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

Critical Factors & Inputs
- Economic Development
- Public Involvement

Feedback
- Budgets
- Title VI
- Air Quality
- Environment
- Issues
- Isuuses

Air Quality

Economic Development

Public Involvement

Feedback
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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
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

Forecasts of Future Conditions

Vision & Goals

Analysis & Evaluation

Strategies:
Transportation, Land Use, Access, Investment

Impacts, Benefits, etc.

Recommended Plan

Public & Stakeholder Involvement & Feedback

Implementation Strategy:
Phasing
Financing
Responsibilities
Institutional Structures

Vision & Goals

Data on Existing Conditions

Forecasts of Future Conditions

Analysis & Evaluation

Strategies:
Transportation, Land Use, Access, Investment

Impacts, Benefits, etc.

Recommended Plan
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

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
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 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)
- 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)