

# "MPO 101"

## Introduction to the Purpose & Function of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)



Peter Plumeau  
Resource Systems Group, Inc.

# Overview

- Some Key Concepts
- MPOs – What, Why, Who?
- Functions & Products
- Structure
- Operating Procedures
- Best Practices
- Challenges
- Resources
- Discussion



# Some Key Concepts

- Fiscal Constraint
- Public & Stakeholder Involvement
- Collaboration
- Multimodalism/Intermodalism
- Transportation-Land Use Connection
- Transportation-Economic Vitality Connection
- System Management & Operations (M&O)
- Safety & Security





# MPOs – What, Why, Who?



# What is an MPO?

- A transportation **policy-making and planning body** with representatives of local, state & federal government and transportation authorities
- Required in **urbanized areas** of 50,000+
- Ensures federal spending on transportation occurs through a **comprehensive, cooperative and continuing (3-C) process**
- ┌ Variety of **organizational arrangements** – “hosted” by another agency; stand-alone; existing agency designated as MPO

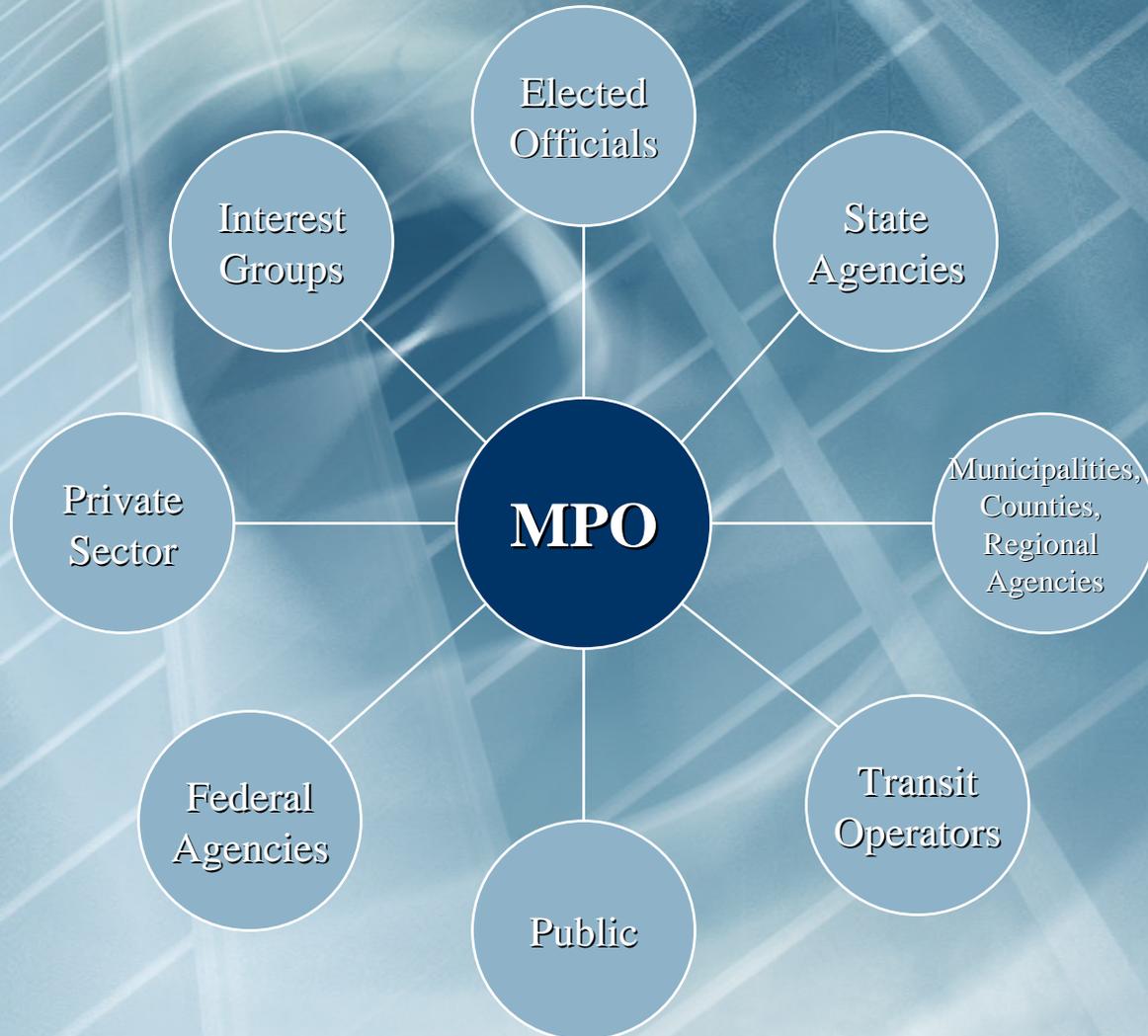


# Why an MPO?

- Transportation investment means **allocating scarce transportation funding** resources appropriately
- Planning needs to reflect the **region's shared vision** for its future
- Requires a **comprehensive examination** of the region's future and investment **alternatives**
- MPO **facilitates collaboration** of governments, interested parties and residents



# Who is the MPO?



# MPO Functions & Products



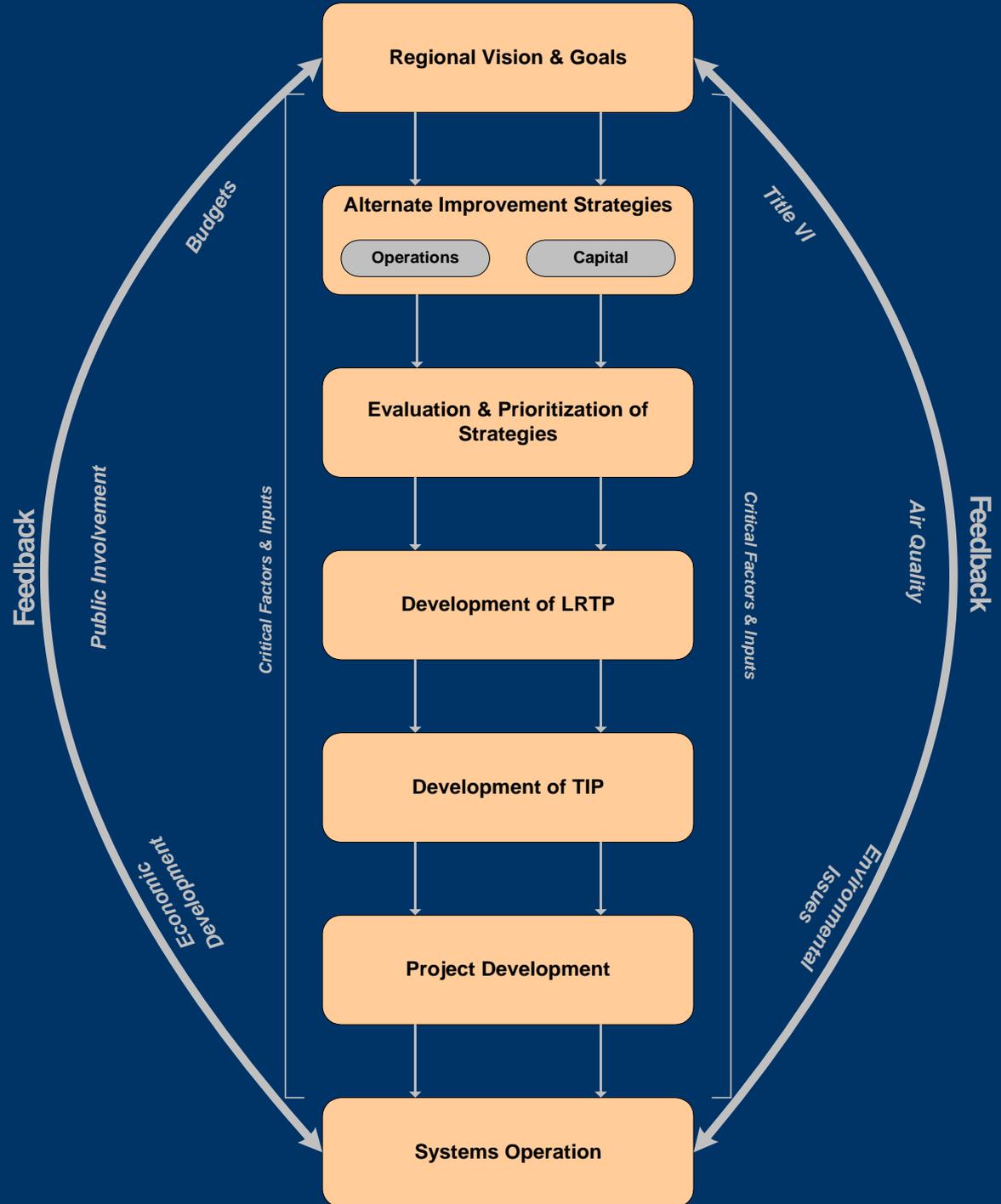
# MPO Functions

## Five Core Functions:

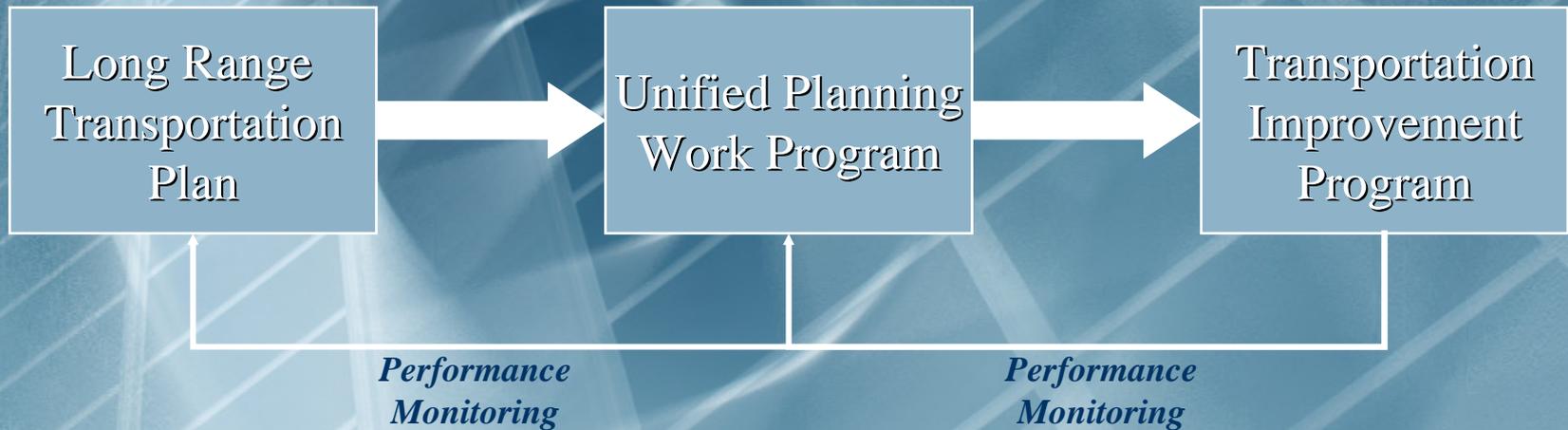
1. Establish a setting – fair & impartial
2. Evaluate transportation alternatives
3. Maintain a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
4. Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
5. Involve the public – residents and key affected sub-groups (PIP)



# The MPO Process



# MPO Products



# MPO Products

	Time Horizon	Contents	Update Requirements
UPWP	1-2 Years	Planning Studies, Tasks, Budget	Annual
LRTP	20 Years (min.) 25 Years (preferred)	Future Goals, Strategies & Projects	Every 4 Years
TIP	4 Years	Transportation Investments/Projects	Every 1-2 years (varies by state)



# UPWP

- Reflects local planning priorities
- Lists studies & tasks to be performed by MPO and/or member agencies (with MPO funds)
- Covers at least one year
- Funding sources for each study/task
- Basis for PL funding & FTA 5303 transferability
- Schedules
- Responsible agencies for each study/task
- └ Often includes "preamble" element

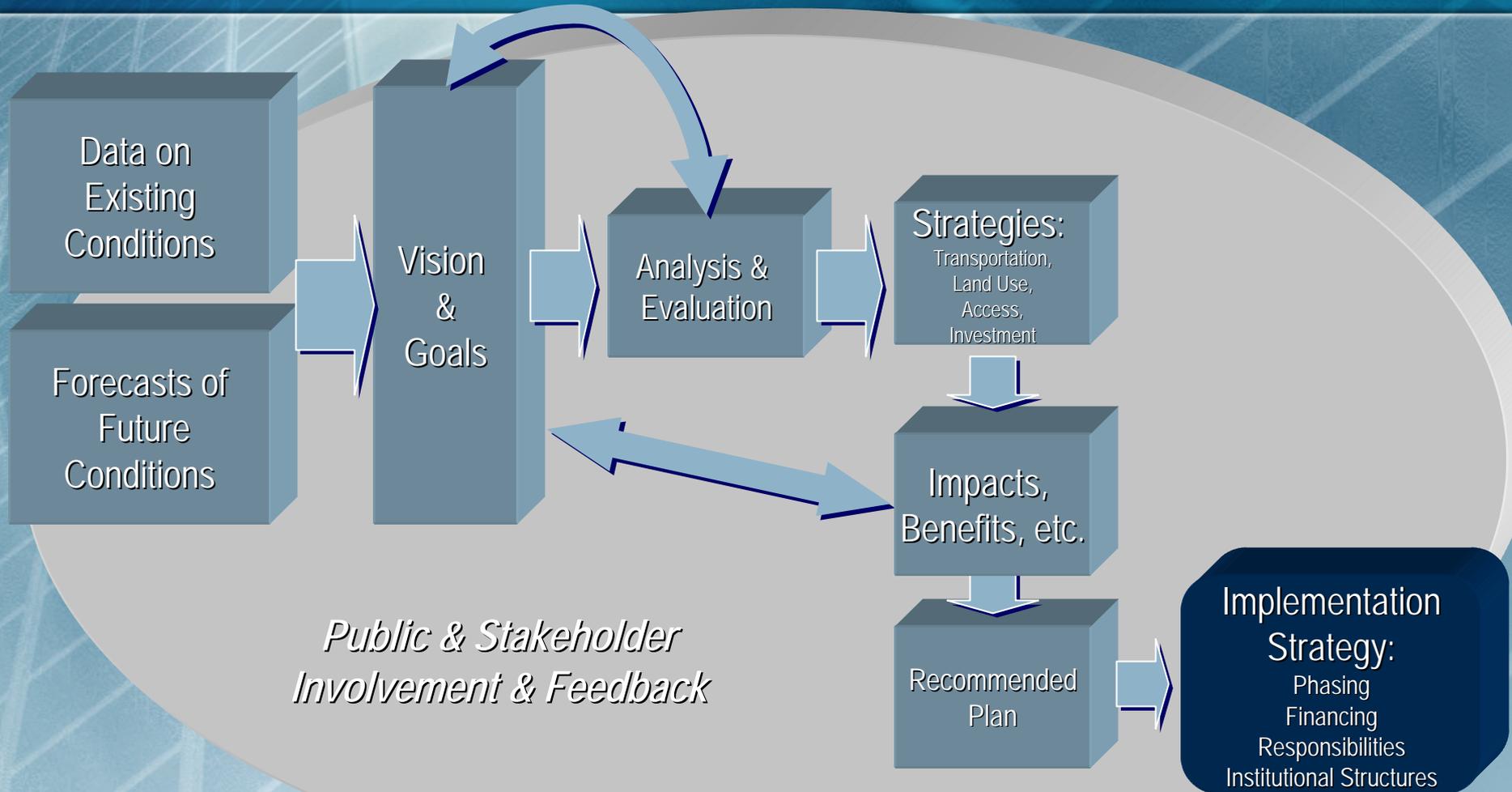


# L RTP

- Statement of region's transportation system investment priorities and plans
- Minimum 20-year time horizon *from date of next update* [25 years preferred]
- Focused on systems level & intermodal/multimodal in nature
- Clearly link with regional land use, development, housing & employment goals & plans



# L RTP



# L RTP

- Emphasize efficient use of existing system & its preservation
- Consistent with Statewide Transportation Plan
- Conform with SIP (non-attainment areas only)
- Be fiscally-constrained
- Update every 4 years
- Prioritized listing of projects



# SAFETEA-LU Planning Factors

## New Factors/Emphasis

- Safety
- Security
- Environment
  - Consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic growth development patterns
  - System-level (not project-specific)

## Similar to TEA-21

- Economic vitality
- Accessibility and mobility
- Integration and connectivity of people, freight, and modes
- Management and operations
- Preservation of the existing system
- Environment
  - Energy conservation
  - Improve quality of life



# TIP

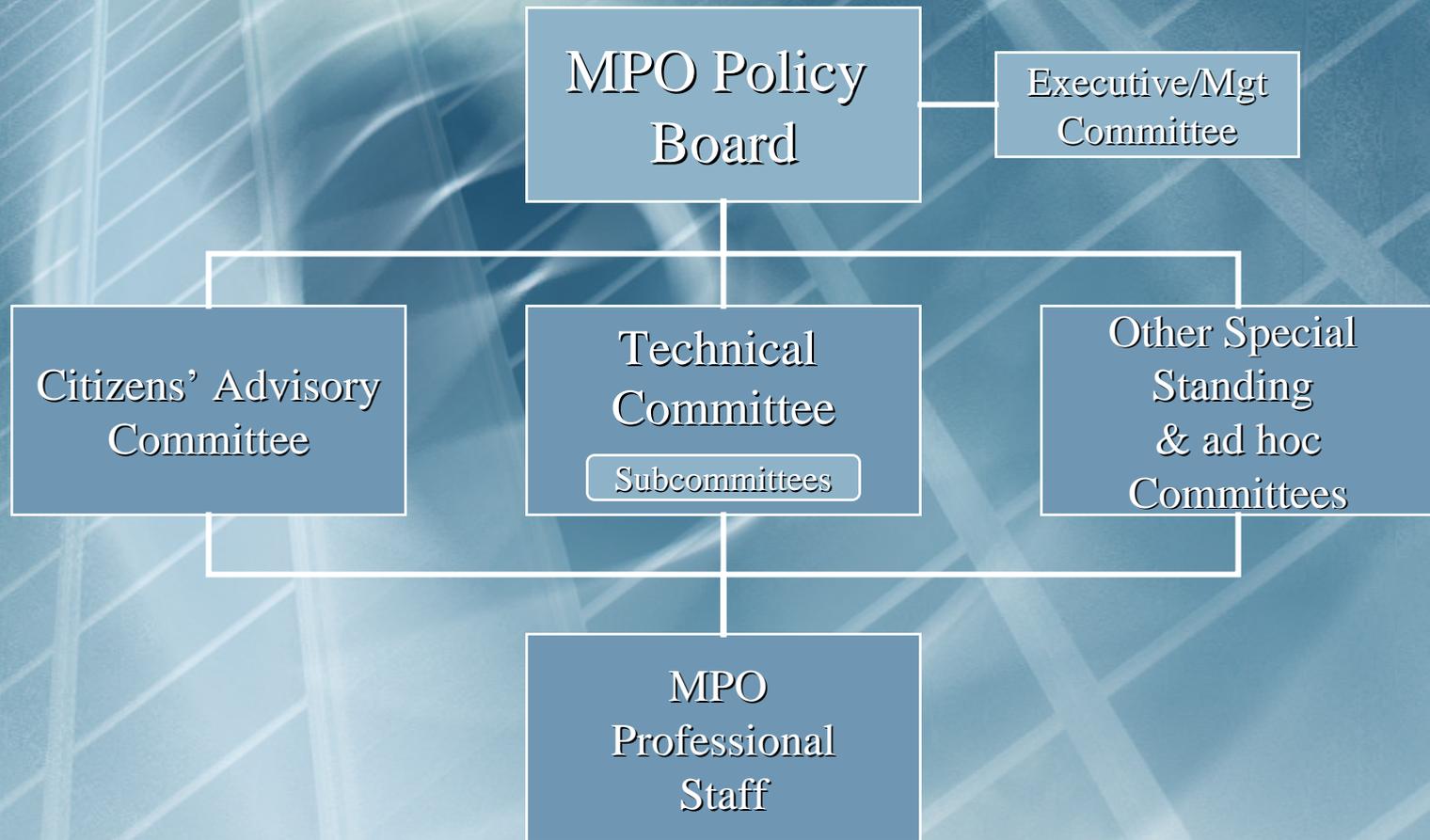
- Financially-constrained program covering most immediate LRTP-based projects & strategies for implementation
- Allocates limited transportation resources among region's priorities
- Minimum 4 years covered
- Updated every 1-2 years, depending on state requirements
- Not a "wish list" – fiscally constrained
- Conforms with SIP (if necessary)
- Incorporated into Statewide TIP without change once approved



# MPO Structure



# "Typical" MPO Structure



# "Typical" MPO Structure

## Policy Committee ("the MPO")

- Local elected & appointed officials
- Modal representatives
- State agency officials
- Interest group representatives
- Tribal Governments



# "Typical" MPO Structure

## Technical Committee

- An advisory body to the MPO Board for transportation issues, primarily technical in nature
- Oversees MPO technical work and develops recommendations on projects and programs for Board consideration
- Meets on regular schedule
- Usually comprised of staff-level officials of local, state & federal agencies



# "Typical" MPO Structure

## Citizens Advisory Committee

- Often acts in an advisory capacity to MPO on public participation strategies
- May meet regularly to review and develop plans, and also assists in organizing and managing public meetings and comments
- Comprised of members of the public
  - ┌ Often appointed by localities & MPO Policy Board
  - ┌ May include representatives of community, environmental & other interested organizations



# Operating Procedures



# MPO Operations

- Decision-making processes
- Effective & ongoing public involvement



# Decision-Making

- MPO process is designed to be **“bottom-up”**
- **Leadership** is also critical to progress
- Policy Board needs to clearly **delineate roles & responsibilities** of committees & staff (through adoption/maintenance of Bylaws)



# Effective Public Involvement

- Public Participation Plan
  - Required document
  - Need to clearly lay out process, strategy and responsibilities for ensuring continuous opportunities for public input and education
  - Public involvement *methods* stressed in SAFETEA-LU
- Innovation in public involvement can both enhance the process and make it more cost-effective



# Effective Public Involvement

## High Tech

- Interactive websites
- Videos & Animation
- Public Access TV
- Electronic communications
- Telephone "hotlines"
- Speakers' kits

## High Touch

- Local liaisons
- Community meetings
- Interactive workshops/ open houses
- Resident surveys
- Newsletters/media releases
- Reach the "under-involved"



# MPO Best Practices



# MPO Best Practices

- Lots of innovation across MPOs in many different topics
- Small MPOs sometimes among the leaders
- Worth considering best practices for lessons learned and local applicability



# Themes of MPO Best Practices

- ☑ Creativity & innovation in public & stakeholder involvement
- ☑ Focus on consensus-building on priorities & actions
- ☑ “Push the envelope” in use of planning tools & process to effectively address hot topics the in region (e.g., visualization)



# Themes of MPO Best Practices

- ☑ Aggressively monitor & report on regional performance measures
- ☑ Develop plans, projects and work programs within a strategic framework
- ☑ Strong leadership is most important determinant of MPO "success"



# Challenges



# Challenges

- “Meeting fatigue” – MPO participants and citizens
- Coordination among different players in MPO process (and knowing who they are!)
- Staying on top of emerging issues and requirements – federal, state, local



# Challenges

- Balancing management of in-house work and consultant tasks
- Achieving organizational goals with limited financial & staff resources



# Resources



# Resources

- *The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process: Key Issues – A Briefing Notebook for MPO Board Members* (Nov. 2001)
- Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program - [www.planning.dot.gov/metro.asp](http://www.planning.dot.gov/metro.asp)
- Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) – [www.ampo.org](http://www.ampo.org)
- TRB Committee on Metropolitan Policy, Planning and Processes – [www.trb.org](http://www.trb.org)

