

Federal Highway Administration

And

Federal Transit Administration

Joint Certification Review

Of the

Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization

September 1 , 2004

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ADA –	Americans with Disabilities Act
CFR-	Code of Federal Regulations
CKTC-	Concord Kannapolis Transit Commission
CMS –	Congestion Management System
CMAQ –	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality
CRMPO-	Cabarrus-Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization
CRAFT-	Charlotte Regional Alliance For Transportation
EJ –	Environmental Justice
ECMT -	Emergency Congestion Management Team
EPA -	Environmental Protection Agency
FHWA -	Federal Highway Administration
FTA -	Federal Transit Administration
ITS –	Intelligent Transportation System
LPA-	Lead Planning Agency
L RTP –	Long Range Transportation Plan
MLI -	Minority and Low Income
MOA –	Memorandum of Agreement
MPO –	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NCDENR-	North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources
NCDOT-	North Carolina Department of Transportation
PL –	Planning Funds
PIP –	Public Involvement Policy
RFATS-	Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area Transportation System Planning Area, SC
RTDM-	Regional Travel Demand Model
SCDOT -	South Carolina Department of Transportation
SICM -	Statewide Interagency Meeting
SIP -	State Implementation Plan
STP-DA-	Surface Transportation Program – Direct Apportionment
STIP -	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
TAC-	Transportation Advisory Committee
TCC –	Technical Coordinating Committee
TEA-21 –	Transportation Equity Act for the 21 st Century

TIP – Transportation Improvement Program
TMA - Transportation Management Area
UPWP – Unified Planning Work Program
UZA- Urbanized Area

FORWARD

Transportation Management Area (TMA) Certification Review Reports

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(5) and 49 U.S.C. 1607, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning process in Transportation Management Areas (TMA) at least every three years. A TMA is an urbanized area, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, with a population of over 200,000. There are 153 TMAs in the U.S., based on the 2000 Census. In general, certification reviews consist of three primary activities: a site visit, review of planning products (in advance of and during the site visit), and preparation of a report that summarizes the review and offers findings. The reviews focus on compliance with federal regulations, challenges, successes, and experiences of the cooperative relationship between the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), State Department of Transportation (DOT) and transit operators in the conduct of the metropolitan planning process. Joint FHWA/FTA certification review guidelines provide agency field reviewers with latitude and flexibility to tailor the review to reflect local issues and needs. As a consequence, the scope and depth of the certification review reports will vary significantly.

The certification review process is only one of several methods used to assess the quality of a local metropolitan planning process, compliance with applicable statutes and regulations, and the level and type of technical assistance needed to enhance the effectiveness of the planning process. Other activities provide opportunities for this type of review and comment, including the Unified Planning Work Program, the multi-modal long-range transportation plan, the Metropolitan and Statewide Transportation Improvement Programs, air quality conformity determinations (in non-attainment and maintenance areas), as well as a range of other formal and less formal contact provide both FHWA/FTA an opportunity to comment on the planning process. The results of these other processes are considered in the certification review process.

While the Planning Certification Review report itself may not fully document those many intermediate and ongoing checkpoints, the “findings” of certification review, in fact, are based upon the cumulative findings of the entire review effort.

The review process is individually tailored to focus on topics of significance in each metropolitan planning area. Federal reviewers prepare certification reports to document the results of the review process. The reports and final actions are the joint responsibility of the appropriate FHWA and FTA field offices and content will vary to reflect the planning process reviewed, whether or not they relate explicitly to the formal “findings” of the review.

To encourage public understanding and input, FHWA/FTA will continue to improve the clarity of the certification review reports.

Executive Summary

For The Certification Review Of The Cabarrus Rowan Transportation Management Area

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(5) and 49 U.S.C. 1607, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning process in Transportation Management Areas at least every three years. In general, certification reviews consist of three primary activities: a site visit, review of planning products (in advance of and during the site visit), and preparation of a report that summarizes the review and offers findings. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)-Region 4, conducted a joint certification review of the Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organizations (CRMPO) planning process on June 9 & 10, 2004. Other participants in the review consisted of representatives from the CRMPO, the City of Concord and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT).

Observed during the review were several noteworthy practices, and several recommendations for improving the CRMPO planning process. Noteworthy practices include areas where the MPO is doing well. Recommendations are areas where the review team suggests ways to improve the planning process. Corrective actions are areas where the review team believes the MPO has not done enough to implement a particular planning requirement. The review team did not identify any corrective actions.

Noteworthy Practices

CRMPO has a transportation planning process that adequately addresses local and regional transportation issues facing the area. The review team identified the following Significant Positive efforts by CRMPO:

- A. The planning process is open and includes the adjoining MPOs and RPOs.
- B. Participating in the regional planning process for the NC-73 land use and transportation study corridor project.
- C. Advertised and completed the contract for planning services on time and within State and Federal procurement guidelines.
- D. Using the LRTP as the project selection document.
- E. Development of a priority ranking criteria for non-highway projects that will be used in the TIP selection process that is supported by the TAC.
- F. Initiating the transit development and implementation studies.
- G. Making the transit studies useful documents, with the implementation of the Concord-Kannapolis Transit System.
- H. Identification of low-income and minority populations in the City's of Concord and Kannapolis for the development of the transit routes.
- I. The Transit Commissions use of a Citizens Advisory Committee to provide input into the process.

- J. The level of coordination that has occurred in the development of the RTDM and collection of data thus far.
- K. Supporting the RTDM and regional transportation planning process with funding and staff resources.
- L. Participating in the Air Quality Conformity process for the first time.
- M. Updating the PIP to more adequately meet federal regulations.

Recommendations

1. Continue the cooperative regional planning efforts.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).
3. Continue the annual self-certification process.
4. Identify ways to get the freight industry more involved in the transportation planning process.
5. Continue to use the LRTP as the project selection document for the TIP.
6. Update the short-range transit plan.
7. Formally document the publication of the annual program of projects.
8. Include transit planning in the PIP.
9. Continue to work with the RTDM partners to complete the LRTP and RTDM prior to April 15, 2005.
10. Continue to participate in the interagency consultation process.
11. Rely on and use the federal partners as a resource throughout the conformity process to help avoid delays.
12. Participate in the SIP development process.
13. Continue to participate in the SICM meetings.
14. Participate in environmental justice and public involvement training.
15. Identify a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the public involvement process.
16. With regard to public involvement, develop specific strategies to engage all citizens, especially minority and low-income population (MLI) citizens.
17. Adopt a Title VI/EJ policy for the CRMPO.
18. Develop measures to determine project impacts or service inequities in MLI areas.
19. Plot all past, current and future projects against the identified MLI areas.
20. Develop a demographic profile that includes (MLI) data for the entire planning area.
21. Develop and adopt the CMS with the 2030 LRTP.

Certification

The Federal Review Team certifies the Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization's planning process for three years from the date of this report.

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION (FHWA)/FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA) JOINT CERTIFICATION REVIEW OF THE CABARRUS ROWAN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (CRMPO)

Introduction

Between June 9 & 10, 2004, the North Carolina Division Office of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Region 4 Office of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), conducted a joint certification review of the Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organizations' (CRMPO) planning process. The review was conducted in accordance with 23 CFR 450 and 49 CFR 613 which requires FHWA and FTA to jointly review and assess the transportation planning process for all transportation management areas (TMAs) at least once every three years. A transportation management area is defined as an urbanized area with a population of more than 200,000 as defined by the latest decennial census. The CRMPO based on population is not large enough to qualify as a TMA. At the request of the Town of Harrisburg and with approval from the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), the CRMPO elected to retain a portion of its 1990 planning area boundary, which is identified in the 2000 Census as urbanized area within the Mecklenburg-Union MPO (MUMPO), therefore, the FHWA declared the entire CRMPO area a TMA subject to all TMA planning requirements. This is the first certification review conducted for this area.

The purpose of the review is to assess the extent of compliance with the planning requirements, to recognize noteworthy practices, to identify problem areas, and to provide advice and assistance as appropriate. The review consisted of a series of discussions on transportation planning issues with State and local transportation officials directly involved in highway and transit planning activities of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The review was held at the City of Concord Government Annex Building located at 66 Union Street. In addition, the CRMPO scheduled a meeting to provide the public an opportunity to offer comments on the CRMPO transportation planning process. The public meeting was held at 4:30 PM on June 9, 2004 at the City of Concord Council Chamber located at 26 Union Street. This report contains the findings and recommendations of the review team.

In preparation for the review, the CRMPO staff assembled and distributed to review team members, packets of information which included an agenda, Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Prospectus, Public Involvement Plan, Memorandum of Understanding and MPO Bylaws, Transportation Improvement Program, 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), and the Transit Planning and Implementation Study's. The agenda is attached as Appendix A.

Federal Review Team Members and Participants

The Federal Review Team consisted of the following individuals:

Ms. Loretta Barren, Federal Highway Administration, North Carolina Division
Mr. Eddie Dancausse, Federal Highway Administration, North Carolina Division
Ms. Lynise DeVance, Federal Highway Administration, North Carolina Division
Mr. Bill Marley, Federal Highway Administration, North Carolina Division
Mr. Alex McNeil, Federal Transit Administration, Region 4

Other participants in the Review consisted of staff from the Cabarrus Rowan MPO (CRMPO), City of Concord, North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). Representatives are listed below:

Terry Arellano, NCDOT
Phil Conrad, Mobility Solutions (MPO Staff)
Dereck Dail, NCDOT
Linda Dosse, NCDOT
Jack Flaherty, NCDOT
Mike Nunn, Mobility Solutions (MPO Staff)
Jeff Young, City of Concord

CRMPO Background

The CRMPO Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) includes the following member jurisdictions with each representative having one vote: the City of Concord, City of Kannapolis, City of Salisbury, Cabarrus County, Rowan County, Town of China Grove, Town of Cleveland, Town of Granite Quarry, Town of Harrisburg, Town of Landis, Town of Mount Pleasant, Town of Rockwell, Town of Spencer and a member of the North Carolina Board of Transportation. The City of Concord serves as the Lead Planning Agency (LPA). The CRMPO has a Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) that consists of transportation professionals from the member agencies, the Concord Regional Airport, the Rowan County Airport, Centralina Council of Governments, Rider Transit System, and the Salisbury Transit System. The TCC does not include representation from the other modes of transportation, specifically the freight community. The TCC reviews materials and forwards recommendations to the CRMPO for action.

MPO/NCDOT Coordination

The CRMPO believes the level of coordination and participation on the part of the NCDOT has greatly improved. The CRMPO likes the fact that they've had the same coordinator with NCDOT for approximately 12 years. The CRMPO

recently recognized Linda Dosse, the NCDOT MPO coordinator. Ms. Dosse works with the CRMPO and two adjoining Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs). This keeps both the MPO and RPOs informed about planning initiatives in the area.

The CRMPO adjoins the MUMPO and provides planning services for a portion of the MUMPO urbanized area. The CRMPO works cooperatively with MUMPO, Gaston MPO, Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area Transportation Study (RFATS), a South Carolina MPO, Rocky River RPO and Lake Norman RPO in developing a regional travel demand model (RTDM) and coordinating the development of transportation plans for the impending air quality conformity determination.

The CRMPO used the NC-73 corridor study as an example of the NCDOT's efforts to enhance communication with its partners. The NC-73 corridor study includes a land use-planning element and the NCDOT is working with the CRMPO, the Lake Norman RPO, and the local governments and planning staffs along the corridor. The partners in the NC-73 corridor study project are commended for forging alliances that are leading to regional land use and transportation plans.

The NCDOT continues to stress that the most successful coordination effort to date has been development of the Regional Travel Demand Model (RTDM) as is evident from the hard work the staffs have done from the pooling of funds to implementing the process thus far.

Noteworthy Practices

- A. The planning process is open and includes adjoining MPOs and RPOs.
- B. Participating in the regional planning for the NC-73 land use and transportation corridor study.

Recommendation

- 1. Continue the cooperative regional planning efforts.

Agreements and Contracts

The CRMPO is the only TMA in North Carolina that contract out its planning services. The City of Concord (LPA) advertised the need for planning services and the contract with Mobility Solutions was approved in June 2004. Mobility Solutions, a Women and Minority Business Enterprise (WBE) firm is the staff for the CRMPO and they ensure that the MPO meets all State and Federal planning requirements. The LPA has contracted out planning services for four years, and this process seems to work well for them.

At the request of the Town of Harrisburg and with approval from the TAC, the CRMPO elected to retain the Town of Harrisburg and a portion of Cabarrus County within the CRMPO, even though the Census designated those areas part

of MUMPO. The CRMPO worked with the MUMPO planning staff to develop a cooperative resolution for providing planning services to the areas. Since those areas are part of the MUMPO urbanized area, the CRMPO was designated a TMA. Because this TMA designation is by association with MUMPO, CRMPO does not get any additional planning funds (PL) or Surface Transportation Program-Direct Allocation (STP-DA). Further, neither MUMPO nor NCDOT would agree to any division of funds for CRMPO.

Noteworthy Practices

C. Advertising and completing the contract for planning services on time and within State and Federal procurement guidelines.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

In 2003, the CRMPO updated the Prospectus to guide the UPWP development process, including the expanded planning area. The Prospectus identifies planning tasks, products expected and roles and responsibilities. The CRMPO adopted the UPWP for FY04/05 in April 2004 based on the new prospectus. The CRMPO uses the prospectus as a tool to help train and educate new TAC members about the MPO process.

Member jurisdictions are asked to submit their list of transportation planning needs for consideration. Staff analyzes those needs along with any required work program tasks and develops a draft UPWP based on what they can feasibly accomplish. The majority of the FY 04/05 work tasks focus on completing the new model, the LRTP and conducting the conformity determination process. The CRMPO did not seek public input in the development of the UPWP.

Since the Concord-Kannapolis Transit System (Rider) opened in April 2004, the CRMPO must now include the transit program funds in the UPWP. The NC-PTD reminded the CRMPO to develop a narrative statement for each transit work task. Additionally, the CRMPO needs to consider the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) requirement for future UPWP tasks. It was noted that Rowan County has a rural transit system that is not subject to the MPO process.

In the past, the CRMPO has made few, if any, amendments to the UPWP. However, the CRMPO believes that there will be more amendments in the future, considering that transit program funds are appropriated differently than highway funds, the complexity of the regional model and LRTP development process, and all the new TMA requirements that have to be completed. Given that there are not enough planning funds to meet the growing needs of the urban area, to adequately develop the RTDM, and to comply with pending air quality regulations the CRMPO anticipates amendments to the UPWP, at least for the short term. The CRMPO also has to consider the PL match, because the match is divided among the member jurisdictions and any changes made to the work program

could require some additional match, after local governments have adopted their budgets.

The CRMPO is encouraged to continue the annual evaluation of the UPWP. During the evaluation process the CRMPO is encouraged to examine the effectiveness of the UPWP to ensure that the scarce PL funds needed for regional modeling and air quality conformity are being adequately allocated to accomplish the goals and objectives of the LRTP.

The annual adoption of the UPWP is also the time that the MPO self certifies the planning process. A checklist that covers all the federal requirements for self-certification is reviewed and discussed in open session during a regularly scheduled TAC meeting. The review team reminded the CRMPO that the annual self-certification process was still a requirement.

Recommendations

2. Examine the effectiveness of the UPWP to ensure that funds are being appropriately allocated to meet regional modeling and air quality conformity needs and requirements.
3. Continue the annual self-certification process.

Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

The CRMPO adopted the 2025 LRTP on June 20, 2001. The 2025 LRTP is in the process of being updated. The new plan will have a horizon year of 2030, and include the new planning area within the CRMPO. For the first time the LRTP will be subject to the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments. The 2030 LRTP is due June 15, 2005, to meet the new 8-hr Ozone standard. The CRMPO used existing land use plans, and consulted with planners and local experts for the update of the LRTP. The CRMPO believes the area will adopt a fairly conservative growth scenario for the future. An early examination of the existing and projected land use data gave a good indication of some of the transportation improvements that might be needed in the area. Where possible the growth and transportation system is being compared to the 2025 LRTP as a cross check. The development of the 2030 LRTP compared to development of the 2025 LRTP has been much more in-depth and collaborative. The data collection effort has been tremendous. CRMPO has assisted in the funding of several consultants that have projected growth, trips, and traffic counts, to name a few. CRMPO is developing the public involvement plan for the LRTP update.

The CRMPO has not found a way to involve the freight industry in the planning process. The CRMPO has worked with NCDOT to include railroad-crossing safety projects in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). A truck study was completed for the area. The CRMPO and the local governments are aware of truck movements and some associated impacts. This knowledge is shared and discussed at the TCC level during project selection. The review team

encouraged the CRMPO to find a way to involve the freight industry in the planning process to help ensure that future transportation improvements are meeting the needs of the traveling public.

The Charlotte Department of Transportation has hired a process manager to assist the regions MPOs in completing their LRTPs by April 2005. The regions MPOs and RPOs are working closing together as they develop their plans. The process manager is working with the MPOs to develop a region-wide database that will be used in the development of the fiscally constrained portion of the LRTPs. The CRMPO will develop the operations and maintenance costs for the highway and transit systems.

Recommendations

4. Examine ways to get the freight industry more involved in the planning process.

Transportation Improvement Program

The CRMPO uses the LRTP as the project selection tool for the TIP. The horizon year table in the LRTP is used to develop the transportation needs list. Though this list is used for the TIP project selection process, few, if any of the requests get funded.

The CRMPO is in two NCDOT Divisions. Rowan County is in Division 9 and Cabarrus County is in Division 10. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) requires that a prioritized list of projects be developed for each Division. Each municipality develops a prioritized list of needs and submits it to the CRMPO for further evaluation and division prioritization. In 2003, the CRMPO decided that non-highway projects deserved the same prioritization treatment as highway projects. The CRMPO staff in collaboration with the TCC developed criteria for ranking non-highway projects. The list of non-highway projects is ranked and prioritized by mode and division. The TAC is expected to act on the list of non-highway projects for the first time in the fall of 2004. Both the TCC and TAC put a lot of thought and effort into the development of the non-highway ranking criteria.

The CRMPO believes that the 2-year TIP process offers MPOs a better opportunity to be involved in the development of the TIP. With the 2-year process came the “one-on-one” sessions between the MPOs and the DOT. The CRMPO would like for the NCDOT to reexamine how the “one-on-one” sessions are handled. During the first 30-minutes of the session the NCDOT explains that they (NCDOT) don’t have any new money to add to the TIP, and this doesn’t give the CRMPO the impression that the TIP is being developed cooperatively. If an MPO wants any new projects in the TIP, then an existing project has to be removed or delayed, and that is not something an MPO wants to do. The CRMPO believes the real problem is with the equity formula. The CRMPO would

like for the NCDOT to consider making some changes to the equity formula, otherwise the NCDOT needs to be more creative in how it plans to fund and accommodate future growth in the urban areas. Without additional money in the TIP process, there is really not a lot that changes in the TIP from year-to-year.

Noteworthy Practices

- D. Using the LRTP as the project selection document.
- E. Developing the ranking criteria for non-highway projects.

Recommendations

- 5. Continue to use the LRTP as the project selection document for the TIP.

Transit Planning

The CRMPO staff is also the transit planning staff. The City of Concord is the LPA for the transit program. The CRMPO initiated a transit feasibility study and a transit implementation study with two different private consultant firms. The FTA and the NCDOT Public Transit Division were very involved in the studies and subsequent development of the Concord-Kannapolis Transit System (aka Rider). The FTA was impressed by the level of coordination and involvement the CRMPO fostered among the jurisdictions and state and federal agencies during the planning and development of the transit system most systems don't do as much.

The CRMPO needs to have a formal agreement for the general management of the transit system and that can be by MOA or included in the prospectus. The City of Concord contracts general management of the transit system to an outside consultant, and that is included in the prospectus. The CRMPO also needs to formally document the public involvement plan for the annual program of projects for transit. All MPOs are required to publish the annual program of projects prior to adopting the list of projects. This can be accomplished by publishing the list of projects along with the TIP or separately. Either way, the process must be documented so that the public knows what to expect.

The City's of Concord and Kannapolis appoint elected officials to serve on the Concord Kannapolis Transit Commission (CKTC), as well as the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). The adopted implementation plan identified the need to have a committee of citizens guiding the transit program. There will be a transit rider on the commission. The rider has not been appointed since the system just began operation in April 2004.

Outside of marketing the "opening" of Rider, the CRMPO has not developed a formal PIP for transit nor included it in the CRMPOs PIP. In implementing Rider, the CRMPO identified the Minority and Low-Income (MLI) communities and used that data as a basis for public involvement and route selection. The CRMPO did a good job in identifying and using the MLI information for implementation of the

transit system. This was also the first time the CRMPO dealt with an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) local organization. In setting the transit fares the local ADA organization was opposed to the System offering lower fares for disabled persons. The group did not want to be treated differently than any other system patrons. The CRMPO asked how to deal with that matter. FTA explained that all federally funded transit systems have to offer discounted fares in the off-peak hour not only to disabled patrons, but, too elderly and Medicare card carriers. However, if the ADA organization members do not want to pay the lower fare they can pay the regular fare, but the lower fare must be offered.

The CRMPO did an outstanding job planning for and implementing the new transit system. The review team encouraged them to continually update the short-range transit plan as the area continues to grow.

Noteworthy Practices

- F. Initiating the transit development and implementation studies.
- G. Making the transit studies useful documents, with the implementation of the Concord-Kannapolis Transit System.
- H. Identifying minority and low-income populations and using them in transit route selection process.
- I. The Transit Commissions use of a Citizens Advisory Committee to provide input into the process.

Recommendations

- 6. Continue to update the short-range transit plan.
- 7. Formally document the publication of the annual program of projects.
- 8. Include transit planning in the Public Involvement Plan.

Regional Travel Demand Modeling (RTDM) and Land Use Planning

The CRMPO is a partner in the development of a RTDM. The RTDM covers eleven-counties, includes four-MPOs, one-RPO, the NCDOT and SCDOT. The RTDM development process includes an Executive Committee (NCDOT, SCDOT, CRMPO, RFATS & Gaston MPO), an Oversight Committee (technical staff from four-MPOs, RPO, NCDOT, FHWA) and a Model Team (NCDOT and CDOT). This is a new model developed from the ground up. It incorporates the networks taken from the existing CDOT, Gaston, Cabarrus-Rowan, and RFATS models and some of the structure from the existing CDOT model. The CRMPO regularly attends Oversight Committee meetings. Thus far, the process has been extremely successful. The CRMPO along with others in the region are collecting and verifying socio-economic data for development of the RTDM. The CRMPO has had an exhaustive socio-economic data collection process, including the use of local property tax data, Info USA data, Dunn & Bradstreet data, and private consultants. The data is being projected in five-year increments to the LRTPs horizon year, 2030. The entire region has made good

use of experts in the field to assist with the projections and allocations of the data. The model needs to be completed in time to make the conformity determination on the 2030 LRTP, due April 15, 2005.

While the development of the RTDM is progressing, actual model expectations are unclear. The CRMPO is concerned the model will be more useful for large-scale project analysis than on small-medium size projects. The NCDOT explained that the model would have equal utility in all the model coverage area, but would likely be more useful in the future as more localized information is inputted into the model. The NCDOT agreed to share this concern with the oversight committee to ensure that model results were clear for everyone involved.

Noteworthy Practices

- J. The review team is very impressed with the level the coordination that has occurred in the development of the RTDM and collection of data thus far.
- K. Supporting the RTDM process with the allocation of staff time and resources.

Recommendations

- 9. CRMPO is encouraged to continue to work with the RTDM partners to complete the LRTP and RTDM prior to April 15, 2005.

Air Quality Planning

On June 15, 2004, the EPA designated Rowan and Cabarrus County's non-attainment for the 8-hour Ozone Standard. The LRTP and RTDM planning that they are involved in reflects the need to conform to the air quality standards. CRMPO participated in the first Interagency Consultation (IC) meeting for the 8-hour Ozone conformity process. It was a large group of participants and being new to the process the CRMPO found it to be overwhelming, but informative. The level of effort from the agencies participating in development of the RTDM has been very beneficial in getting the area prepared for the upcoming LRTP update and air quality conformity determination. The CRMPO is concerned that with such a large non-attainment area and so many participants that no one is accountable, if the deadline is not met. The CRMPO board will hold its staff accountable, even though they have no control over any of the other participants. The review team encouraged the CRMPO to stay involved in the process and to contact the federal partners if there are any concerns, no matter how small. Additional IC meetings can be arranged when needed to address issues as needed. The CRMPO expressed concern over recent vacancies in several partner agencies and wondered whether that could have an impact on the process. The FHWA is working closely with all the partners to make every attempt to stay ahead of the game and to take into account unforeseen issues. There are no guarantees, but everyone is working towards the same goal of having a conforming LRTP and TIP in place by April 15, 2005. The April 15 2005, date was selected as the target date for the Metrolina area 8-hour

conformity determination because it is the due date for MUMPO's 1-hr conformity determination.

The Charlotte Regional Alliance For Transportation (CRAFT) was formed by the four MPOs to provide a forum for MPO discussions and coordination. CRMPO is a member of CRAFT. The CRMPO chairman is also the chairman of CRAFT. CRAFT has not met consistently over the past year. The CRMPO believes that CRAFT should be more active with current transportation issues, since air quality is an issue that impacts the entire region. The new chairman plans to begin scheduling CRAFT meetings in the very near future.

The CRMPO is involved in the Statewide Interagency Consultation Meetings (SICM). Partners are allowed to call into the meetings, which are always held in Raleigh. The meetings offer MPOs additional information, guidance and an opportunity to ask questions of all the partners and other MPOs throughout the state. The CRMPO finds the SICM meetings useful. The CRMPO was encouraged to continue their participation in the SICM, because it will help keep them in the loop with all the statewide issues. Additional training and guidance will be offered during the summer from EPA and FHWA once the new conformity guidance is published. The first of which is scheduled for July 7 & 8 via video-conference. The EPA is handling all the conference details and will send out additional information as it becomes available. The FHWA will continue to send out training information as well.

The FHWA encouraged the CRMPO to use them as a resource throughout the process, as well as, the interagency consultation team. This will help facilitate a timely completion process for the air quality conformity determination. The review team encouraged the CRMPO to stay involved in the air quality process and to look for opportunities to be involved in the State Implementation Plan (SIP) process, especially since they are a new non-attainment area.

Noteworthy Practices

L. Participating in the air quality conformity process for the first time.

Recommendations

10. Continue to participate in the interagency consultation process.
11. Rely on and use the federal partners as a resource throughout the conformity process to avoid delays.
12. Participate in the SIP development process.
13. Continue to participate in the SICM meetings.

Environmental Justice and Public Involvement

Environmental Justice

The appropriate time to ensure an MPO's compliance with Title VI, and to substantiate the MPO's self-certification, is during the planning certification review. The purpose of this part of the review is to examine the CRMPO's efforts to address environmental justice with regard to transportation impacts resulting from the planning process. Efforts will be examined regarding identification of MLI communities and their needs, identification of benefits and burdens, and effective engagement of MLI citizens in the transportation planning process.

Currently the CRMPO does not have a comprehensive demographic profile. Demographic information has been obtained through the transit planning process but only for the areas served by transit (Concord, Kannapolis, and small portion of Rowan County). The CRMPO staff indicated that, based on their personal knowledge of the planning area, there are currently no planned projects that will negatively impact any MLI communities. It is still imperative, however, that the CRMPO develop demographic information for the entire planning area as required by federal regulations. This information should then be mapped and overlaid onto the CRMPO's map of past, current, and planned projects. It was noted that there currently are no, and have been no, environmental justice complaints against the CRMPO.

With regard to public involvement and outreach, most of the public involvement activities revolve around transit. For example, one of the ways in which the CRMPO engages MLI citizens is through their transit citizen advisory committee. This committee consists of nine citizens and includes minorities and disabled members. No such committee exists for the CRMPO overall.

Additionally, in an effort to engage and meet the needs of the MPO's Hispanic citizenry, all transit information is provided in both Spanish and English. Furthermore, the CRMPO works closely with the Hispanic Learning Center to assist the Hispanic community with transportation issues.

CRMPO staff also advised that they advertise in three newspapers; however, none are minority newspapers, as none exist within the planning area.

The review team believes the CRMPO should develop a written policy regarding Title VI and EJ. The policy can be an element of the Public Involvement Plan (PIP).

Public Involvement

The CRMPO recently reviewed and revised its Public Involvement Plan (PIP). The new plan was adopted after a 45-day public comment period; in which no comments were received. Only the staff, TCC, and TAC were involved in the

actual update of the PIP. The PIP more comprehensively addresses public involvement for the various planning elements and requires additional media outlets. The CRMPO has solicited an outside contractor to develop a stand-alone web site that will also be used as a public involvement tool. Once the web site is created the NCDOT will provide a direct link to it from the NCDOTs web site. The CRMPO is very responsive to the publics request for information and frequently makes presentations to a variety of civic and neighborhood groups. Public participation for general transportation planning is usually low. The CRMPO, as have most other MPOs, admits that citizens are more involved in transportation planning when there is some direct impact from a specific project, than they are for meetings regarding the development of general plans. Additional training regarding public involvement and EJ could help the CRMPO proactively address how to engage all of its citizenry in the planning process.

As mentioned previously, during the development of the transit system the CRMPO addressed neighborhood groups, and MLI populations. For the City's of Concord and Kannapolis MLI communities were identified and that information was used in the formulation of the transit routes.

The CRMPO does not have a process for evaluating the effectiveness of its PIP. A periodic evaluation of the PIP gives the public an opportunity to impact how they are involved in the transportation planning process. The review team believes the CRMPO needs to identify a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the public involvement plan. The public involvement plan should include ways to address MLI communities in the CRMPO planning process.

Noteworthy Practices

M. Updating the Public Involvement Plan to more adequately meet federal regulations.

Recommendations

14. Participate in environmental justice and public involvement training.
15. Identify a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the public involvement plan.
16. With regard to public involvement, develop specific strategies to engage all citizens, especially MLI citizens.
17. Adopt a Title VI/EJ policy for the CRMPO.
18. Develop measures to determine project impacts or service inequities in MLI areas.
19. Plot all past, current and future projects against the identified MLI areas.
20. Develop a demographic profile that includes minority and low-income population (MLI) data for the entire planning area.

Congestion Management and ITS Planning

The CRMPO developed a preliminary Congestion Management System (CMS) outline for the January 2004 submittal deadline. The CRMPO needs to submit the more detailed CMS with their updated LRTP. The CRMPO had hoped to use the new RTDM to assist them in the development of the CMS, but the RTDM will not be available soon enough in the process to be used for that purpose. It was explained that TMAs were encouraged evaluate the current TIP list of projects where construction is not yet authorized. The CRMPO could begin with an evaluation of the TIP first and then move through the LRTP with subsequent updates. The area has a very active emergency congestion management team (ECMT). The team addresses transportation related congestion impacts on the highways with emergency vehicle deployment and traffic management solutions. The CRMPO will contact the ECMT and involve them in the transportation planning process and the development of the CMS.

The CRMPO has not included freight providers in the planning process. Now that the CRMPO has to develop a CMS plan, trucking and rail will likely be considered. A truck study was done two years ago to help determine what routes were being used and the condition of those routes.

Current planning efforts by the CRMPO do not directly address Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) planning. The CRMPO participated with the NCDOT in the development of the State's regional ITS architecture. The City's of Concord, Kannapolis and Salisbury have coordinated traffic signal systems.

Recommendation

21. The CRMPO should adopt a CMS plan and submit it along with the 2030 LRTP.

CRMPO Needs

The CRMPO expressed the following could help them enhance their transportation planning process:

- The CRMPO needs more money, as the amount of federal planning funds received isn't enough to complete the required planning, modeling and air quality conformity activities for an MPO, let alone a TMA.
- The CRMPO would like for the NCDOT to reexamine the equity formula for effectiveness.
- The CRMPO wants FHWA to keep them informed of upcoming training opportunities regarding public involvement and air quality.
- The CRMPO would like for the NCDOT to reexamine how the one-on-one MPO sessions are conducted.
- The CRMPO would like for the NCDOT to clarify model expectations to all the partners.

Public Involvement Meeting/Comments

The public was invited to a special public meeting on Tuesday, June 9, 2004, for the purpose of fulfilling the public involvement portion of the Certification Review. The public notification and meeting participants are attached as Appendix B. One individual attended the public meeting, Ms. Marilyn Barnhardt, who's address is P. O. Box 26339 Charlotte, NC 28221. Ms. Barnhardt is concerned that what the public wants for road projects is not being listened to by the CRMPO, NCDOT or the FHWA. She stated that the citizens of the area have requested the widening of I-85 in Cabarrus County since the mid-eighty's. While I-85 in parts of Rowan County and Mecklenburg County is being widening nothing is being done in Cabarrus County. Other projects that were not as high on the CRMPOs priority list are being built, and no one wanted them, the Westside Bypass is a good example. Ms. Barnhardt believes the CRMPO process is failing the citizens.

Noteworthy Practices

The CRMPO has done a terrific job in a number of its planning responsibilities.

The CRMPO is commended for developing the project priority ranking criteria used for project selection in the LRTP. The ability to weigh candidate projects from different political jurisdictions against each other with a system that is seen as equitable by the policy board is remarkable.

The CRMPO has done a good job of mapping the MLI communities for a portion of the CRMPO planning area, since the 2000 Census data was released. MLI data for the entire planning area is also needed. It should be overlaid on the highway and transit elements of the LRTP. This is the first step to addressing the needs of those populations and to identify any transportation related impacts there might be to those areas as a result of a project.

Recommendations

The Federal Review Team believes the CRMPOs planning process would be greatly enhanced with the implementation of the following recommendations.

- Continue the regional planning efforts.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).
- Continue the annual self-certification process.
- Identify ways to get the freight industry more involved in the transportation planning process.
- Continue to use the LRTP as the project selection document for the TIP.
- Update the short-range transit plan.
- Formally document the publication of the annual program of projects.
- Include transit planning in the PIP.

- Continue to work with the RTDM partners to complete the LRTP and RTDM prior to April 15, 2005.
- Continue to participate in the interagency consultation process.
- Rely on and use the federal partners as a resource throughout the conformity process to help avoid delays.
- Participate in the SIP development process.
- Continue to participate in the SICM meetings.
- Participate in environmental justice and public involvement training.
- Identify a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the public involvement process.
- With regard to public involvement, develop specific strategies to engage all citizens, especially MLI citizens.
- Adopt a Title VI/EJ policy for the CRMPO.
- Develop measures to determine project impacts or service inequities in MLI areas.
- Plot all past, current and future projects against the identified MLI areas.
- Develop a demographic profile that includes minority and low-income population (MLI) data for the entire planning area.
- Develop and adopt the CMS with the 2030 LRTP.

Certification

The Federal Review Team, consisting of staff from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration, issues this certification. The Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization is certified for three years from the date of this report.

APPENDIX A

Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization Certification Review Agenda

Agenda

Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization Certification Review

June 9, 2004
City of Concord
Annex Building

Agenda topics

8:30-8:45	Welcome and Introductions	Federal Team
8:45-9:15	Certification Overview, Review of Schedule and General Discussion	Federal Team
9:15-10:15	MPO Overview/Update - Metropolitan Area Boundary/MOU/Voting Structure	MPO
10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-11:30	MPO/NCDOT Coordination Agreements/Contracts	Bill Marley
11:30-1:00	Lunch – On your own	
1:00-2:00	UPWP	Bill Marley
2:00-3:00	LRTP/Financial Planning	Loretta Barren
3:00-3:45	MTIP/STIP	Loretta Barren
3:45	Quick Wrap-up-Day 1 Prepare for 4:30 Public Involvement Meeting	Loretta Barren

Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization Certification Review

**June 10, 2004
City of Concord
Annex Building**

Day 2

8:30-9:30	Public Involvement	Loretta Barren
9:30-10:45	Transit Planning	Alex McNeil
10:45-11:00	Break	
11:00-11:45	Regional Coordination Modeling/CRAFT	Loretta Barren
11:45-1:00	Lunch	
1:00-2:00	Air Quality	Eddie Dancausse
2:00-3:00	Title VI/EJ/ADA	Lynise DeVance
3:00-3:15	Break	
3:15-5:00	Other Emphasis Areas - CMS / ITS / Safety / Bike/Pedestrian	Loretta Barren

**Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan
Planning Organization
Certification Review**

**June 11, 2004
City of Concord
Annex Building**

Day 3

8:30-9:30

Review Team Meeting

9:30-10:30

Presentation of Review Teams Preliminary
Findings and Discussion

Loretta Barren

APPENDIX B

Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization Certification Review Public Meeting Notice

Public comments are strongly encouraged for a triennial review of planning activities and procedures of the Cabarrus-Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The MPO is comprised of representatives from local governments in Rowan and Cabarrus Counties, is part of a federal process to conduct transportation planning in urbanized areas. Every three years, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration conducts a certification review to determine whether the MPO follows a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process.

Public comments for the review are scheduled for:

4:00 pm, Wednesday, June 9th, in the Council Chambers of the City of Concord located at 26 Union Street in Concord. For more information or if you are a person with disabilities in need of special provisions to attend this meeting (requires at least 48 hours notice), contact the Metropolitan Planning Organization at (704) 795-7528.

Written comments on the planning process will also be accepted until June 25, 2004. Comments may be submitted to Phil Conrad, Cabarrus-Rowan MPO, 135 Cabarrus Avenue, East Suite 101, Concord, NC 28025, or by email to pconrad@mblsolution.com.

APPENDIX C

**Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization
Certification Review Materials**