“MPO 101”

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

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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?

- Elected Officials
- Municipalities, Counties, Regional Agencies
- Federal Agencies
- Transit Operators
- Public
- State Agencies
- Private Sector
- Interest Groups
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

Regional Vision & Goals

Alternate Improvement Strategies
- Operations
- Capital

Evaluation & Prioritization of Strategies

Development of LRTP

Development of TIP

Project Development

Systems Operation

Feedback

Critical Factors & Inputs

Public Involvement

Budgets

Title VI

Air Quality

Economic

Environmental

Issues
MPO Products

- Long Range Transportation Plan
- Unified Planning Work Program
- Transportation Improvement Program

Performance Monitoring
### MPO Products

#### Time Horizon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Horizon</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Update Requirements</th>
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<tr>
<td>UPWP</td>
<td>1-2 Years</td>
<td>Planning Studies, Tasks, Budget</td>
<td>Annual</td>
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<tr>
<td>LRTP</td>
<td>20 Years (min.)</td>
<td>Future Goals, Strategies &amp; Projects</td>
<td>Every 4 Years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>25 Years (preferred)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIP</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>Transportation Investments/Projects</td>
<td>Every 1-2 years (varies by state)</td>
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</table>
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
LRTP

- 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
LRTP

Data on Existing Conditions

Vision & Goals

Analysis & Evaluation

Strategies:
- Transportation
- Land Use
- Access
- Investment

Impacts, Benefits, etc.

Recommended Plan

Implementation Strategy:
- Phasing
- Financing
- Responsibilities
- Institutional Structures

Public & Stakeholder Involvement & Feedback

Forecasts of Future Conditions
LRTP

- 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

- MPO Policy Board
  - Citizens’ Advisory Committee
  - Technical Committee
    - Subcommittees
  - MPO Professional Staff
  - Executive/Mgt Committee
  - Other Special Standing & ad hoc Committees
“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
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 in the 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
- Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) – www.ampo.org
- TRB Committee on Metropolitan Policy, Planning and Processes – www.trb.org