will be too hard to make a part of their lifestyle.
- People think that the gas tax pays for highways and say that transit doesn't pay for itself, but neither do the highways.

In the discussion of what focus group members would like to learn from other regions, the following points were raised:

- People decide global issues based on how it affects “me”—so what are some of the positives and negatives?
- In Denver, one elected official did a complete turnaround on the transit issue, because he realized that having a more mobile workforce meant he didn't have to have inclusionary housing everywhere if the workforce could get around—it was easy for people to come to work in his community.
- We need examples of people who can articulate what the decision means to them, such as happened with the defeat of the transit tax recall vote in Charlotte.
- We also need to look at how other regions overcome territorialism. And representation – how do they decide what's fair?
- I would like to see what was driving the process that moved politicians to see it as beneficial to overcome perceived barriers to merger.
- How did they inform the public?
- So many of our communities deal with transportation (demand-response transit and other transit) in different ways – some are enterprise funds, some are authorities, some are under
- Aging or DSS, some are just “stuck” somewhere. We need to give it a place where collaboration can happen, and I'd like to hear from Denver.
- We also need to look at moving goods – especially in rural areas.
- And how do areas integrate the needs of all users – what do you do with people who can't drive? Who's doing travel training programs? This shouldn't be just a disability issue.
- We also need to look at people who do complete streets – sometimes advisory boards are all highway and planner people but no user groups. Who's done it from a livable communities, more holistic, perspective? Streets also need to consider people.
- It's a concern when you can walk but you can't get anywhere, so it's also about land use/destination linkage.
- We need to look at the economic development impacts of multi-modal systems.
- We should also look for a couple examples of people with problems – “if we'd only done” – like Atlanta.
- Edge cities like Tyson's Corner are a mess; you've got to have edge cities with a functional framework. It'd be great to find a community with a center city and four surrounding smaller municipalities served by rail, to look at how that works. It'd be great to look at places with real town-centers that are on transit lines from a major metro.
- That's the DC area—and there will have to be a financial incentive to people doing this. The need is really for bi-state – look at St. Louis – so we need to be sure that you look at bi-state.
- Getting back to destinations—we need to not lose green places as transportation. And are there systems that let urban dwellers get to trails?
- We need to also look at mobility management funds, because we have to lead with carrots, and we don't have any. We need funds that we can only use for carrots. Even Sec. Conti is saying this.
- All CATS buses have bike racks – CATS is doing a great job. We need to see what communities are doing in terms of promoting the issue of radius from Transit-Oriented Development centers – make sure street and greenway system is supportive of transit. The TOD radius is a lot more than ¼ mile – more like 3 miles.

- Through Aging, we fund every transit agency in nine counties. There are some who do great, but there are lots of other things they'd like to be doing. In fact, many of them are just keeping their heads above water as demand increases. We need a resource/agency to help them identify and provide funding and tools. I'd like to know what other regions do to work with local agencies to access funds. And to get the time needed to develop thought-out projects.

The discussion closed with the following points being made:

- You're not getting anything now but what are you afraid of losing? It's about control.
- Some things have grown up in bits and pieces – grown over time. Our transportation planning system may be one of them.
- A lot of transit systems want to coordinate more, but are so stretched with funding there are short term service needs that make the need for this study more important – both short and long term.
- Park and ride lots are a real challenge; our vanpool program was challenged by Park and Ride limitations, such as liability issues. We need to better plan Park and Ride lots and bus cut-outs so you don't have to beg for it – in rural areas it's especially a challenge.
- There are also challenges with New Freedom/JART funding. You have to have local coordinated plan. Some MPO's/RPO's wouldn't do them, so the transit agency has to do it on their own. And there's also a problem with local match.
- Quality of life things really make a difference in a region, and mobility is one of them. You need to invest in mobility.

## Appendix D. Peer Exchange Interviews

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The following present the complete summaries as they were reviewed and edited by MPO staff from the following seven metropolitan planning organizations:

- Atlanta (ARC)
- Austin (CAMPO, Texas)
- Kansas City (MARC)
- Minneapolis-St. Paul (Metropolitan Council)
- Nashville, Tennessee
- Pinellas County, Florida (Tampa-St. Petersburg)
- San Diego (SANDAG)

## Atlanta Regional Commission (Atlanta, GA)

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Like most of the other peer study MPOs, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) oversees transportation planning in a fast-growing area. The Atlanta metropolitan area encompasses all or parts of 18 counties, and is expected to grow by 2.2 million people over the life of the current long-range transportation plan (a 46% increase through 2030), which is called the Regional Transportation Plan, or RTP. The transportation policy framework of ARC has been heavily influenced by air quality conformity, with which the region has struggled to maintain compliance. In addition to roadway capacity, the area has also been aggressively investigating managed lane concepts and transit expansion to deal with the existing and future congestion generated by this increase in population and commensurate rise in travel demand. Unlike the other study areas, a transportation/land use planning authority was formed to help deal with the integration of land use and transportation decision-making (Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, or GRTA). The relationship of ARC to GRTA – which has gubernatorial signatory authority – has required additional consideration in the MPO programming and planning process for the past 10 years.

### Responses to Discussion Questions

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#### Funding Issues

- What are the funding sources that your agency typically applies?
- What funding sources and / or modes does your agency have a meaningful voice in allocating?
- How do you allocate your funding to member agencies?
- How much control does your agency have over state, federal, and local funding levels and allocations?
- How are Congressional earmarks handled – is this “new” money coming into the system, or does it require re-allocating existing funding from other projects?
- Do you work with private sector sources to secure new or leverage existing funding sources?

All regionally significant projects have to be in the TIP regardless of funding source due to the region's air quality conformity maintenance status. The ARC is showing public-private partnerships as funding sources in the financial plan/RTP in a couple of cases for managed lane projects and a multimodal transit center project, but the FHWA wants to have the details worked out before it can be shown in the TIP. The local option sales tax is a source that the FHWA allows since it has historically been available. The state legislature has allowed the region (10 counties as they define it) to assess a one percent regional sales tax that would require a majority of the voters in 10 counties in a referendum anticipated in 2012. The state department of revenue and GRTA will determine the allocation of these regional funds if the referendum is passed. There is also a county-by-county tax dedicated to MARTA that the ARC manages. The ARC does not install congressional earmarks in the Regional Transportation Plan until they know how the project will be funded. Project prioritization has become more important since they have had to remove projects from the TIP and RTP in recent years.

#### Decision-Making Issues

- Please describe your voting process at the policy board level.
- Is there a weighted voting provision, how is it invoked, and how does it work? How often is the weighted voting provision applied (if it is discretionary)?
- In your quorum provisions or membership representations on the policy board, are there conditions that provide a majority vote or decision-making authority to one or a few member agencies?
- Are the chair and/or vice-chair positions rotated among different jurisdictions for the technical or policy boards? Is the location of meetings different, and set on a regular schedule for rotation at different locations?
- Has your organization undergone an important structural change in the fairly recent past?
- How do you engage smaller member jurisdictions (e.g., special allocation provisions, sub-area caucuses, district voting on certain issues, etc.)?
- What is the MPO's relationship to legislative bodies at the state level?
- Is there a host agency for the MPO, or is it independent? If it is hosted by another agency, what is the perception among MPO members of the MPO's independence from that hosting agency?

The ARC has a unique voting structure since the ARC as an agency encompasses many other functions (e.g., aging, housing, etc.) besides transportation. When parts of eight outer counties were incorporated after the 2000 Census definition of the UZA got modified, the voting structure got more complicated. There is no weighted voting scheme, and the current voting scheme has worked for over 30 years. Counties, cities, state air agency, GRTA, transit operators and others comprise the technical body. Counties, Atlanta, GDOT, state environmental protection office, GRTA, and MARTA are on the transportation policy board (the Transportation and Air Quality Board, or TAQC). The full ARC Board (which covers only 10 counties and includes 15 citizen representatives, one of which is now the chair for the first time in history) then votes on the policy board's decision. If the latter doesn't approve the transportation policy board's decision it gets sent back to the MPO boards. However, the ARC Board cannot over-ride a transportation policy board decision that impacts a project in the eight outer counties even though the ARC Board is the final decision-making authority. In six years of this system with the eight outer counties included there has not been an issue, nor has there been a consistent problem with the ARC Board over-riding MPO policy board decisions.

Engaging smaller jurisdictions and rural areas is a constant effort. For example, the new RTP process engages these areas in a unified growth policy map which required meeting with every jurisdiction one-on-one. The ARC is developing transportation policies and project types that are appropriate for rural areas. This is all being tied around the three pillars of sustainability (economic, social, environmental); so far, federal agencies have been on-board with this effort even though it is heavily emphasizing land use and non-transportation issues. STP-DA funds are being used for the Livable Centers Initiative work, although the ARC has to be careful to use these funds appropriately for (ultimately) transportation purposes. All members are required to pay dues, which are used to provide the matching funds for PL104(F), in part. There is a lot of informal contact and benefit from having land use staff intermingling with transportation staff in a casual environment. The ARC has to identify how they are going to implement a five-year land use plan. The ARC allocates STP-DA money to members (Atlanta and counties) to develop comprehensive transportation plans in cooperation with their cities. ARC uses all of its PL104(F) funds and does not allocate that to any other member agency. They are also creating a regionwide thoroughfare plan with ARRA funding.

### **Cooperation / Collaboration Issues**

- How would you rate your agency's level of effectiveness at cooperating with:
  - DOT
  - Other, Nearby MPOs
  - Other, Nearby RPOs (there are none, which GDOT strongly opposes this)
  - Resource Agencies
  - Local Government Land Planning Departments
  - Transit Operators
  - Advocacy Organizations
- Are there special considerations or techniques that your agency applies to engage these agencies?
- How effective is the MPO at addressing regional issues or, put a different way, how effective is the MPO at breaking down local barriers to regional participation and decision-making?

The GDOT director of planning reports directly to the Governor now, creating a firewall between the operations units of GDOT and planning. The current director of planning at GDOT is a veteran person that has made a strong effort to make sure that there is cooperation between ARC and the State. Transit is a huge issue at ARC, with multiple transit authorities. MARTA has the largest ridership and funding, but has had to make severe cuts in service and raise their fares – they receive no money from the state, and the 1% local sales taxes in certain counties until recently had to be apportioned 50% towards capital. A transit operator subcommittee at ARC deals with funding and coordination issues, but a new subcommittee of the ARC Board deals with nothing but transit and includes elected officials and transit staff. This body has taken on a 40-year issue with the creation of a regional transit body, augmented by state legislation authorizing regional transit authorities. In a year the transit picture could look much different than it does now if a breakthrough were to happen with regional transit governance. The operating budget for transit operators has gotten very large and difficult to accommodate under the current funding requirements.

*GRTA is the Governor's signatory in the Atlanta Region for transportation projects. The relationship between ARC and GRTA has evolved, along with GRTA itself; there is some question about how GRTA will change with the next Governor coming into office. The ARC has to add another month in the TIP / RTP amendment process to allow a GRTA vote. If the GRTA board does not vote in favor of an ARC action, the process has to start all over again at ARC. The relationship has stabilized in recent years, in part because the GRTA budget got slashed recently (they are entirely funded by the State) and required a number of staff to be laid off. Some of GRTA's staffing supports GDOT planning functions. A regional transit program operated by GRTA is also under a severe funding constraint (insufficient operating expenses).*

*The relationship with nearby MPOs, particularly Gainesville-Hall County which came into existence after the 2000 Census and is actually inside the non-attainment boundary of ARC, is strong. The ARC runs the 20-county air quality model including the area of Gainesville-Hall MPO. Since this MPO is quite small there has not been a major issue yet with this air quality coordination effort. They do have a monthly meeting to help coordination and have a dialogue as part of the interagency consultation process for air quality conformity and related issues. Georgia MPOs meet together twice each year for a day or day-and-a-half, once at GDOT offices and once at a different (MPO) location. Ms. Hayse herself has taken a lead on organizing this effort. There is not an effort going on now to engage adjacent MPOs in a conversation about consolidation in part due to the more pressing needs elsewhere and in part because there is not an immediate need since the boundaries are not likely to expand to reach each other in the near-term.*

### **Engaging the Public Issues**

- **Has your agency undertaken an MPO-wide "blueprinting" exercise? If so, describe when and how it was conducted, emphasizing engagement and buy-in with officials and the public. How effective was this exercise, and could you cite specific changes that occurred as a result or partial result of this effort?**
- **Has your agency been effective at engaging the public? Please describe any innovative techniques that you could recommend for both urban and more rural / small town member jurisdictions.**

*The unified growth policy map discussed previously is one example of such a blueprint exercise. ARC has also studied extreme land use scenarios to see how they would impact transportation system performance in the travel demand model. The 50 Forward project, for example, considers technology, health care, and other issues. The ARC Board (not the MPO) has sponsored speakers and white papers on these different topics, although the final product is not certain. The Plan 2040 RTP is much more than a transportation plan, and is intended to be a comprehensive plan involving land use and other services.*

*The ARC is doing a good job of engaging the public. For example, the ARC has a public involvement officer that makes presentations, engages neighborhood groups, conducts small group exercises, etc. in the development of the RTP update. The ARC is also doing on-line public meetings with a PowerPoint and streaming image of a speaker. They are doing more speaking engagements. The MPO is cutting back on doing public meetings that they sponsor since they do not typically get many participants at meetings where the MPO is the sole meeting sponsor. They are working through an EJ committee to coordinate with different cultural / ethnic group organizations in a more direct fashion.*

## Capital Area (Austin) MPO

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The Capital Area MPO serves a fast-growing region comprised of five counties centered on Austin. The 2000 population of 1.45 million is forecasted to expand to 3.25 million by 2035. The most recent long-range transportation plan (adopted in May of 2010) suggests that the region recognizes the integration possibilities of land use and transportation, as the plan alternatives were developed with land use options as well as transportation system options in mind. A regional transit vision featuring major expansions of the MetroRail system is prominent in the LRTP as well. The MPO is stable, although some turnover in staffing is often accommodated by an abundance of graduates of nearby universities. The MPO noted that the region opened its first toll road within the past five years. Newly created regional mobility authorities have emerged throughout the state that require new and important coordination efforts.

### Responses to Discussion Questions

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#### Funding Issues

- What are the funding sources that your agency typically applies?
- What funding sources and / or modes does your agency have a meaningful voice in allocating?
- How do you allocate your funding to member agencies?
- How much control does your agency have over state, federal, and local funding levels and allocations?
- How are Congressional earmarks handled – is this “new” money coming into the system, or does it require re-allocating existing funding from other projects?
- Do you work with private sector sources to secure new or leverage existing funding sources?

Most transportation funding is still federal- and state-driven, but the big trend is that of increased participation by local governments in transportation projects. State elected officials are reluctant to change the funding structure (e.g., gas tax increases) that drives the major state sources of transportation revenue or allowing localities the option to impose additional fees on themselves. The emergence of public-private partnerships is also a notable trend on the rise. Both sources are included in the LRTP (financial plan) based on past history of bond lettings and other historical trends, with some jurisdictions being more aggressive than others in terms of financing road projects. All jurisdictions provide the MPO with their own estimates of future funding. The MPO would like to have the opportunity to go back and “backcast” the first five years of the 2030 transportation plan to see if the financial forecasts were valid, but time and resource constraints currently make this effort impractical.

The CAMPO has not had any real issues with High Priority Projects, in part because they didn’t get many Congressional earmarks. However, pet projects sometime leapfrog the LRTP priorities. The level of MPO control is “emerging,” with greater acceptance of the 25 MPOs in Texas occurring gradually within the state DOT. New district engineers are often more receptive to the role of the MPO, but still a challenge on occasion working with people that only grudgingly accept the role of the MPO. For example, there have been some issues receiving funding information from the DOT, an organization which is itself undergoing a huge reorganization. The regional mobility authorities are the only regional agencies currently able to raise the capital to fund cross-jurisdictional major projects and therefore these agencies require ever-greater levels of coordination with the MPO. The MPO staff sits on the Chamber of Commerce transportation and infrastructure committee; however, while the MPO has made progress coordinating with the private sector, it has not done a perfect job. The MPO does not forecast private sector sources in the financial plan, although they do pin the development of certain roads as being the responsibility of local or private sector sources.

#### Decision-Making Issues

- Please describe your voting process at the policy board level.
- Is there a weighted voting provision, how is it invoked, and how does it work? How often is the weighted voting provision applied (if it is discretionary)?

- In your quorum provisions or membership representations on the policy board, are there conditions that provide a majority vote or decision-making authority to one or a few member agencies?
- Are the chair and/or vice-chair positions rotated among different jurisdictions for the technical or policy boards? Is the location of meetings different, and set on a regular schedule for rotation at different locations?
- Has your organization undergone an important structural change in the fairly recent past?
- How do you engage smaller member jurisdictions (e.g., special allocation provisions, sub-area caucuses, district voting on certain issues, etc.)?
- What is the MPO's relationship to legislative bodies at the state level?
- Is there a host agency for the MPO, or is it independent? If it is hosted by another agency, what is the perception among MPO members of the MPO's independence from that hosting agency?

*The MPO policy board has 19 members with one vote apiece; there is no weighting of votes although some jurisdictions have more representation (in accordance with county and city population). The quorum is 51% of the 19 members. The policy board has undergone a five-year evolution; prior to January 2010 there were state senators and representatives sitting on the board. Prior to 2007, the chair was held by the same person (state senator) for over 15 years, but after he declined to run for another term, the new chairperson (also a state senator) started moving state legislators off of the board until by 2010 all of the members were representing local governments. At that same time the chair and vice-chair began rotating for two-year terms (it is implied that the vice-chair will become the chair). The prevailing theory was that the presence of the state legislators provided the state-elected official with a greater familiarity of the MPO needs and operations. However the state-level representatives were hard to keep fully engaged with regional (MPO) processes, especially during the legislative sessions. Representation also proved to be somewhat awkward when the state legislators' jurisdiction expanded beyond the MPO boundary. Staff feels that moving to 100% local government representation was a gradual change, but worthwhile.*

*The local COG has instituted a rural planning organization on its own volition, but the RPO is not supported by the state. The MPO believes there is value in communicating more with the rural agency. The MPO is hosted by the City of Austin and the MPO staff is employed by the City, which has excellent benefits and is a good employer. However, the long-term viability of keeping the City of Austin as the fiscal agent is uncertain, with the region perhaps undertaking an informal study to explore the consideration of moving the MPO into the COG (like Dallas and Houston). The conversation about independent representation (non-hosting) should also happen at some point in the future. MPO staff is supportive of an independent effort to explore the most appropriate place for the MPO to be housed.*

### **Cooperation / Collaboration Issues**

- How would you rate your agency's level of effectiveness at cooperating with:
  - DOT
  - Other, Nearby MPOs
  - Other, Nearby RPOs (there are none, which GDOT strongly opposes this)
  - Resource Agencies
  - Local Government Land Planning Departments
  - Transit Operators
  - Advocacy Organizations
- Are there special considerations or techniques that your agency applies to engage these agencies?
- How effective is the MPO at addressing regional issues or, put a different way, how effective is the MPO at breaking down local barriers to regional participation and decision-making?

*The MPO cooperates well with the state DOT and transit agency; there are a number of MPOs that they talk to regularly as well as conduct statewide meetings quarterly with all 25 MPOs. San Antonio is only 70 miles away, with two more MPOs in close proximity to the north. The informal coordination with the RPO ("CARTPO") includes having meetings that the MPO staff attends. The MPO also serves as a important resource to the RPO, which is an impressive group in terms of making recommendations for projects to the*

east and west of the MPO, letting go of parochial interests to make recommendations on major transportation projects of importance to the region.

They coordinate well on air quality issues, but have not yet had many dealings with water quality issues or resource agencies and staff. They are in attainment with air quality, although that likely change when the administration announces the new standards in the near future. While the local governments are represented on the MPO technical committee, the counties don't have any land use authority so land development occurs without much (transportation) oversight in unincorporated areas. The MPO coordinates very closely with transit operators at the technical level. At the policy level the major players (MPO, TXDOT, City, Regional Mobility Authority, transit operators) get together informally to discuss matters of common interest, pending impediments, and so forth. It is a very effective approach, although very informal. This approach is highly recommended, if it is feasible to do so with the right staff that can represent their agency comfortably in such a setting.

### **Engaging the Public Issues**

- Has your agency undertaken an MPO-wide “blueprinting” exercise? If so, describe when and how it was conducted, emphasizing engagement and buy-in with officials and the public. How effective was this exercise, and could you cite specific changes that occurred as a result or partial result of this effort?
- Has your agency been effective at engaging the public? Please describe any innovative techniques that you could recommend for both urban and more rural / small town member jurisdictions.

The land use-transportation connections were only recently analyzed together for the 2035 LRTP, looking at centers and growth nodes concepts. Performance indicators are forthcoming. The assessment was done at the regional level.

The MPO does engage the public and elected officials, but felt like they could do better. Engaging the public is one of the frustrating areas for the MPO; they try very hard and are getting better but feel that more could be done. They believe that they are not reaching the people they really need to talk with; instead they seem to be communicating with the same people that tend to be followers of the process. The budget doesn't seem to be in place to allow for the public engagement efforts that the MPO desires. They believe that they could do better at public engagement if they hired a dedicated person to work on public engagement efforts. The staff conducts outreach meetings in all five counties; the last round of meetings gathered (for adoption of the Transportation Improvement Program) 14 people (total). They use on-line survey devices, public meetings, newsletters, postcards to mailing lists, email lists, jurisdictional mailing lists, etc. No one at the MPO knows if people have had the time to read and understand the information disseminated, especially in a time-constrained environment.

## Metropolitan Council (Minneapolis-St. Paul)

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### Responses to Discussion Questions

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#### Funding Issues

- What are the funding sources that your agency typically applies?
- What funding sources and / or modes does your agency have a meaningful voice in allocating?
- How do you allocate your funding to member agencies?
- How much control does your agency have over state, federal, and local funding levels and allocations?
- How are Congressional earmarks handled – is this “new” money coming into the system, or does it require re-allocating existing funding from other projects?
- Do you work with private sector sources to secure new or leverage existing funding sources?

CMAQ STP Urban Guarantee (STP-DA), and transportation enhancement funds are awarded every two years as a result of a competitive grant process. The MPO allocates the funding through a regional solicitation; each applicant has to state where the 20% local match will originate. Different funding pools that the MPO directs (CMAQ, enhancement, and STP Urban Guarantee) have different solicitation criteria and allocation formulas. It is a very objective, quantitative process and the money is allocated to specific projects, not member agencies. Analysis done in the past on geographic and modal distribution of projects has shown that over time the funding is balanced out

There is also a regional transit capital (RTC) capital funding source that the MPO administers, which can serve as the 20% local match for transit projects, as well as JARC/New Freedom funds. The MPO annually goes to the legislature to levy the RTC tax as a major transit operator; the MPO's role in allocating this funding is minimal. Fiscal constraint considers all sources of funding, including a metropolitan sales tax which is allocated at the county level.

The MPO has a fairly strong role in directing federal/state funds, (The region receives about 43% of all state and federal highway funding apportioned to the State) and works closely with the Capital Improvements Committee of the MnDOT district office to monitor and plan funding levels.

The Metropolitan Council is an appointed body so in order to meet the federal requirement that an MPO be made up of locally elected officials, state law set up a Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) of elected officials and modal representatives. State law and a memo of understanding define how the Metro Council and the TAB work together to fulfill the MPO role. A technical advisory committee (TAC) is the technical body comprised of municipal and county staff to advise the policy makers of the TAB. Metro Council reviews and concurs with the transportation programming and policy decisions of the TAB. There are very few conflicts between the Metropolitan Council and the TAB, although the ARRA program presented some process issues for a brief time due to the short timeframes required. The system is somewhat complex, and people are encouraged to review the materials on the website. One criticism is that there is a lot of process required to move things forward, although there are many members that are familiar with and deeply engaged in the process.

The MPO does have some issues with Congressional earmarks, especially when the earmark is only for a fraction of the total cost of the project. When this occurs, the money is encouraged to be diverted to the planning / preliminary design of a project to help detail and get buy-in for that project. It is important for the earmark not to “jump the [priority] queue” and circumvent the planning

There is not a strong history of bringing private sector money into the planning process. There is some discomfort with MNDOT in terms of the amount of competitive funds (that may include private sector funding) that are being shown in the financial plan. Although there have not been direct private sector contributions for projects, there have been highway interchanges built with TIF money generated from surrounding development built after the interchange was constructed.

## Decision-Making Issues

- Please describe your voting process at the policy board level.
- Is there a weighted voting provision, how is it invoked, and how does it work? How often is the weighted voting provision applied (if it is discretionary)?
- In your quorum provisions or membership representations on the policy board, are there conditions that provide a majority vote or decision-making authority to one or a few member agencies?
- Are the chair and/or vice-chair positions rotated among different jurisdictions for the technical or policy boards? Is the location of meetings different, and set on a regular schedule for rotation at different locations?
- Has your organization undergone an important structural change in the fairly recent past?
- How do you engage smaller member jurisdictions (e.g., special allocation provisions, sub-area caucuses, district voting on certain issues, etc.)?
- What is the MPO's relationship to legislative bodies at the state level?
- Is there a host agency for the MPO, or is it independent? If it is hosted by another agency, what is the perception among MPO members of the MPO's independence from that hosting agency?

*Although there are 198 municipalities inside the metropolitan planning boundary, there are 33 TAB policy board members (seven counties, two cities, eight rotating positions appointed by the Metropolitan Cities organization, freight, airport, bicycle, transit, and eight appointed citizen members representing a geographic area) which is set by state statute in terms of the TAB membership; All members of TAB have an equal vote with no weighting. The structure of the Metropolitan Council, which has 17 members appointed by the Governor, is also set out in state statute. The Metropolitan Council has to have a majority vote to concur with the TAB or vote to send it back. There is no frustration on the part of the larger cities with the smaller towns, but there is some sentiment that suburban "ring" areas may have too much authority. Competition for roadway funds is limited to certain categories of roads (e.g., connector, reliever, etc.). Simple majority of TAB is required. The chair of the technical advisory board does rotate among different categories (county, municipality, and agencies), and the chair (and citizen members) of the TAB is appointed by the Metropolitan Council. This structure has worked this way for quite some time.*

*Since project types are the unit of funding allocation there is some smoothing of potential conflicts since smaller member agencies may have no or very few of certain kinds of roadways, for example. A comprehensive plan is required by state law for every community every 10 years for the metropolitan council to review and approve. Therefore, the priorities and issues are fairly well known to the MPO.*

*The relationship with the state legislature is necessarily "distant" since the MPO process is highly quantitative and technical in nature.*

*The Metropolitan Council hosts the MPO.*

## Cooperation / Collaboration Issues

- How would you rate your agency's level of effectiveness at cooperating with:
  - DOT
  - Other, Nearby MPOs
  - Other, Nearby RPOs (there are none, which GDOT strongly opposes this)
  - Resource Agencies
  - Local Government Land Planning Departments
  - Transit Operators
  - Advocacy Organizations
- Are there special considerations or techniques that your agency applies to engage these agencies?
- How effective is the MPO at addressing regional issues or, put a different way, how effective is the MPO at breaking down local barriers to regional participation and decision-making?

*The MPO has a very good relationship with the state DOT, making sure the regional and statewide plans are compatible and they are all speaking with the same voice. MnDOT and METC, for example, gave joint public*

open house presentations on a recent policy change; there are also monthly joint planning staff meetings to ensure that the issues are well understood. They view their MPO-DOT relationship as the best in the country, based on their understanding of how other MPO's and DOT's relate to each other .

Rochester and St Cloud are nearby smaller MPOs; they rely on a quarterly staff meeting of all MPOs in the state to discuss issues of common concern. The next largest MPO is only 100,000 population. There are RDCs (Regional Development Commissions ), in the more rural areas abutting the Twin Cities but they are not particularly strong organizations.

The pollution control agency is represented on the TAB, and department of natural resource representatives are also represented on various committees.

Some technical advisory committee (TAC) members are municipal planners, but due to the state requirement for a comprehensive planning document approved by the MPO there is not much need for additional overall coordination, although local government planners do participate in special transportation studies like corridor studies.

Metro Transit is an operating division within the Metropolitan Council (just like the MPO) so there is good coordination with them as well as paratransit planning service staff. There are six other providers in the south and west areas that are also represented on the TAC All the transit operators work collaboratively on a single short-term plan, which guides funding.

There are several kinds of advocacy organizations, such as the Transportation Alliance, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, and affordable housing agency representatives that are spoken with occasionally but there is no formal seat on the TAB. The MPO also works closely with the university to conduct research. They feel that they are very strong with their communication efforts. The Metropolitan Council's authority through land use planning requirements, sewer authority, and approval authority on access management changes make the agency hard to ignore.

- Engaging the Public Issues
- Has your agency undertaken an MPO-wide "blueprinting" exercise? If so, describe when and how it was conducted, emphasizing engagement and buy-in with officials and the public. How effective was this exercise, and could you cite specific changes that occurred as a result or partial result of this effort?
- Has your agency been effective at engaging the public? Please describe any innovative techniques that you could recommend for both urban and more rural / small town member jurisdictions.

The Regional Development Framework, which is the overall plan for the region, gets written every 8-10 years. There was a "blueprinting" attempt led by Peter Calthorpe in the early 2000's that terminated part of the way through the process due to a change in political leadership. Due to the state planning law giving an approval role to the MPO, a separate process isn't typically viewed as important.

The public outreach process is very good, and public meetings are held often and advertised well. They have staff-level district representatives that have evolved good relationships with local (municipal and county) staff. There also public engagement specialists for updating and creating web content. Somalis and Hmong are important ESL populations requiring special attention, although there is not an attempt to make mass translations of printed materials at this time.

## Mid-America Regional Council

The Mid-America Regional Council is one of the larger MPOs in the country, particularly in terms of number of member agencies: nine counties and 120 cities or towns spread across two states (seven of the nine counties comprise the MPO boundary). The MPO engages in an array of activities, both traditional and specific to their area. The latter includes supporting the SmartPort system in Kansas City, traffic signal coordination, safety planning initiatives, and ridesharing. As part of a regional planning commission, the MARC staff also works with area aging, community development, early learning, environmental, public safety and other program areas. The long-range transportation plan, entitled Transportation Outlook 2040, emphasizes diverse goals as well: environmental, economic vitality, public health, placemaking, and climate change/energy use all have specific strategies and goals in the planning process and document. Each of these goals is reflected in the modal chapters in the long-range transportation plan. As with other MPOs in the study, MARC will grow rapidly over the course of the next 30 years, adding over 500,000 (from 2.0 million in 2010) and another 300,000 jobs. Among other regional initiatives, MARC undertook Imagine KC, which asked communities around the region what it meant to be “green,” “connected”, and “vibrant.” MARC also conducted “Creating Quality Places,” developing “a set of 20 principles that identify what it takes to design successful neighborhoods; vibrant, mixed use commercial areas; and efficient transportation systems — all within a healthy natural environment.”

*Not only does integrated transportation and land use planning — through a targeted centers and corridors strategy — contribute to nearly all of the Transportation Outlook 2040 policy framework goals, but the adaptive land use scenario that partially forms the basis of the plan’s economic and population forecast, was developed with these goals in mind. For instance, characteristics of the adaptive scenario include: 1) mixed land uses and higher densities (place making goal), 2) protection of high quality natural areas (environmental goal), and 3) elimination of essentially all of the urban core’s loss of people and jobs, and growth in nearly all areas (economic vitality goal).*

Transportation Outlook 2040

## Responses to Discussion Questions

### Funding Issues

- What are the funding sources that your agency typically applies?
- What funding sources and / or modes does your agency have a meaningful voice in allocating?
- How do you allocate your funding to member agencies?
- How much control does your agency have over state, federal, and local funding levels and allocations?
- How are Congressional earmarks handled – is this “new” money coming into the system, or does it require re-allocating existing funding from other projects?
- Do you work with private sector sources to secure new or leverage existing funding sources?

MARC uses CMAQ and STP funds to support programs like Operation Green Light (ITS) and regional ridesharing program; bike/pedestrian promotional activities, and public education work. MARC has not typically applied for transportation enhancement dollars that it spends itself; the last time was to do a trails master plan for two communities. MARC has partnered with and used monies from KDOT and MoDOT to fund the regional household travel survey; external stations; and on-board transit survey. MARC has a voice in selecting projects for bridge and STP funds in both states; CMAQ funds (different allocations for the two states); Section 5310 (Capital purchases for transit); JARC/New Freedom funds although the MPO is not the designated recipient (but MARC does orchestrate the allocation process); and transportation enhancement dollars. In every case, MARC issues a call for projects to eligible sponsors and projects are prioritized through a combination of technical and forum discussion components.

MARC has applied for federal earmarks itself in the past if the project is one that MARC supports and has prioritized in the long-range transportation plan, or if MARC has been requested to coordinate an application

on the part of multiple jurisdictions. The MPO does coordinate with the three transit operators to request transit funding earmarks. MARC does not typically reflect private sector support to projects in the financial plan of the LRTP or TIP, unless the projects are also receiving federal funding support.

MARC has the most “say” in selecting projects for funding in Missouri due to a state policy; this is not true in Kansas where the state has historically “locked in” funding for 10 year programs of projects. KDOT has starting doing “local consult” meetings, to bring more local/regional input into the state decision-making process.

### Decision-Making Issues

- Please describe your voting process at the policy board level.
- Is there a weighted voting provision, how is it invoked, and how does it work? How often is the weighted voting provision applied (if it is discretionary)?
- In your quorum provisions or membership representations on the policy board, are there conditions that provide a majority vote or decision-making authority to one or a few member agencies?
- Are the chair and/or vice-chair positions rotated among different jurisdictions for the technical or policy boards? Is the location of meetings different, and set on a regular schedule for rotation at different locations?
- Has your organization undergone an important structural change in the fairly recent past?
- How do you engage smaller member jurisdictions (e.g., special allocation provisions, sub-area caucuses, district voting on certain issues, etc.)?
- What is the MPO’s relationship to legislative bodies at the state level?
- Is there a host agency for the MPO, or is it independent? If it is hosted by another agency, what is the perception among MPO members of the MPO’s independence from that hosting agency?

*There is not weighted voting on the policy board but the membership is weighted towards larger member agencies. The nine counties and six cities in the interlocal agreement have direct representation on the policy board. Some counties have delegated some of their representation to some cities; some have not. In some cases, the smaller cities within a county are represented by a joint city representative selected by the cities in the county. The counties and joint city representatives therefore represent the many smaller municipalities. The quorum requirement is based on 30 percent of the Kansas and Missouri delegates to the Board being present.*

*The chair and vice-chair positions rotate across state lines with elections done every year for one-year terms, but officers are typically re-elected to a second term. There is a progression of movement from vice-chair to chair, which creates more continuity in the organization. The most significant structural change in the recent past was adding a ninth county and two new cities, which required a re-write and adoption of the MPO interlocal agreement.*

*Smaller jurisdictions are represented by their parent counties, or by joint city representatives, but the MPO also has many advisory boards that allow additional opportunities for these smaller agencies to have a place in the decision-making structure. These other committees are sometimes considered a means to introduce new officials to the work of MARC and to prepare them for participation in higher-level committees or the policy board. The MPO does hear on occasion concerns from smaller communities that have limited staff to participate in the meetings, complete application requirements, and so forth even though the MPO does attempt to help these communities and educate them on the potential benefits of their time investment. As part of the project selection processes, the MPO does report to member agencies the total funded projects that different jurisdictions have received, which has to respect the hard-and-fast state line barrier (Kansas funds stay in Kansas; Missouri funds stay in Missouri) . MARC prepares an annual state legislative platform and sends it to the legislators in the state capitols, but there is no legislative forum or lobbyist sponsored by the MPO (the latter cannot be funded by federal monies).*

*MARC is its own, independent non-profit agency. Over the years, the agenda has been pretty broad with the MPO and transportation being just one focus area. This diversity of function increases the visibility and credibility of the work that MARC does, plus the diversity of staff expertise allows for cross-cutting issues to be explored in the areas of environment, aging populations, and public safety. This situation allows the MPO*

*staff to leverage the work they are doing to create more of an impact in the community. Friendly, cooperative personalities make this easier, although the demands for each functional area to complete its work limits the amount of time available for collaborative activities.*

### **Cooperation / Collaboration Issues**

- How would you rate your agency's level of effectiveness at cooperating with:
  - DOT
  - Other, Nearby MPOs
  - Other, Nearby RPOs
  - Resource Agencies
  - Local Government Land Planning Departments
  - Transit Operators
  - Advocacy Organizations
- Are there special considerations or techniques that your agency applies to engage these agencies?
- How effective is the MPO at addressing regional issues or, put a different way, how effective is the MPO at breaking down local barriers to regional participation and decision-making?

*Missouri has regional planning commissions (RPCs) that cover the entire state and a statewide organization through which the RPCs coordinates (in addition to being the MPO, MARC is one of Missouri's RPCs); Kansas does not have a similar situation with rural areas, although there is a loose statewide MPO association. The Missouri MPOs have not gotten fully organized but have met occasionally to share information. The MPO has very healthy and productive relationships with both state departments of transportation. "If you are open to collaboration, then people will reciprocate." Part of this again is due to the leadership at the top, with relationships being re-forged with each important staff turnover.*

*The Lawrence, KS MPO is very close by, but the collaboration has been on a case-by-case effort. The St. Joseph's MPO is also nearby, and a couple of issues have been collaborated on. Both of the nearby MPOs participate in the regional ridesharing program.*

*MARC has a good relationship with the states' environmental resource agencies, in part because of the environmental staff maintain a good relationship with air and water quality staff.*

*The relationship with the three major transit operators is stronger now than it has been in a very long time. Two of these operators are county-based, while the other one is a bi-state regional authority. The MPO has worked extensively with them to help ensure a seamless regional system, which has been successful (for example, regional call center, shared bus purchases, etc.).*

*Some advocacy agencies are more organized in some places than others, with the environmental organizations in the region not being very well coordinated or organized. The most vocal advocacy group is the bicycle advocacy group, followed by public transit advocates although they are not always speaking with one voice. There is an aging coalition that has just started to get more organized, as has a social equity group. Both have gotten more active and engaged with the MPO's work. Mostly these groups have come to MARC; the MPO's outreach has focused mostly on reaching out to the general public with specific efforts to engage disadvantaged communities (e.g., youth, minority, low-income, limited English proficiency).*

*MARC is "pretty good" about putting the question on the table and going as far as people are willing to go; the philosophy is that they want to protect relationships with their member and partner agencies. Because of this approach, there is a level of comfort that they have with the MPO when regional coordination and growth issues are explored.*

### **Engaging the Public Issues**

- Has your agency undertaken an MPO-wide "blueprinting" exercise? If so, describe when and how it was conducted, emphasizing engagement and buy-in with officials and the public. How effective

was this exercise, and could you cite specific changes that occurred as a result or partial result of this effort?

- Has your agency been effective at engaging the public? Please describe any innovative techniques that you could recommend for both urban and more rural / small town member jurisdictions.

*The land use scenario exercise represented in the LRTP started with two scenarios, trend and adaptive scenario (“what if our region was more adaptive to fuel costs, social concerns, environmental issues, etc. to make us more competitive”) which called for 40% of the region’s growth to be captured by redevelopment. Communities on the edge of the region felt that was not reasonable due to costs of land assembly for redevelopment, issues with crime or schools, and so forth. The MPO worked through a long list of policies and identified which were feasible or not feasible; based on the results of this exercise the amount of redevelopment was scaled back in the adaptive scenario to 15% to 20%. As they watch what happens over time, this scenario may become the new baseline. As the opportunity arises changes may have to be made in the growth scenario to reflect new reality. This modified adaptive scenario was the basis for the land use forecast adopted in the long-range transportation plan; the result was a similar nodes-and-corridors configuration. This element of the plan is now being used as one of the prioritization elements for new projects. Other communities / MPOs have expressed surprise that MARC was able to get a climate change goal into the LRTP.*

*MARC has been effective at engaging the public; an example being the Imagine KC process. However, they purposely did not limit that exercise to transportation but kept it much broader; there was also an intent to avoid keeping the process too rigid. The connectivity, green, and vibrant themes emerged from this exercise and greatly supported some of the goals in the LRTP.*

*Public television was used to broadcast a regionwide town hall meeting; internet tools like surveys and blogs; and other techniques were used to reach the public. “Whatever you do it is not enough” with regard to public outreach. The scenario planning involved talking to a lot of city councils, many of which hosted broadcasts on public access television or were listened to by in-person audiences. The MPO did sponsor a photography contest to challenge people to take pictures of things that they value in their area or part of the region and would like to see protected or replicated in the region’s future. The resulting photographs were used to enrich the planning documents. Public meetings may be hard for some people to reach. The media is a great help and can help you reach large audiences; the MPO has good connections with the people at the TV stations and some newspapers, particularly the region’s public TV station. The Imagine KC project is being turned into a monthly TV series that is supported by the MPO and a range of community partners. The relationships with the region’s radio stations are OK, but most channels do very little local programming. Similarly, the region’s TV stations have very few local interest shows or content; you may get 30 to 90 seconds to tell a story.*

## Nashville MPO

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The Nashville MPO anticipated growing from just under 1.4million people to just over 2.2million between 2006 and 2035 (55%), making it one of the fastest-growing MPOs in the study, although it is also one of the least populous currently. The MPO has actively been promoting regional discussions over the past decade, with the result now being that they are heavily involved in regional land use modeling as well as sponsoring a high-level group dedicated to discussions of regional transportation and land use matters (the Mayor's Caucus). The Mayor's Caucus deals with a larger area than the MPO study boundary, extending to 10 counties, some of which contain rural areas.

### Responses to Discussion Questions

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#### Funding Issues

- What are the funding sources that your agency typically applies?
- What funding sources and / or modes does your agency have a meaningful voice in allocating?
- How do you allocate your funding to member agencies?
- How much control does your agency have over state, federal, and local funding levels and allocations?
- How are Congressional earmarks handled – is this “new” money coming into the system, or does it require re-allocating existing funding from other projects?
- Do you work with private sector sources to secure new or leverage existing funding sources?

The long-range transportation plan only considers core programs such as state/federal STP monies, NHS, Interstate Maintenance, and to some extent CMAQ funds (the MPO's air quality status has shifted recently and is likely to shift again to account for recent changes in the federal ozone standard). For transportation enhancement funds the MPO estimates how much revenue they may get from this source and similar small funding pools and identify eligible project categories for each (rather than specific projects). For transit funding, large capital projects have specific funding sources (e.g., new terminal, BRT or rail lines, etc.) but generally use Section 5307 and 5303 funds for forecasting purposes; JARC/New Freedom funds only have project categories identified.

The MPO has a very strong role in allocating these funds. Mr. Skipper has some familiarity with other MPOs and feels that the Nashville MPO has a comparatively strong, proactive relationship with transit agencies to produce a collaborative forum for allocating priorities. The MPO, through a previous decision-making effort, allocates a minimum 15% of urban STP funds (STP-Direct Apportionment funds) to bicycle / pedestrian mode projects (or walkable communities); 10% to public transportation; and 5% to ITS and program efficiency. The project “Urban STP” refers to monies allocated to STP-Direct Apportionment and small urban funds allocated to a small UZA area and a large (over 200,000) UZA as well as portions of smaller urban areas inside the MPO; the funds are allocated as one pot of money. The State DOT still comes to the MPO with projects that they want to see in the Plan when those projects are funded by other sources.

The way that earmarks are handled differs and is hard to generalize, but for highway projects the integration is more likely to be done at the back-end of the planning process or between plan updates. Transit projects are more regular, and easier to program in advance. The MPO does not formally forecast private sector revenues, but just discusses the importance of public-private partnerships in its planning efforts. Mr. Skipper is aware of some non-traditional sources but those are not discretely considered in the planning process.

#### Decision-Making Issues

- Please describe your voting process at the policy board level.
- Is there a weighted voting provision, how is it invoked, and how does it work? How often is the weighted voting provision applied (if it is discretionary)?
- In your quorum provisions or membership representations on the policy board, are there conditions that provide a majority vote or decision-making authority to one or a few member agencies?

- Are the chair and/or vice-chair positions rotated among different jurisdictions for the technical or policy boards? Is the location of meetings different, and set on a regular schedule for rotation at different locations?
- Has your organization undergone an important structural change in the fairly recent past?
- How do you engage smaller member jurisdictions (e.g., special allocation provisions, sub-area caucuses, district voting on certain issues, etc.)?
- What is the MPO's relationship to legislative bodies at the state level?
- Is there a host agency for the MPO, or is it independent? If it is hosted by another agency, what is the perception among MPO members of the MPO's independence from that hosting agency?

*The voting process is straightforward with one vote per member, but does have a weighted voting option that is typically avoided (described as a "nuclear" option). One twist is that the weighted vote is delayed for one month after its invocation by a member agency to ensure full attendance at the next meeting when the vote would actually occur. The imbalance of population implies that the Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County would need just one additional member to vote its way to direct the outcome of a vote, but the weighted voting option has not been exercised in over 10 years. Otherwise, the one-person, one-vote organization tends to work against the larger governments.*

*Although not part of the official bylaws, the positions are rotated every two years through the seven different counties that are part of the MPO. The location of meetings is held in the same location; the Mayor's caucus rotates through different locations in Nashville.*

*The MPO has expanded to deal with air quality and demographic changes. The MPO has proved to be a good forum for political leaders to discuss regional issues beyond transportation infrastructure including land use, environment, health, community development, since the members seldom see each other outside the MPO meetings.*

*In the past there had been a sense from the surrounding communities that there was undue influence from the center (hosting) city. One of the ways of dealing with this issue was implementing a regional dues structure invoiced annually; another change was the adoption of a MPO sponsorship policy that clearly outlines the relationship between the MPO staff and hosting government agency. There have been thoughts about becoming independent, but there would need to be state enabling legislation passed to grant MPOs contracting authority. However, the MPO sees some advantages to being hosted, including lower overhead costs. Ultimately, the regional nature of many issues may force a reconsideration of independence.*

*The MPO interfaces with the state legislature through the Mayor's Caucus; however, the state legislature doesn't have good knowledge of what a MPO is or does since they interface primarily with their state DOT on transportation issues. Hence, decision-making at the MPO level seldom interfaces with the state legislators except when a state representative wants to move transportation money for a particular project or when the MPO has a legislative issue that they would like to see addressed.*

### **Cooperation / Collaboration Issues**

- How would you rate your agency's level of effectiveness at cooperating with:
  - DOT
  - Other, Nearby MPOs
  - Other, Nearby RPOs (there are none, which GDOT strongly opposes this)
  - Resource Agencies
  - Local Government Land Planning Departments
  - Transit Operators
  - Advocacy Organizations
- Are there special considerations or techniques that your agency applies to engage these agencies?
- How effective is the MPO at addressing regional issues or, put a different way, how effective is the MPO at breaking down local barriers to regional participation and decision-making?

While it has not always been the case, the DOT relationship is very good, mainly because of the staff chosen by the current governor some of which include former MPO staff. However, there is still a long way to go to get a lot of understanding through the large DOT organization.

Within the 10-county region there is another, smaller MPO (Clarksville Urbanized Area MPO) that they cooperate with, although Nashville takes the lead on transit planning. The relationship with RPOs is adequate, but the RPOs are not very active. There is no formal relationship outlined with RPOs, for example, which are typically run out of state development districts (there are at least two exceptions to this general rule).

The MPO has been heavily engaged in working with other agencies, and has been an important part of the MPO's recent mission. There had been a lot of press about how there was no regional cooperation. The MPO formed a regionalism task force that considered how they could promote more regional cooperation in the future. They took a trip to Denver to learn more about the regional task force in place at that MPO. The Mayor's Caucus is the forum for regionalism, as is the Chamber Caucus. These groups are more dedicated to regional matters without the burden of conducting day-to-day business. The MPO's regionalism taskforce was created to figure out ways to promote regional cooperation (following local media claims that there was a lack of regional cooperation). The MPO evolved that taskforce into a more comprehensive Mayors Caucus after a trip to Denver where we learned of their Metro Mayors Caucus, which is not run by their MPO. The Mayors Caucus provides a more casual forum for mayors to get to know each other and to work through a range of issues without the pressure of conducting formal business (which the MPO is required to do). The MPO maintains a 10-county modeling effort. Progress is being made but leadership at local governments is always changing and will always look out after their own best interest: the MPO tries to make sure that while they are looking out for their own interests that they are not ignoring decisions that could harm themselves and others in the region.

### **Engaging the Public Issues**

- Has your agency undertaken an MPO-wide “blueprinting” exercise? If so, describe when and how it was conducted, emphasizing engagement and buy-in with officials and the public. How effective was this exercise, and could you cite specific changes that occurred as a result or partial result of this effort?
- Has your agency been effective at engaging the public? Please describe any innovative techniques that you could recommend for both urban and more rural / small town member jurisdictions.

About a decade ago, Cumberland Region Tomorrow (CRT) – a local non-profit quality growth advocacy group – facilitated a 10-county regional scenario planning process that helped to communicate the consequences of the then current land development trends particularly as it related to the loss of open space and prime agriculture land, and the cost of the infrastructure that would be needed to support the sprawling land development pattern. Since then, the MPO in cooperation with CRT, has taken on the responsibility of developing and maintaining a 10-county land use model for use in scenario planning to engage the public and key stakeholder groups on important growth policy issues. While the MPO has conducted sub-regional blueprinting exercises, a comprehensive regional visioning process has not yet been done. The MPO recently submitted a HUD Sustainable Communities grant application on behalf of the region to fund such a regional visioning exercise. The work will be carried out in partnership with Cumberland Region Tomorrow under the brand name, “Power of 10.”

The MPO tries to produce performance indicators that are more meaningful to the average citizen and stakeholder. They have also hired a media coordinator, and reformatted their website and have gotten more into social media.

Pinellas County (St. Petersburg, FL)

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Responses to Discussion Questions

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**Funding Issues**

- What are the funding sources that your agency typically applies?
- What funding sources and / or modes does your agency have a meaningful voice in allocating?
- How do you allocate your funding to member agencies?
- How much control does your agency have over state, federal, and local funding levels and allocations?
- How are Congressional earmarks handled – is this “new” money coming into the system, or does it require re-allocating existing funding from other projects?
- Do you work with private sector sources to secure new or leverage existing funding sources?

*The primary sources are traditional, including STP-DA, Enhancement, and CMAQ (this last is no longer eligible or available to the MPO at the moment, but that may change with the assignment of the new, stricter ozone standards). The STP-DA and transportation enhancement funds are the only two sources that the MPO has direct control over; the state has funds that they manage and coordinate with the MPO to allocate. The MPO is very involved in the priorities for these funds as well, and the state typically adheres to the MPO’s suggestions in the project allocations. These funds are assigned to the SIS (Strategic Intermodal System) network and facilities (e.g., ports, connecting roadways, airports) established 10-15 years ago, but this network is sparse inside the Pinellas MPO so conflicts are relatively rare – this may or may not be the case in MPOs where there is a more extensive SIS network to prioritize. The stimulus funding under ARRA was also used for these projects, including two major interchange projects. One concern is that 75% of the discretionary state program is allocated to the SIS network, but the MPO realizes that there are major roadways that aren’t on the SIS network that still need attention, although the standards for inclusion in the SIS have been loosened slightly. For example, smaller airports are starting to be included in the SIS, in this case because the smaller airport serves a unique market. The SIS did not originally include public transportation facilities, but that condition is being challenged now as more transit facilities are being implemented statewide. The MPO will be advocating for this change as it tries to advance major transit initiatives.*

*The MPO determines the destination of funds that they control through an annual prioritization process that is managed by a multi-jurisdictional committee informed by technical inputs and public comment. The local agencies participate heavily in this process. The allocation of Enhancement funds is treated like a grant program, with member agencies providing application information. Geographic balance is important, as is consideration of the 24 municipalities in this relatively small county. The MPO works frequently with the smaller communities to provide resources to prepare a competitive application. The transportation enhancement project applications are reviewed by four committees: bicycle, pedestrian, citizen advisory committee, and technical coordinating committee.*

*There have been some issues with legislatively earmarked projects with questions being raised about taking allocations from the counties and their existing projects to pay for earmarked projects. The current administration has realized fewer of these projects and conflicts. The MPO has not had any major initiatives involving the private sector, although they hope to involve the private sector more in transit station area development. The MPO has adopted a regional rail plan (2009) connecting the region. The referendum is slated for next year, at the earliest, although the nearby Hillsborough County referendum is going to happen in November and may influence how Pinellas approaches their own referendum.*

**Decision-Making Issues**

- Please describe your voting process at the policy board level.

- Is there a weighted voting provision, how is it invoked, and how does it work? How often is the weighted voting provision applied (if it is discretionary)?
- In your quorum provisions or membership representations on the policy board, are there conditions that provide a majority vote or decision-making authority to one or a few member agencies?
- Are the chair and/or vice-chair positions rotated among different jurisdictions for the technical or policy boards? Is the location of meetings different, and set on a regular schedule for rotation at different locations?
- Has your organization undergone an important structural change in the fairly recent past?
- How do you engage smaller member jurisdictions (e.g., special allocation provisions, sub-area caucuses, district voting on certain issues, etc.)?
- What is the MPO's relationship to legislative bodies at the state level?
- Is there a host agency for the MPO, or is it independent? If it is hosted by another agency, what is the perception among MPO members of the MPO's independence from that hosting agency?

*The voting is not weighted on the 11-member policy board, with a simple majority for the quorum. Officer positions are held for two years and in the past 20 years these have always been held non-consecutively with a progression moving from secretary to vice-chair to chair. One seat is shared by three small communities which is rotated every two years. Under state law, 20% to 33% of the representation is occupied by the county commission; this is the only representation that the smaller towns may have on the MPO policy board. Smaller communities are allowed to bring issues directly to the MPO boards, even if they don't have a direct vote on the MPO board. The MPO has undertaken a pedestrian safety plan for the smaller, beach-oriented communities and has started to invest in those recommended improvements contained in the plan. The smaller communities can participate directly on the technical and citizen committees, but may not have the staff to participate all the time. The MPO does a "significant" amount of community outreach to these areas.*

*The MPO is discussing an organizational change, in part because of considerations about county-wide land use and transit plans. There is a county-wide body that, under Florida state law, makes recommendations that the MPO can over-ride with a super-majority. Discussions are being held now about the this county-wide planning oversight board being merged into the MPO. This concept of merging is becoming a more popular topic across the state in part due to county financial problems, with the MPO recently becoming independent in Broward County (which involved a number of layoffs and was assessed by Jeff Kramer and CUTR). A task force comprised of three members each of the MPO, county-wide land use policy board, and county commission is investigating this concept of moving to independence. Smaller communities may also have two positions added to the Pinellas MPO policy board if this land use/transportation merger moves forward. The Task Force is in place due to a (retracted) piece of legislation to discuss the idea of MPO independence, staffing impacts, and efficiencies. The MPO's executive director is also the county's planning director, which has created some concerns with issues dealing with annexation. Most issues that come up are related to land use decisions, and may be part of the thinking of moving the county-wide land use policy entity under the MPO. The Miami-Dade MPO is hosted by and fully embedded in the county government, as are others.*

### **Cooperation / Collaboration Issues**

- How would you rate your agency's level of effectiveness at cooperating with:
  - DOT
  - Other, Nearby MPOs
  - Other, Nearby RPOs (there are none, which GDOT strongly opposes this)
  - Resource Agencies
  - Local Government Land Planning Departments
  - Transit Operators
  - Advocacy Organizations
- Are there special considerations or techniques that your agency applies to engage these agencies?
- How effective is the MPO at addressing regional issues or, put a different way, how effective is the MPO at breaking down local barriers to regional participation and decision-making?

*The relationships between MPOs and the Florida DOT have historically been very good, and the Pinellas MPO is no exception. The Pinellas MPO does not have any rural areas, and there are not RPOs in Florida generally. One rural county to the north is part of the coordination effort of the Pinellas MPO (although this county may become a MPO as a result of the 2010 Census).*

*As a result of state legislation, there is an interlocal agreement with this rural area and six other MPOs that created a regional entity. There has been a regional transportation plan developed after a 2000 legislation required a regional planning process that developed a MPO chair coordinating committee required to develop regional priorities, public engagement plan, and regional citizen's advisory and technical committees. There is no dedicated staff, but each MPO allocates UPWP dollars to support this regional planning process, which includes a meeting every other week by telephone or in person and a policy board meeting every quarter that is staffed by a rotating assignment among the MPOs party to the interlocal agreement. So every 18 months, the Pinellas MPO is responsible for the staff support work and one policy board meeting. One dedicated funding program supplies state-derived funding for the state highway system to these regional entities, which ensured the participation and interest of the rural county to the north. In the early years this dedicated regional funding allocation amounted to about \$20 million in one of the two FDOT districts. Some of this money has been redirected to transit initiatives. The funding is used for ITS, short roadway widening projects, or other, small projects; a local match is required (50%). Most projects are occurring on county roads in the state system or on roads that can be shown to benefit the state system. Growth management benefits have to be demonstrated by the applicant for these projects.*

*The MPO works with the Florida environmental agencies and particularly the air quality agency and Coast Guard. The statewide ETDM process has made an important difference in the level of coordination with MPOs, resource agencies, and the state DOT.*

### **Engaging the Public Issues**

- **Has your agency undertaken an MPO-wide “blueprinting” exercise? If so, describe when and how it was conducted, emphasizing engagement and buy-in with officials and the public. How effective was this exercise, and could you cite specific changes that occurred as a result or partial result of this effort?**
- **Has your agency been effective at engaging the public? Please describe any innovative techniques that you could recommend for both urban and more rural / small town member jurisdictions.**

*The MPO has not done blueprinting, although CORPLAN was used in the last long-range transportation plan update. A regional vision for the eight-county planning council has preempted the MPO's sponsoring another, parallel effort since the planning entity and process included a lot of public outreach. Roadway corridors, activity centers, etc. were already well-established. There is very little room left for new development, as Pinellas County is nearly entirely built out.*

*Public engagement is always a challenge. Effective efforts include partnering with other agencies and their efforts already underway (e.g., event coordination); speaking engagements; MPO website/online surveying. (For example, the Junior League invited the MPO to set up a display on bicycle/pedestrian safety this past Saturday.) Although public meetings are still conducted, they typically get only very low attendance. Post-event public engagement evaluations are conducted through questionnaires (e.g., location accessibility, quality of visuals used, etc.) and a biannual assessment and report. The citizen's advisory committee has been difficult to maintain in terms of its diversity, and the staff effort required to serve the CAC is considerable (more than is required for the technical committee). Some people on this committee use the CAC as a springboard for elected office, but there have recently been a lot of applications to be on the CAC, more than the board can actually accommodate. The MPO has had to establish term limits since some members had been on the board for over 20 years; the term limits are now set at two, three-year terms. The CAC has evolved for the better and the members on this committee seem to be more engaged in the MPO planning process.*

## San Diego Association of Governments (San Diego, CA)

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At over 3,000,000 people in 2004, SANDAG is the largest MPO in the peer study. It is also the most diverse with just over half of the population being non-white, and perhaps the youngest as well (26% of the population is under the age of 18). Although the growth rate has slowed somewhat, SANDAG is still expected to increase its population considerably, 37% from 2004 to 2030. SANDAG is at the forefront of considering greenhouse gas emissions and sustainability principles, in part due to the statewide emphasis on these topics. For example, Senate Bill 375 requires transportation agencies to consider the impacts of transportation systems on GHG emissions and how land use and transportation systems will meet targets set every eight years in a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). SB375 impacts the MPOs in California directly. It contains language pertaining to public outreach (two meetings in each county); enhances the fiscal constraint plan; and has requirements for considering alternative development plans and transportation networks that might be incorporated into the long-range transportation plan for MPOs.

## Responses to Discussion Questions

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### Funding Issues

- What are the funding sources that your agency typically applies?
- What funding sources and / or modes does your agency have a meaningful voice in allocating?
- How do you allocate your funding to member agencies?
- How much control does your agency have over state, federal, and local funding levels and allocations?
- How are Congressional earmarks handled – is this “new” money coming into the system, or does it require re-allocating existing funding from other projects?
- Do you work with private sector sources to secure new or leverage existing funding sources?

*In terms of capital projects, a local ½-cent sales tax that SANDAG administers. Most other projects are funded through the typical blend of section (transit) funds and federal formula dollars (e.g., STP-DA, CMAQ). SANDAG answers only to itself on the locally generated dollars; population and lane miles are used for one state funding source. The State also distributes money to the regions via formula, which in turn gets applied locally along the lines of the project priority system in place at the MPO. The sales tax funding is directed towards projects that were originally identified in the sales tax that will run through 2048. Each county is eligible to pass this referendum, but the resulting funds are fed to the MPO to manage. SANDAG is a one-county MPO, which limits the amount of potential conflict (this is unusual in California).*

*Earmarks come from the same list as the MPO’s priority list typically, since the MPO works with the state legislative representatives to develop that list of projects. Hence, there are generally very few conflicts, which are typically small projects. The MPO coordinates with their legislative representatives every year, and those five legislative representatives in that meeting are appreciative that the MPO is coordinating this list of projects.*

*The sales tax program extension includes a regional program that requires development projects to contribute \$2,000 per residential dwelling unit to build the regional arterial roadway system (typ. four- and six-lane facilities designated in the regional transportation plan). This was part of the selling point for selling the sales tax. Interestingly, this sales tax was enacted in 2008 so the recession has translated into the private sector not really contributing much to the overall funding. A toll road worth \$800 million was financed by a private consortium; this project was opened within one day of the recession and has also been hurt by a lack of anticipated revenue. A third example is a port of entry (Mexico) that is being constructed in part by private funding, which would be a first. Other projects are funded privately but sent through local governments to the MPO.*

## Decision-Making Issues

- Please describe your voting process at the policy board level.
- Is there a weighted voting provision, how is it invoked, and how does it work? How often is the weighted voting provision applied (if it is discretionary)?
- In your quorum provisions or membership representations on the policy board, are there conditions that provide a majority vote or decision-making authority to one or a few member agencies?
- Are the chair and/or vice-chair positions rotated among different jurisdictions for the technical or policy boards? Is the location of meetings different, and set on a regular schedule for rotation at different locations?
- Has your organization undergone an important structural change in the fairly recent past?
- How do you engage smaller member jurisdictions (e.g., special allocation provisions, sub-area caucuses, district voting on certain issues, etc.)?
- What is the MPO's relationship to legislative bodies at the state level?
- Is there a host agency for the MPO, or is it independent? If it is hosted by another agency, what is the perception among MPO members of the MPO's independence from that hosting agency?

*The voting process has been simplified in part due to a state law that mandates each member government sit on the policy board. Each local jurisdiction has at least one member; the City and County of San Diego has two members that sit on the board. Two votes are done: a tally vote (one-to-one vote) and a weighted vote (by population with San Diego City capped at 40% of the weighted vote of the members present). For items to pass, they have to be approved by both votes. Most things have to work in a consensus fashion anyway, so there are few conflicts. This allows small cities to be represented and ensures that no one or group can collaborate to dominate a vote. These rules are part of a state law that applies only to SANDAG. The quorum is the majority of voting members (19 voting members means 10 have to be present). The votes are tabulated electronically and interpreted by computer software; some votes require a 2/3 majority vote but that is relatively rare. The smaller jurisdictions have good representation and participation at board meetings. There are five policy advisory committees (policy, transportation/transit, regional planning, public safety, and borders that works with Mexican and tribal governments). Board members are elected annually in December, with vice-chairs typically moving to the chair position after two years. Smaller and mid-size governments typically do not hold vice-chair or chair positions; this is not a written policy rule. More legitimacy is accrued to the policy board when the San Diego mayor sits on the board.*

*The Board of Directors (chairs and vice-chairs) meet in February-March with the legislative delegation and 1-2 times additionally each year. Other meetings can happen depending on the nature of particular legislation being considered. These meetings are fairly informal, and typically consist of reviewing specific projects and project concerns, but often not concerned overly with specific appropriations.*

*SANDAG is an independent MPO, and not hosted by any other agency.*

## Cooperation / Collaboration Issues

- How would you rate your agency's level of effectiveness at cooperating with:
  - DOT
  - Other, Nearby MPOs
  - Other, Nearby RPOs (there are none, which GDOT strongly opposes this)
  - Resource Agencies
  - Local Government Land Planning Departments
  - Transit Operators
  - Advocacy Organizations
- Are there special considerations or techniques that your agency applies to engage these agencies?
- How effective is the MPO at addressing regional issues or, put a different way, how effective is the MPO at breaking down local barriers to regional participation and decision-making?

*Mr. Stoll had worked with the state DOT for 20 years before going to the SANDAG MPO; he notes that probably no other MPO has a better relationship with their district DOT staff. There is a strong legacy of cooperation between the MPO and state DOT. The other nearby MPO, SCAG, is closely cooperated with and*

they are met with 1-2 times per year by the Board of Directors. Regional Transportation Planning Authorities (RTPAs) are also met with at a staff level. RTPAs are a product of state law that mirror the federal law that are actually individual counties. A lot of California is very rural and represented by these RTPA county organizations. A rural county to the east is also a target for extensive collaboration, particularly with managing the US-Mexico border.

SANDAG has a long history of working directly with state resource agencies, not only air quality but habitat planning for nearly 20 years. There is funding in the sales tax program to acquire, monitor, and maintain habitat (\$850 million over the 40-year life of the sales tax program). The MPO has even completed a joint webinar with the resource agency on that program. The planning directors of the cities and county meet monthly with SANDAG, as well as the city/county public works directors. Sometimes these two groups meet together.

The relationship with service-oriented planning of transit operators (two of them) and the transit planners at SANDAG has some challenges. This is due to short-range v. longer-range planning, as well as capital development handled by SANDAG that then gets turned over to one of the two transit operators for implementation. SANDAG also oversees operating in terms of fare structure.

There are also two dozen working groups in addition to the five policy bodies that focus on various issue areas, such as transit access and environmental. The advocacy groups get involved through these working groups, which then pass along their findings to the five main technical boards.

### **Engaging the Public Issues**

- Has your agency undertaken an MPO-wide “blueprinting” exercise? If so, describe when and how it was conducted, emphasizing engagement and buy-in with officials and the public. How effective was this exercise, and could you cite specific changes that occurred as a result or partial result of this effort?
- Has your agency been effective at engaging the public? Please describe any innovative techniques that you could recommend for both urban and more rural / small town member jurisdictions.

The Regional Comprehensive Plan was approved in 2004 which did not focus on transportation, but included sections on sustainable land use development and other, non-transportation forms of infrastructure. From this came a quality-of-life initiative in the region. The SANDAG MPO will include the first Sustainable Communities Strategy in their long-range transportation plan.

The MPO has a lot of different strategies that they employ shown on their website. For example, the MPO distributed “mini-grants” (\$3,000 to \$5,000) to various groups, e.g., small non-profits that are advocacy organizations such as disabled, non-English language groups, minority or low-income groups. The first application coincided with the US Census count to get the awareness of that program increased. They also want to bring on a consultant that has done a lot of visualization work to show the public what projects will look like more often. Stakeholder workings groups, subregional meetings, and public opinion surveys are other methods that they MPO employs to gather information.

## **Appendix E. Chairs Coordinating Committee Interlocal Agreement**

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The following is the full agreement of the Chairs Coordinating Committee, which provides regional planning services for six MPOs and one rural county in West Central Florida.

**AMENDED AND RESTATED INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT FOR REGIONAL  
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND COORDINATION IN WEST CENTRAL  
FLORIDA**

This AMENDED AND RESTATED INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT (herein the "Agreement" or "Amended and Restated Agreement") is made and entered into by and between the Hernando County Metropolitan Planning Organization, an entity created and operated pursuant to Interlocal Agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes (herein, the Hernando MPO); the Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization, an entity created and operated pursuant to Interlocal Agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes (herein, the Hillsborough MPO); the Pasco County Metropolitan Planning Organization, an entity created and operated pursuant to Interlocal Agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes (herein, the Pasco MPO); the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization, an entity created and operated pursuant to Interlocal Agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes (herein, the Pinellas MPO); the Polk Transportation Planning Organization, an entity created and operated pursuant to Interlocal Agreement and Section 339.175 Florida Statutes (herein the Polk TPO); the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization, an entity created and operated pursuant to Interlocal Agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes (herein, the Sarasota/Manatee MPO); and, Citrus County, a political subdivision of the State of Florida (herein, Citrus County).

WHEREAS, the Hernando MPO, the Hillsborough MPO, the Pasco MPO, the Pinellas MPO, the Polk TPO, and the Sarasota/Manatee MPO entered into an agreement to form a regional entity, the West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee (herein, the CCC), to coordinate transportation planning activities in the urbanized areas of Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota Counties, such original agreement having been signed on March 17, 2004; and hereinafter referred to as the "Agreement"; and,

WHEREAS, in 2005 the Florida legislature created the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP); and

WHEREAS, an interlocal agreement between partner agencies is required for the development of regional transportation plans in regional transportation areas pursuant to Section 339.115(5), Florida Statutes, in order to participate in the TRIP; and

WHEREAS, the CCC on June 9, 2006 executed Amendment No. 1 to amend the original March 17, 2004 Agreement, by allowing Citrus County a voting membership for the purposes of participating in TRIP and to incorporate the adopted CCC Conflict Resolution Process in the Agreement, and

WHEREAS, after the initial 5-year term the parties to the original Agreement and Citrus County have examined the terms of the original Agreement, as amended, and have agreed to amend the provisions of the original Agreement, as amended, consistent with Section 10 of the original Agreement; and

WHEREAS this Amended and Restated Agreement, once effective, supersedes the original March 17, 2004 agreement, as amended, which would have automatically renewed but for the Parties entering into this Agreement.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the covenants made to by each Party to the other and of the mutual advantages to be realized by the Parties hereto, the Hernando MPO, the Hillsborough MPO, the Pasco MPO, the Pinellas MPO, the Polk TPO, the Sarasota/Manatee MPO and Citrus County agree as follows:

**Section 1. Authority** – This Interlocal Agreement is entered into pursuant to the general authority of Sections 339.175, 339.155 and 163.01, Florida Statutes, relating to Interlocal Agreements.

**Section 2. Purpose** – The purpose of this Agreement is to provide a forum for continuing coordination and communication among the member CCC Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Citrus County, District One and District Seven Offices of the Florida Department of Transportation, the Florida Turnpike Enterprise, the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority, and the affected Regional Planning Councils and to address those tasks necessary to conduct an ongoing regional transportation planning process in accordance with Sections 339.175, 339.155 and 339.2819, Florida Statutes, and in accordance with the requirements under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, or successor legislation.

Pursuant to the language of Section 339.175 (5) (i) , Florida Statutes, the powers and duties of the CCC are to coordinate transportation projects deemed to be regionally significant by the Committee, review the impact of regionally significant land use decisions on the region, review all proposed regionally significant transportation projects in the respective transportation improvement programs which affect more than one of the MPOs represented on the Committee, and institute a conflict resolution process to address any conflict that may arise in the planning and programming of such regionally significant projects.

Pursuant to the language of Section 339.2819, Florida Statutes there is created within the Florida Department of Transportation a Transportation Regional Incentive Program for the purpose of providing funds to improve regionally significant transportation facilities in regional areas created pursuant to Section 339.155(5), Florida Statutes. This interlocal agreement meets the requirements of Section 163.01, Florida Statutes .

**Section 3. Name of Entity** – The entity created pursuant to this Interlocal Agreement shall be called the West Central Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Chairs Coordinating Committee (herein the CCC).

**Section 4. Organization and Membership**

**(a) Voting Members:** The voting membership of the CCC shall consist of the Chair of each of the six member Metropolitan Planning Organizations. An alternate, who is an elected official, may represent the respective Metropolitan Planning Organization member if so designated by the respective Metropolitan Planning Organization. Each member shall have one vote. Except as indicated in Sections 11 and 12, a simple majority of the voting membership shall be required to pass motions. Citrus County shall have voting membership regarding any issues relating to the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (herein the TRIP), authorized under Section 339.2819, Florida Statutes.

**(b) Nonvoting Partner Entities:** The Secretaries for Districts One and Seven of the Florida Department of Transportation; representatives of the Florida Turnpike Enterprise and of the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority; and Chairs (or designees) of the Tampa Bay, Withlacoochee, Southwest Florida, and Central Florida Regional Planning Councils shall be nonvoting partner entities of the CCC. It is the intent of the CCC to enter into separate agreements to define the roles and responsibilities of these nonvoting entities to the CCC.

**Section 5. Conduct of Meetings** –Meetings shall be held at least quarterly on a rotating basis with the meeting Host rotating each quarter among the member Metropolitan Planning Organizations. The order of rotation shall be the Hernando MPO, the Pasco MPO, the Hillsborough MPO, the Polk TPO, the Sarasota/Manatee MPO, and the Pinellas MPO. Responsibility for serving as the Chair of each meeting shall alternate among member MPOs. The Chair of the meeting shall conduct the meetings but have no extraordinary membership powers or responsibilities. At the last meeting of the calendar year, meeting dates shall be approved for the following year. Meeting dates shall be posted on the CCC website. Special meetings may be called by a majority of the members. The Host for all special meetings will follow the rotational order. Reasonable notice must be provided to all members for special meetings. The Host MPO shall be responsible for ensuring that notice requirements of §286.011 have been met, and that meetings are held in a facility accessible to persons with disabilities in compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Meetings shall be conducted pursuant first to any applicable statute, then to any procedural rules adopted by the CCC, then finally to the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

**Section 6. Staffing, Professional Services and Financial Support of Entity** – Pursuant to §339.175(5)(i)(2), Florida Statutes, the Parties agree that the Directors and Managers of the member MPOs will be responsible for carrying out the regional work programs and coordinating process as directed by the CCC, provided, however, that should a direction



of the CCC directly conflict with the officially-adopted policy direction of a member MPO, staff of that MPO may ask that the work in question be performed by staff of some other MPO. Expenses concerning projects assigned to a lead Metropolitan Planning Organization may be paid by the regional set-aside as specified in its Unified Planning Work Program. The provision of professional services to the administrative entity, including legal review, shall be as agreed by the Parties from time to time, with the exception that no legal counsel shall be required to render advice to the entity or representation to the members thereof absent each individual member's waiver of any conflict and authorization of joint representation, as provided for by Florida Bar Rule 4-1.7. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Parties do not authorize this administrative entity to incur for itself any cost or expense, nor to obtain or retain funds from any source. The entity created by this Agreement is not authorized to conduct any banking or other financial transactions of any kind, nor to receive or disburse any funds. Instead, all financial support for this entity, including the payment of costs and expenses related to its operation, shall be borne by member MPOs, on an equitable basis taking into account the relative size of the member as measured by budget and population. The voting members of the CCC may, by separate resolution, adopt more specific financial support allocation methods as may be deemed necessary, and may appoint a lead MPO to receive and administer funds for the entity. The Parties agree to work together to seek new sources of funding to assist the member MPOs with the added costs and expenses associated with the operations of this new administrative entity.

**Section 7. Record Keeping** – Staff of the Metropolitan Planning Organization from which the current Host is a member shall provide a recording secretary for that meeting. Record keeping and other clerical responsibilities shall be the duty of the Metropolitan Planning Organization staff consistent with the rotation for hosting the meeting. All minutes shall be distributed to other members prior to the next quarterly meeting date. Duplicate records of the official proceedings of the Committee will be kept in each Metropolitan Planning Organization office. The CCC shall designate one of the member MPOs to be the records custodian for all official records. Records shall be maintained in accordance with the public records law, Chapter 119, Florida Statutes.

**Section 8. Conflict Resolution** – A conflict resolution process is adopted which will be used to resolve disagreements regarding interpretation of the interlocal agreement or disputes relating to the development or content of the regional plan. If the Parties to this Agreement fail to resolve any conflicts related to issues covered in the Agreement, such dispute will be resolved in accordance with the "West Central Florida Metropolitan Planning Organizations Memorandum of Understanding for a Conflict Resolution Process (June 2001)."

**Section 9. Risk of Loss** - The Parties acknowledge that as a mere administrative entity, the CCC cannot sue, be sued, nor bear any legal liability. Therefore, the Parties agree that each shall continue to maintain such insurance coverage as may be required to cover the additional risks associated with membership and participation in the CCC entity. Members covered by a self-insurance program shall notify their respective covering-entities of this agreement so that any added risk may be factored. The Parties further

agree that under no circumstances shall any member of the CCC seek to recover against any other member for any loss associated with this Agreement or the work of the CCC.

**Section 10. Duration of Agreement** – This Agreement shall have a term of five years from the effective date and shall automatically renew at the end of said five years for another five-year term and every five years thereafter. At the end of the five-year term and at least every five years thereafter, the Parties hereto shall examine the terms hereof and agree to amend provisions or reaffirm the same. However, the failure to amend or to reaffirm the terms of this Agreement shall not invalidate or otherwise terminate this Agreement.

**Section 11. Termination** – This Agreement shall continue in force until terminated with or without cause by a unanimous vote of the MPOs and Citrus County.

**Section 12. Modification** – This Agreement may only be modified by a unanimous vote of the MPOs and Citrus County. Amendments or modifications to the Agreement shall not become effective until executed and recorded in the public records of the counties of each participating MPO and Citrus County.

**Section 13. Rescission** – Any MPO or Citrus County, may terminate its participation in this Agreement upon thirty (30) days written notice. Notice of intent to terminate shall be given to the other member agencies. Said notice shall be transmitted to the official office of the member agencies by certified mail, return receipt requested. The 30-day notice requirement shall commence upon giving of the notice.

**Section 14. Filing and Recording** –As required by §163.01(11), Florida Statutes, this Interlocal Agreement shall be filed with the Clerks of the Circuit Courts of Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota and Citrus Counties, Florida.

This Amended and Restated Agreement does not become effective until recorded in each county and shall continue to be effective thereafter in accordance with Section 10. of this Agreement. Until the Amended and Restated Agreement becomes effective, the original Agreement and Amendment No. 1 shall remain in effect.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties herein have executed this Agreement by their duly authorized officials as of the day and year written.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION, an entity created and operated pursuant to interlocal agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes

By: [Signature]  
Joe Affronti, Chairperson

HERNANDO COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION, an entity created and operated pursuant to interlocal agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes

By: [Signature]  
Dave Russell, Chairperson

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 17<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2009, by Joe Affronti, as Chairperson of the Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization, an entity created and operated pursuant to interlocal agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes, who is personally known to me or has produced

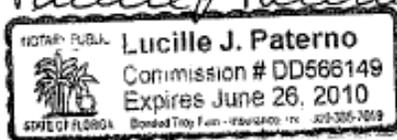


[Signature]  
PASCO COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION, an entity created and operated pursuant to interlocal agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes

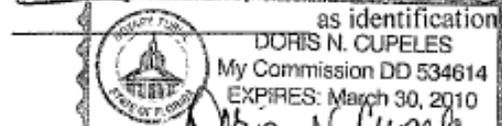
By: [Signature]  
Michael Cox, Chairperson

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 24 day of NOV, 2009, by Michael Cox as Chairperson of the Pasco County Metropolitan Planning Organization, an entity created and operated pursuant to interlocal agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes, who is personally known to me or has produced

as identification.



The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 19<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2009, by Dave Russell, as Chairperson of the Hernando County Metropolitan Planning Organization, an entity created and operated pursuant to interlocal agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes, who is personally known to me or has produced



[Signature]  
PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION, an entity created and operated pursuant to interlocal agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes

By: [Signature]  
Chris Arbutine, Chairperson

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 13<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2009, by Chris Arbutine, as Chairperson of the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization, an entity created and operated pursuant to interlocal agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes, who is personally known to me or has produced

as identification.

[Signature]



POLK COUNTY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION, an entity created and operated pursuant to interlocal agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes

By: [Signature]  
James Verplanck, Chairperson

SARASOTA/MANATEE COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION, an entity created and operated pursuant to interlocal agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes

By: [Signature]  
Nora Patterson, Chairperson



The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 21<sup>st</sup> day of Dec., 2009, by James Verplanck, as Chairperson of the Polk County Transportation Planning Organization, an entity created and operated pursuant to interlocal agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes, who is personally known to me or has produced \_\_\_\_\_ as identification.

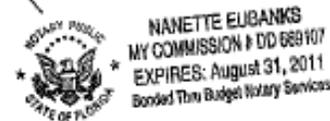
[Signature]  
Deborah M. Cason

CITRUS COUNTY, FLORIDA, by and through its County Commission

By: [Signature]  
John Thrumston, Chairperson

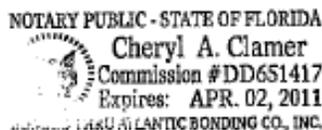
The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of November, 2009, by Nora Patterson, as Chairperson of the Sarasota/Manatee County Metropolitan Planning Organization, an entity created and operated pursuant to interlocal agreement and Section 339.175, Florida Statutes, who is personally known to me or has produced \_\_\_\_\_ as identification.

[Signature]  
Nanette Eulank



The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 9<sup>th</sup> day of November 2009, by John Thrumston, as Chairperson of the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners, who is personally known to me ~~or has produced~~ \_\_\_\_\_ as identification:

[Signature]  
Cheryl A. Clamer



## **Appendix F. CRAFT Partnership Agreement**

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The following is a reproduction of the existing agreement forming the Charlotte Regional Alliance for Transportation (CRAFT).

# MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

between

The metropolitan planning organizations of the Cabarrus-South Rowan Urban Area, the Gaston Urban Area, the Mecklenburg-Union Urban Area and the Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area Transportation Study

It is hereby agreed that the metropolitan planning organizations serving the Cabarrus-South Rowan Urban Area, the Gaston Urban Area, the Mecklenburg-Union Urban Area and the Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area Transportation Study shall participate in a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive (3-C) transportation planning process in an entity known as the Charlotte Regional Alliance for Transportation (CRAFT). As stated in 23 U.S.C. 134, metropolitan planning organizations shall engage in a 3-C planning process to “provide for the development of transportation facilities...which will function as an intermodal transportation system for the State, the metropolitan areas, and the Nation.” The role of CRAFT shall be to integrate the 3-C concept into the transportation planning process for those projects and programs of a regional scope. The parties to this agreement shall endeavor to ensure that regional transportation planning in the Charlotte metropolitan bi-state region is conducted in such a manner that is beneficial to the public good. Participation of a metropolitan planning organization shall commence upon the signature of this document by its designated representative.

## *Section 1 Executive Committee*

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The primary governing board of CRAFT shall consist of the following members, or their designees:

- a. The chair of the Transportation Advisory Committee of the Cabarrus-South Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization
- b. The chair of the Transportation Advisory Committee of the Gaston Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
- c. The chair of the Metropolitan Planning Organization of the Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization
- d. The chair of the Policy Committee of the Rock Hill Fort Mill Area Transportation Study
- e. Chairperson of the Metropolitan Transit Commission
- f. One member of the South Carolina Department of Transportation Commission
- g. One member of the North Carolina Board of Transportation

This governing board shall be known as the Executive Committee. A presiding officer shall be elected from among the four chairs of the individual MPO policy boards as listed above in items a through d. The presence of three chairs, or their designees shall constitute a quorum of the Executive Committee. The designee of the chair of a metropolitan planning organization shall be an elected official serving on the policy committee of that metropolitan planning organization. The Executive Committee shall meet no less than three times during the calendar year.

## *Section 2 Executive Committee Responsibilities*

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Prior to action by the Executive Committee, members of the Executive Committee shall place all matters requiring action on the agendas of the respective policy boards chaired. On matters that require a vote of the Executive Committee, the chairs shall consult with the policy board they represent. The South

Carolina Department of Transportation Commission member and the North Carolina Board of Transportation member shall vote in a manner consistent with the policies of their respective Department of Transportation. If in the event an individual chair has not had a reasonable opportunity to consult with the policy board he/she represents, that chair shall be permitted to exercise judgment on the matter at hand.

### *Section 3 Executive Committee Meetings*

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All meetings of the Executive Committee shall be open to all members of the individual MPO policy boards, as listed in Section 1, items a through d. These members shall have an opportunity to address the Executive Committee, at the discretion of the presiding officer. Also, members of the Technical Committee (addressed in Section 5 of this document) and staff shall be permitted to attend meetings of the Executive Committee. Meeting locations shall rotate among the four member agencies. The inaugural meeting of the executive committee shall set the times, dates, and locations for the meetings to be held during the remainder of the year. During the final meeting of the executive committee during a given year, a calendar that sets forth the times, dates, and locations of meetings for the following year shall be approved.

### *Section 4 General Meetings*

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A general meeting of the four policy boards may be called at the discretion of the Executive Committee. The purpose of these general meetings shall be to provide a forum for the discussion of transportation and related issues that affect the region. As no official business will be conducted, a specific quorum requirement is not necessary.

### *Section 5 Technical Committee*

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In addition to the Executive Committee, there shall be established a Technical Committee. The responsibility of the Technical Committee shall be to provide general review, guidance and coordination of the transportation planning process in the Charlotte region, and to make recommendations to the Executive Committee.

The Technical Committee shall consist of, but not be limited to, the following members, or their designees:

- Senior staff member of the local metropolitan planning organization
- Senior staff member of the lead planning agency of the metropolitan planning organization
- SCDOT MPO program manager
- NCDOT local area coordinators
- Director of the Charlotte Department of Transportation
- The chairs of the three North Carolina MPO technical coordinating committees and the chair of Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area Transportation Study study team.
- A representative of the public transportation staff of SCDOT and NCDOT
- Director of Public Transportation for the City of Charlotte
- The planning directors of the two regional COGs
- A representative of the bicycle and pedestrian planning staff of SCDOT and NCDOT
- Director of Aviation for the City of Charlotte
- A representative of the planning departments of the following counties: Cabarrus, Gaston, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Union and York.
- A representative of both South Carolina and North Carolina's Division of Air Quality, or a representative from both states DOT whose primary responsibility is air quality
- A representative of the Mecklenburg County Department of Environmental Protection

The Technical Committee shall meet no less than three times a year. The meetings shall be scheduled at least three weeks prior to meetings of the Executive Committee so as to allow for sufficient time for

members of the Executive Committee to adequately review the findings and recommendations of the Technical Committee. Meeting locations shall rotate among the four member agencies.

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Ken Geathers  
Cabarrus-South Rowan  
Metropolitan Planning Organization

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Bill D. Powers  
Gaston Urban Area  
Metropolitan Planning Organization

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R. Lee Myers  
Mecklenburg-Union  
Metropolitan Planning Organization

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Bayless Mack  
Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area  
Transportation Study

## References

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- 1 Although different in most respects, the districting of the original NPB and its successor organizations bear some resemblance today of Federal Transit Administration regions, for example.
- 2 It should be recognized that the Minneapolis-St. Paul Region created a consolidated planning organization in 1969 that pre-dated the federal requirements, and still operates as a model of sorts with a shared tax base and long record of regional-scale initiatives.
- 3 National Association of Development Organizations, RuralTransportation.Org ([http://66.132.139.69/pages/page.asp?page\\_id=60977](http://66.132.139.69/pages/page.asp?page_id=60977)) accessed on 6.15.2010.
- 4 North Carolina Department of Transportation, Transportation Planning Branch, "RPO Manual 2006", April 17, 2006 (<http://66.132.139.69/uploads/ncrpo.pdf>) accessed on 6.15.2010.
- 5 Note that if either Gaston County or Gastonia are serving as a TAC officer, then these two positions will be held by one of the smaller jurisdictions in the MPO to ensure permanent representation on the Executive Committee of municipalities other than Gastonia.
- 6 Grimm, Lewis; Morris, Anne; and Lane, J. Scott, "Best Practices Study for the Hampton Roads Metropolitan Planning Organization", 2009.
- 7 Racciatti, Al; and Lane, J. Scott, "Project Prioritization Study for the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority," The Louis Berger Group, Inc. 2007.
- 8 Bond, Alexander; Kramer, Jeff; Seggerman, Karen, "Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations," Center for Urban Transportation Research, 2010. 120 pages.
- 9 Grimm, Lewis; Morris, Anne; and Lane, J. Scott, "Best Practices Study of Metropolitan Planning Organizations," prepared for the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization, January 2009. Page 3-8.
- 10 Bond, Alexander; Kramer, Jeff; Seggerman, Karen, "Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations," Center for Urban Transportation Research, 2010. Pages 2-4.
- 11 Jeff Kramer, "West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee," via email received July 28, 2010.
- 12 "Amended and Restated Interlocal Agreement for Regional Transportation Planning and Coordination in West Central Florida," website accessed September 7, 2010 ([www.regionaltransportation.org/agreements/Interlocal.pdf](http://www.regionaltransportation.org/agreements/Interlocal.pdf)). Page 5.
- 13 FHWA and FTA, "Best Practices for Small- and Medium-Sized Metropolitan Planning Organizations," April 28-30, 2004. Website accessed on September 8, 2010 ([www.planning.dot.gov/Peer/Arkansas/arkansas.asp](http://www.planning.dot.gov/Peer/Arkansas/arkansas.asp)).
- 14 U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Trends, Effect on State Spending, and Options for Future Program Design," August, 2004.
- 15 Barlow, William, Public Transportation Division of North Carolina Department of Transportation. Telephone conversation conducted with J. Scott Lane on October 13, 2010.