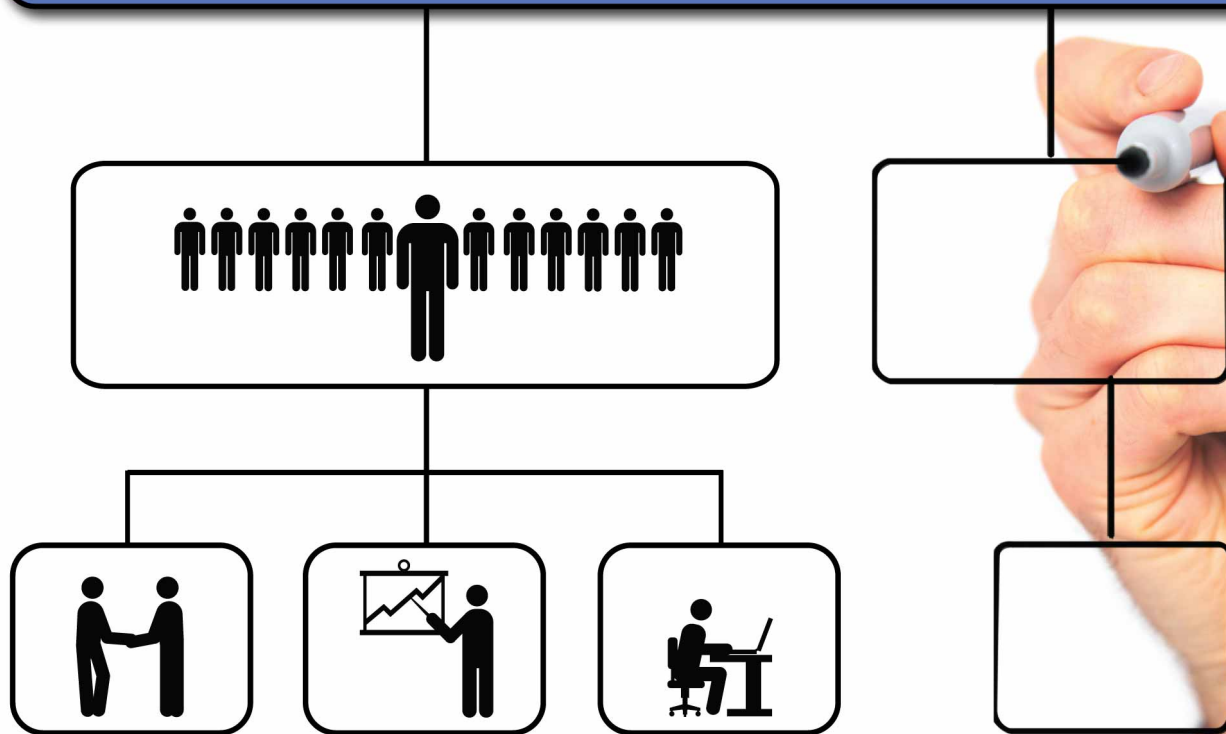


Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations



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Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations



Prepared by:

Alexander Bond
Jeff Kramer
Karen Seggerman

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Executive Summary

MPOs were formed and structured to accomplish the prevailing planning tasks of the late 20th century. Recent federal legislation and regulations coupled with technology improvements have increased the complexity of MPO activities, requiring increased planning capacity and resources. Identifying effective strategies for maximizing planning capacity and organizational efficiency has become a challenge for MPOs across the country.

This research report documents how MPOs have structured their organizations and allocated staff resources. MPO organizational structure includes administrative information like governance, host agency relationships, budgeting, and work planning. The report also addresses staffing arrangements, technical skills, use of consultant labor, and employee retention. Effective and unique practices are documented through case studies interspersed in the report. The intent of this research is to help MPO leaders evaluate their staffing and organizational structures in light of their current and anticipated responsibilities, budget and policy environment.

The information contained in the report was gained through a national survey of MPOs, plus follow-up case study research. The survey gained a 35.5 percent response rate, with 133 MPOs participating. Ten participating MPOs were selected for follow-up case study research, which are interspersed throughout the research report.

The report is organized into six stand-alone chapters which are organized as follows:

Chapter 1 contains introductory material and details about the project purpose and methodology.

Chapter 2 discusses issues of MPO governance, including board size, board composition, voting systems, advisory committees, state statutes, and formal inter-MPO collaboration. Important information presented in Chapter 2 includes:

- MPO governing boards range from five to seventy-three seats, with a median of fourteen seats. The median increases as the MPO planning area and population grows.
- Municipal elected officials have the most seats on the typical MPO board, followed by county commissioners and state DOT representatives. Relatively few MPO boards allocate voting seats to representatives of independent modal authorities (transit, toll, port, etc.).
- Few (13%) MPOs have a voting system where each member's vote is not equal, often known as a "weighted" voting system. To strike a political balance, additional seats are often apportioned to larger jurisdictions, with each member having a single (unweighted) vote.

Chapter 3 discusses the organizational structure of MPOs. Approximately 69 percent of MPOs are "hosted" by another agency—an MPO that has another public organization that acts as its fiscal agent and/or holds hiring and firing authority over MPO employees. The remaining 31 percent exist as "independent" agencies. Responses to survey questions, narrative comments, and case studies indicate that instead of forming two groups, MPOs appear in an array of different organizational structures. Some specific findings in Chapter 3 include:

- About 20 percent of all MPOs are hosted at a county government, and another 20 percent are hosted by a municipal government. Taken together, MPOs hosted by local governments are the most common type of MPO in operation today.
- Being hosted provides a variety of benefits, including lower cost of operations, opportunities for cross-disciplinary cooperation, and fiscal stability.
- Many MPOs have difficulty raising local funds to match federal planning assistance or securing operating capital (termed ‘capital float’) in order to exist independently.
- Hosted MPOs pay an average 23.8 percent indirect rate to their host agency. These funds secure a variety of necessary goods and services such as rent, shared administrative employees, employee benefits, fleet vehicles, and computer hardware/software.

Chapter 4 discusses the staffing levels, strategies, and specialization of MPOs. The size of an MPO’s staff is highly dependent on the population of the planning area, but the most populous MPOs exhibited disproportionately large numbers of employees. The median MPO has six staff members, with a quarter of MPOs having fewer than three. MPOs do not tend to exhibit staff specialization until the number of employees increases to around eight. Other findings in Chapter 4 include:

- Nationally, the survey shows one staff member per 47,963 people in the planning area.
- An estimated 4,100 people work at MPOs nationwide
- Over 60 percent of all MPO staff time is spent on public involvement, committee management, or MPO administrative tasks.

Chapter 5 describes the internal funding of MPOs. This chapter discusses work programs, funding sources, expenditures, and consultant contracts. MPOs report four federal funding sources: FHWA Planning (PL) funds, FTA Metropolitan Transit Planning (5303) funds, flexed Surface Transportation Program – Urban Allocation (STP), and flexed Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program (CMAQ). State and local governments also provide substantial support for MPOs. Fifty-four percent of MPOs (representing 29 states) receive state government funds or in-kind support. Seventy-eight percent of MPOs receive local planning funds. Difficulty raising the required local match was cited by several MPOs. Other MPOs discussed the importance of local funds in supplying “capital float”—on hand funds to meet financial obligations in advance of receiving reimbursement from federal sources. Some specific findings in Chapter 5 include:

- About 49 percent of MPO reported that federal sources are sufficient to complete the required 3-C planning and programming process.
- Local and state funds pay for non-core transportation studies at 59 percent of MPOs.
- The average MPO spends 25 percent of its UPWP budget on consultants.

Chapter 6 discusses a number of workforce development aspects of MPOs. MPO staff members were divided into directors, senior managers, professional employees, and administrative employees. MPOs seem to be adding staff, with 44 percent reporting the creation of a new position over the last two years. MPOs experience 12.5 percent annual employee turnover, although smaller MPOs can experience up to 20 percent turnover. Employees depart for a variety of positions. About 30 percent of

departed MPO employees leave the transportation sector altogether. Consulting firms hire another 26 percent. Pay scales for a variety of position types were collected and reported in Chapter 6 and Appendix C. Some specific findings in Chapter 6 include:

- MPO directors have spent an average of 8.5 years in their current position, with directors in larger metropolitan areas holding longer tenure.
- Almost 30 percent of MPO directors expect to retire within the next five years.
- Pay scales for MPO directors indicate earnings between \$78,000 and \$103,000 per year. Directors at MPOs in larger metropolitan areas earn more money on average than their counterparts in smaller metropolitan areas.

MPO legislation is extremely flexible. The past four decades have seen an ever-widening array of MPO organizational structures. No one type is inherently better than the other—local political demands, historical context, and current transportation needs have dictated how each individual MPO has been formed and administered.

Regions grow and change over time, as cycles of residents, industries, economies, and cultures ebb and flow. The size and influence of member local governments also changes over time. Organizations change too, as careers progress, leaders depart, and technology advances. The intent of this research is to help MPO leaders evaluate their staffing and organizational structure relative to their peers. It will be particularly useful to leaders and stakeholders at MPOs that are establishing a new MPO, facing major organizational changes, or seeking to establish organizational performance benchmarks.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The federal government allocates nearly \$400 million annually for transportation planning within the nation's 385 metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs); state and local governments supplement this funding by at least \$100 million annually.¹ Federal, state, and local governments also expend substantial manpower working with MPOs. The magnitude of resources devoted to metropolitan transportation planning emphasizes the importance of understanding MPOs and their planning activities.

MPOs were formed and structured to accomplish the prevailing planning tasks of the late 20th century. Recent federal legislation and regulations coupled with technology improvements have increased the complexity of MPO activities, requiring increased planning capacity and resources. Identifying effective strategies for maximizing planning capacity and organizational efficiency has become a challenge for MPOs across the country.

Because the federal government interacts with MPOs through Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Divisions and Federal Transit Agency (FTA) Regions, information is rarely amalgamated at the national level. The FHWA Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty maintains a database of MPOs that has historically served as the sole source of nationwide information; however, it contains little information regarding MPO staffing and organization.² Non-governmental sources of MPO information are fractured or not available to the public.

The literature is replete with examples of planning practice and policy measures spearheaded by MPOs; however, national research has not addressed MPO staffing and organizational structures.³ Nor do the few resources available to assist MPO leadership address organizational structure and staffing in any detail.^{4 5}

A handful of reports include case studies that specifically address MPO staffing and organizational structure.^{6 7} Regardless, individual case studies do not provide enough information to establish useful national guidance or to fully analyze one's own organization. This information gap has left MPOs unable to find best practices to emulate on staffing, division of work tasks, and organizational structure. In the absence of clear guidance, an MPO's senior management often must operate based on anecdotal information of how other MPOs operate. This can be compounded by interacting only with directors

¹ A history and definition of metropolitan planning organizations is provided in Appendix A.

² <http://www.planning.dot.gov/mpo.asp>

³ This lack of information was a topic of discussion at The Metropolitan Planning Organization, Present and Future conference sponsored by the Transportation Research Board (TRB), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in August 2006.

⁴ Peter Plumeau, et al. *Noteworthy MPO Practices in Transportation-Land Use Planning Integration*. Washington, DC: Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. 2004.

⁵ Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration Planning Capacity Building Program, "Peer Exchange Report: Best Practices for Small and Medium Sized Metropolitan Planning Organizations." 2004. Available from:

⁶ The FHWA/FTA Planning Capacity Building Program maintains a website that has several individual case studies available for download: <http://www.planning.dot.gov/resourceSearch.asp>

⁷ Jeff Kramer and Christina Hopes, *Models for Independence: Structures of Independent Metropolitan Planning Organizations in Florida*. Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies No. 1997. 2007.

from a particular state or those who choose to participate in national organizations. In addition, staffing can be a challenge given that many staff positions require specialized knowledge, skills, or certifications—an issue often discussed at MPO related conference and meetings, including a National MPO Peer Exchange sponsored by TRB in 2003.

This research documents how MPOs nationwide have structured their organizations and allocated staff resources and expertise. MPO organizational structure includes administrative information like governance, host agency relationships, budgeting, and work planning. The report also addresses staffing arrangements, technical skills, use of consultant labor, and employee retention. Effective and unique practices are documented through case studies interspersed in the report. The intent of this research is to help MPO leaders evaluate their staffing and organizational structure. It will be particularly useful to leaders at MPOs that are:

- establishing a new MPO for a new census-designated urbanized area;
- facing major boundary and intergovernmental political changes following a Census;
- considering a closer relationship with another MPO, including consolidation;
- facing increased planning tasks due to passing the TMA threshold or falling into air quality non-attainment;
- seeking new and innovative ideas on management, staffing, and employee compensation; or
- establishing organizational benchmarks or performance measures.

This report will also be useful to MPO partners, such as state transportation agencies, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, toll authorities, and local governments. Agencies may be able to identify areas where their relationship with MPOs can change, including the elimination of duplicative work or collaboration on planning tasks.

Research Methodology

The core of the project was obtained from a national survey of metropolitan planning organizations. The survey consisted of 61 to 72 questions, depending on each MPO's characteristics. Most questions left the opportunity for the respondent to explain an answer in narrative format. The survey instrument could be partially completed, saved and returned to at a later time. This allowed respondents to consult with colleagues or retrieve needed materials.

The survey was collected entirely online using LimeSurvey, which is an open source, server-side, PHP data collection tool. A dedicated website (www.mposurvey.com) was established for this study and all publicity materials directed users to the website. Visitors supplied information to a custom-built tool that created a unique identifier for the MPO, allowing existing information from FHWA to be incorporated into the final dataset while maintaining respondent anonymity.

The research team drafted questions based on a review of MPO literature, experience with MPO practice, and consultation with MPO experts. Draft survey questions were circulated for comment to the Federal Highway Administration, the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the

National Association of Regional Councils, the American Planning Association, and the Transportation Research Board Committee on Metropolitan Policy, Planning, and Processes. After a complete set of questions was drafted, a group of five MPO directors were recruited to beta test the survey for design, content, and biased terminology.

The survey data collection phase lasted from March 30th to May 27th, 2009. Respondents were recruited through several venues. The most effective method was through direct email appeal. Passive notice of the survey was publicized in newsletters and in person at meetings of the following organizations:

- Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- National Association of Regional Councils
- American Planning Association Transportation Planning Division
- American Planning Association Regional and Intergovernmental Planning Division
- Transportation Research Board Committee on Metropolitan Policy, Planning, and Processes
- National Association of Development Organizations

Direct solicitation was important to increasing response rates. State MPO association leaders were contacted and asked to encourage fellow members to participate. The research team also telephoned MPOs directly to ask for their participation.

Participation

The rate of participation in the survey yielded a robust data set. A total of 133 complete responses were received, representing a 35.5 percent response rate. Table 1-1 illustrates response rates for five classes of MPOs. These classes, although uneven in size, are important cutoffs for MPO structure and policymaking. These classes are based on 2000 Census data and are used for analysis throughout the report.

Table 1-1 Survey Participation by MPO Population Classification

Population Class	MPOs Eligible for Survey	Number Participating	Percent Participation
50,000-100,000	95	31	32.6%
100,000 to 200,000	96	29	30.2%
200,000 to 500,000	96	37	38.5%
500,000 to 1 million	43	13	30.2%
1 million or more	44	23	52.2%
Total	374	133	35.5%

The duties of an MPO change somewhat if it lies within an airshed that is found to be in non-attainment or maintenance status under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards as set by the Clean Air Act of 1990. Respondents were asked their NAAQS status, and the results are shown in Table 1-2.

Participation rates seem to be in line with the number of non-attainment airsheds, although direct comparison is difficult because the geography of analysis is different.

Table 1-2 NAAQS Status of Respondents

NAAQS Status	Frequency	Percent
Attainment	75	56.4%
Non-Attainment	39	29.3%
Maintenance	19	14.3%
Total	133	35.5%

The collection methodology and the nature of MPOs introduced several potential sampling biases to the survey. Survey participants were recruited by popularizing the survey through email lists, newsletters, and websites related to transportation planning and MPOs. As a result, the survey results may be biased toward MPOs that participate in such organizations.

The survey results may also be biased toward certain states, due to active promotion by several prominent MPO leaders. The survey experienced disproportionately high rates of participation in Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Texas, and Washington. Figure 1-1 shows a map of participating MPOs. Responses were received from 41 states, and many states are underrepresented.

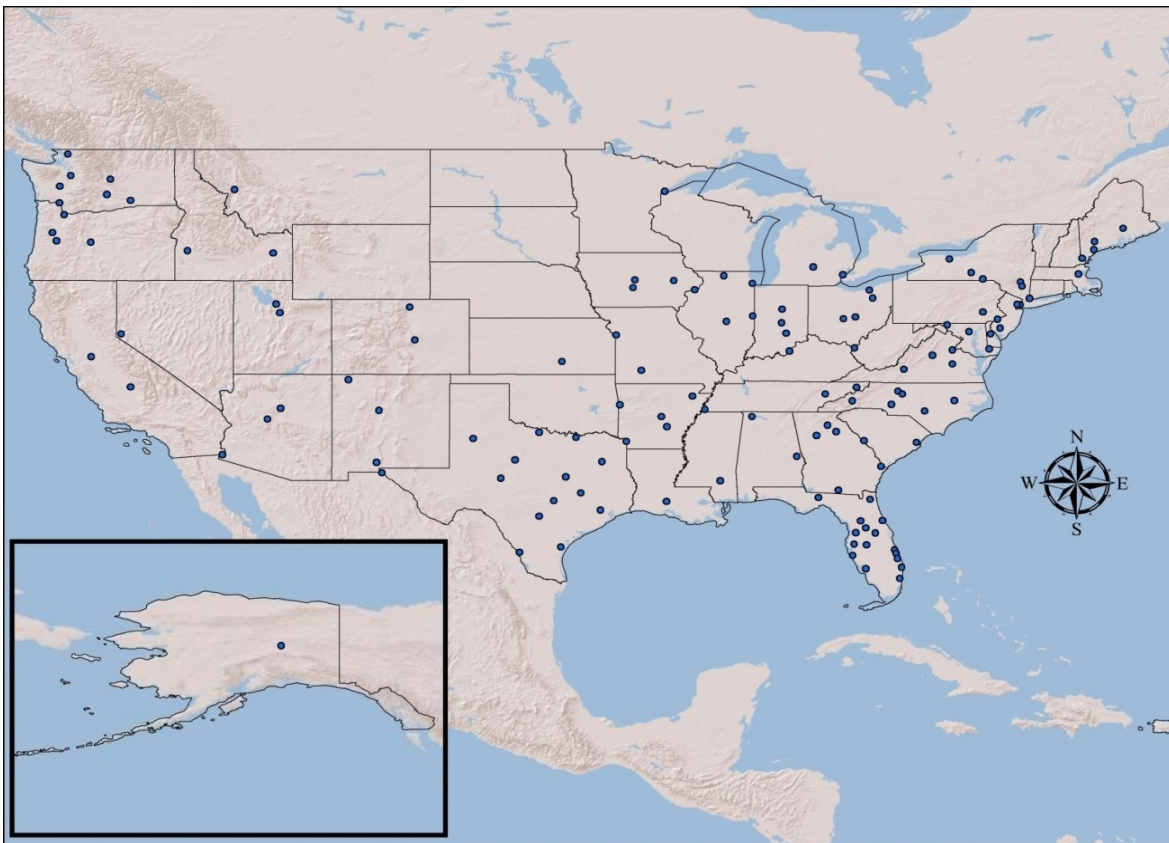


Figure 1-1 Map of participating MPOs.

None of the potential sampling biases outweigh the high level of participation in the survey. The survey qualifies as a valid sample of MPOs in the United States, and for scalar data has a margin of error of +/- 6.83 percent.

Eligibility

There are 385 MPOs operating in the United States, but only 374 were eligible to take the survey. Eleven MPOs could not be surveyed using the instrument developed by the research team due to data inconsistency issues. The ineligible agencies had more than one MPO being operated by a single host agency. Responses for these MPOs could not be compared to other MPOs because of blended staff and administrative resources. For example, an agency from the excluded group may report there are eight employees working for an organization which performs planning for three MPO boards. It is not accurate for the research team to consider there to be 2.6 employees per MPO, nor is it accurate to assume there are eight employees at each of the three MPOs.

Even though these MPOs could not participate in the survey, they are an important class of MPOs for practitioners to understand. For this reason, one such agency—the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission—was selected as one of the case studies in Chapter 3 of this report. The agencies excluded from the survey were:

- [West Florida Regional Planning Council](#): Host of the Florida-Alabama TPO (Pensacola), the Okaloosa-Walton TPO (Destin), and the Bay County TPO (Panama City)
- [East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission](#): Host of the Appleton/Fox Cities MPO, the Fond du Lac MPO, and the Oshkosh MPO
- [Spokane \(WA\) Regional Transportation Council](#): Operates an MPO of the same name, and operates the Kootenai County MPO (Coeur d'Alene, ID) under contract
- [Puerto Rico Department of Transportation and Public Works](#): Operates the Aguadilla MPO, San Juan MPO, and the Urbanized Areas of Puerto Rico MPO

Case Studies

Follow-up case studies were performed on ten agencies. MPOs were chosen based on geographic dispersion, MPO planning area population, air quality conformity status, and agency hosting characteristics. In order to be considered for a case study, the MPO must have completed the survey. The lone exception is the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, which was selected because it is representative of a class of MPOs unable to be surveyed. Information for the case studies was gained from telephone interviews, examination of survey responses, internet research, and review of agency documents—particularly the Unified Planning Work Program. The locations of case studies documented in this report are shown on Figure 1-2.



Figure 1-2 Map of MPO Case Studies

Organization of the Report

The report is organized into six chapters, including this introduction (Chapter 1), MPO governance (Chapter 2), administrative structure (Chapter 3), employment (Chapter 4), funding (Chapter 5), and workforce issues (Chapter 6). Appropriate background information is included in each chapter to help the reader understand the concepts introduced and associated survey responses. Numerical data are blended with narrative comments and background information to form observations and findings. Case studies are interspersed throughout the document. Often, the case study is placed near subject matter where the MPO's experience has been unique or illustrative. A series of appendices contain useful information, such as MPO history and background (Appendix A), frequently asked questions regarding staffing strategies and organizational characteristics of newly-designated MPOs (Appendix B), and detailed salary information (Appendix C).

Chapter 2: Governance of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

All responding MPOs reported having a governing board that sets policy for the transportation planning process in that region. United States Code Chapter 23 § 134(D)2 requires that all MPOs operating in a transportation management area (TMA) to be governed by a board consisting of local elected officials, representatives of agencies that operate alternative modes of transportation, and relevant state officials. Actual board composition is not set by federal law or regulation. Federal law is also silent on non-voting board membership, the constitution of advisory committees, and voting rights of board members. MPO governing boards are free to adopt bylaws regulating all of these topics.

The number of seats on each MPO governing board is established during the designation of a newly-formed MPO. After the initial designation, each MPO is free to adopt bylaws that dictate the number of seats and voting rights on the governing board. Federal regulations require a new designation process if the number of seats will change substantially. MPOs commonly revisit the governing board seat allocation after the results of each decennial census are released, although this is usually just a review of bylaws, not a formal designation process. State statute guides MPO board composition in at least nine states, and in those cases MPO bylaws must conform to the statute in that state.

The survey contained approximately 10 questions relating to MPO governance to gain further insight into these issues. MPOs were asked to report the number of voting governing board seats by constituency. The 133 MPOs who responded have 2,142 total board seats. Extrapolating the data indicates there are approximately 6,200 voting seats on MPO boards nationwide. Table 2-1 illustrates measures of central tendency including the mean (average value) number of board members at 16.1, the median (middle value) at 14, and the mode (value that occurs most often) at 9. Because the mean is higher than the other measures of central tendency, the presence of several high outliers is indicated. High outliers were generally reported by MPOs hosted by regional councils, where the board governed both the MPO and the regional council operations.

Table 2-1 MPO Voting Governing Board Seats: Measures of Central Tendency

Mean	16.1
Median	14
Mode	9

Survey responses indicate wide variation in governing board size. The smallest boards have only five members, while the largest in this sample has seventy-three members. When ranked from largest to smallest, the top quarter have 19 or more members while the bottom quarter have eight or fewer members. Board size varies in relation to the population of the MPO. MPOs with fewer than 100,000 people in their planning area have a mean number of 9 board members, while agencies with more than 1 million people have a mean number of 25 board members. Figure 2-1 illustrates the increase in board size as MPO area populations grow. This is an expected result from the addition of new planning area territory, after which the board must be expanded to include new local government representatives.

Although a variety of people serve on MPO governing boards, the vast majority of seats belong to local elected officials—the first eligible category in federal law. Table 2-2 summarizes the frequency and allocation of MPO board seats. Municipal elected officials (mayors, council members, or alderman) are the dominant participants in the MPO process, given that they serve on 94 percent of all MPOs in the survey and hold nearly 7 seats on average. County commissioners (e.g., council member, selectman, or supervisor) are also a significant presence on MPOs, as they are found on 81.2 percent of MPO boards

and hold an average of 2.9 seats per MPO. Seats that are not reserved, vacant at the time of the survey, rotate among different types of government, or are otherwise not defined represent an average 1.7 seats per MPO. Countywide elected officials, defined as individuals holding executive positions, such as a county executive, sheriff, property appraiser, or county judge, have a seat on 30.1 percent of the MPOs with an average of just under 1 seat per MPO.

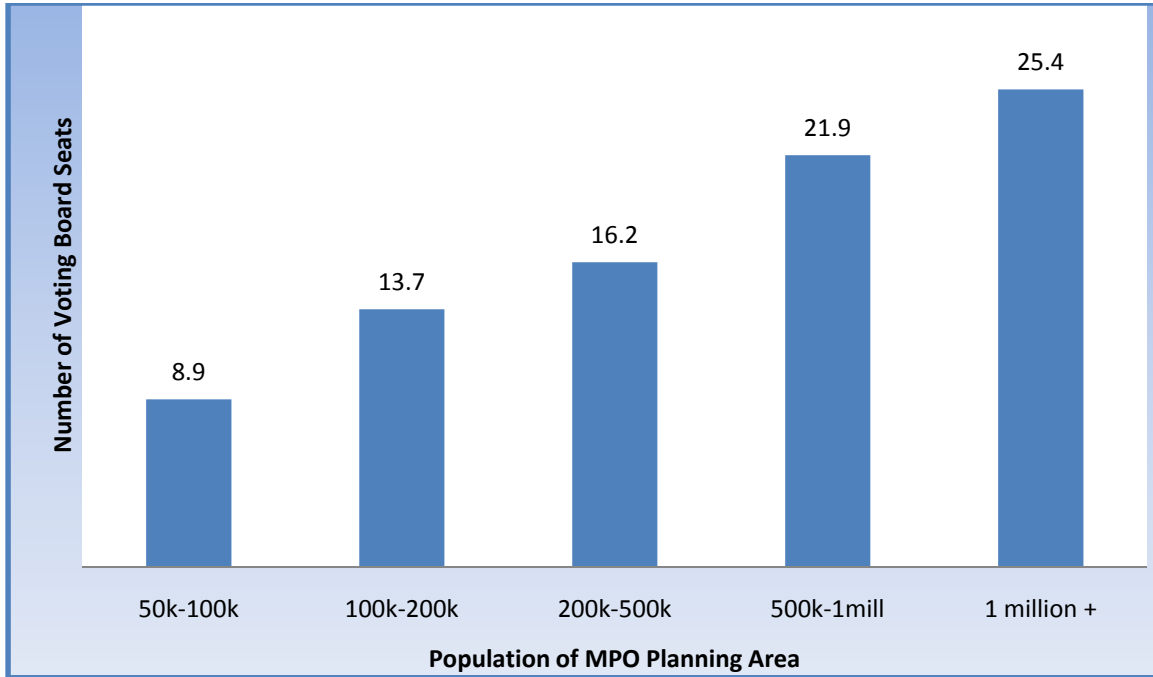


Figure 2-1 Membership size of MPO Governing Boards by population group.

Table 2-2 MPO Governing Board Seat Allocation and Frequency

Seat Type	Percent with this Seat Type	Average Number of Seats
Municipal Elected Officials	94.0%	6.8
County Commissioners	81.2%	2.9
State DOT	64.7%	0.9
Public Transit Agency	45.1%	0.6
Not Reserved	39.1%	1.7
Countywide Elected Official	30.1%	0.9
Regional Council	19.5%	0.2
Gubernatorial Appointee	17.3%	0.3
Aviation Authority	13.5%	0.2
Seaport Authority	12.0%	0.2
Private Sector	9.0%	0.3
Toll Authority	9.0%	0.1
School Board	6.8%	0.1
Tribal Government	6.0%	0.2
College or University	5.3%	0.1
Military Installation	3.0%	<0.1

Federal law states that “appropriate state officials” should serve on the MPO governing board. State officials serving on boards are one of two types: state department of transportation (DOT) officials and gubernatorial appointees. State DOT officials are the third most common board member category—nearly 65 percent of MPO boards have a voting representative from their state DOT. Gubernatorial appointees to MPO boards are relatively rare. Only 17 percent of MPOs have one on their board, and in some cases the appointee is a career service employee of the state DOT who is selected by the governor to serve.

Modal transportation agencies are eligible to serve on MPO boards according to Federal law, but make up only a small proportion of actual board members. Public transportation agencies are the most common modal agency and are represented on forty-five percent of MPO boards. Seaport or aviation authorities are represented on 10 percent of MPO boards; toll authorities are represented on a handful of MPO boards (9%). Several respondents reported that modal agencies in their planning area are owned and operated by a municipal or county government and therefore the agency is not granted an additional seat, since it is considered to be represented by the corresponding local elected officials. There are isolated examples of school boards, tribal governments, colleges or universities, private sector representatives, and military installations serving on MPO boards.

Figure 2-2 shows the type of seat as a percent of the total number of seats of reporting MPOs. Municipal elected officials occupy 42.2 percent of the board seats, with county commissioners filling another 18.2 percent. The number of elected officials serving on MPO boards may rise to over 80 percent when seats “not reserved” are filled with extra elected officials, and people holding elective office occupy ex-officio modal seats.

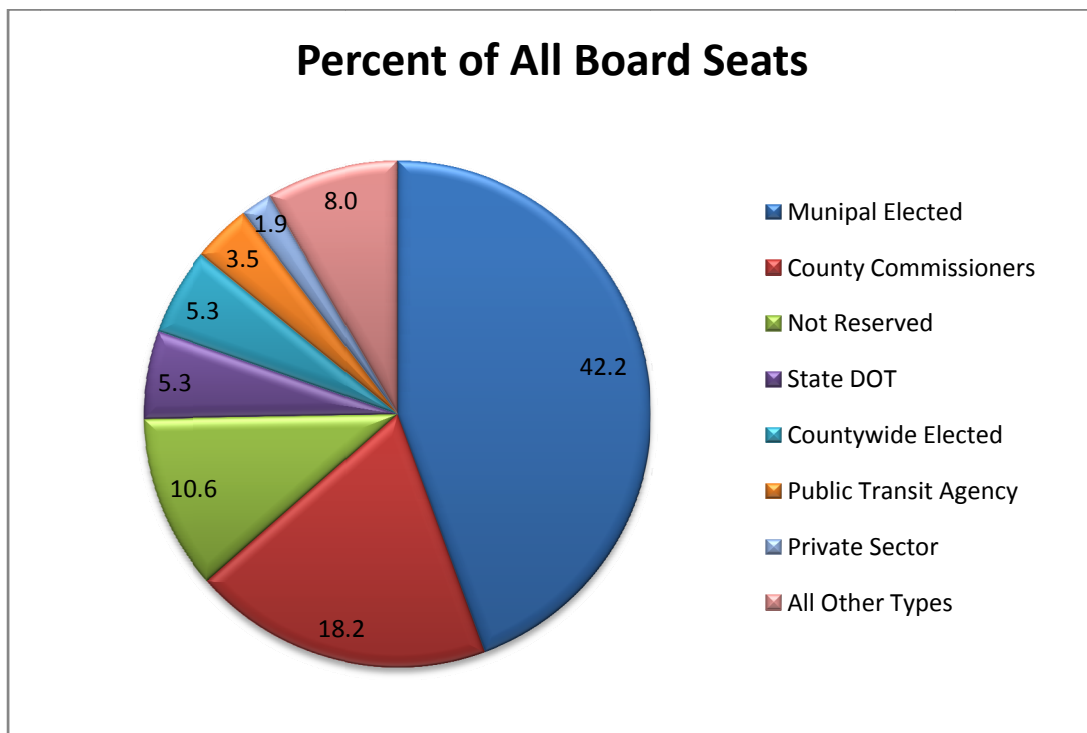


Figure 2-2 Aggregate percent of all reporting MPO board seats.

MPO governing board composition is unique to each urbanized area. Although MPOs must comply with federal statute in establishing their board, state statutes may provide additional guidance for assembling the MPO board. MPOs should understand the breadth of options available to them. For example, areas with many local governments may establish a large board to accommodate adequate local representation, whereas areas with complex transportation issues may desire a board that has seats allocated to modal agencies.

The MPO survey revealed that MPO boards range considerably in size with most having between nine and eighteen members. This is a manageable size for even the smallest staff to administer, while at the same time giving a voice to an appropriately diverse group. Extremely large boards—although impressive in their comprehensiveness—may have the effect of detracting from the staff’s ability to work with individual board members and diluting the value of each member’s time and effort. Conversely, extremely small boards may not be as inclusive in decision-making as federal law intends. Both extremes of MPO governing board size should be avoided unless necessary to maintain intergovernmental political balance.

Voting Rights of Board Members

At some MPOs, intergovernmental politics and demographics lead some board seats to be treated differently than others. Intergovernmental balance is often addressed through seat rotation, allocation of seats, and vote weight.

Many MPOs do not have enough seats on the governing board to allocate at least one to every member local government. One solution to this problem is for certain seats to “rotate” among a subset of member local governments. Among survey respondents, thirty-six of the 133 MPOs (27%) reported at least one seat that rotated among member local governments. Although seat rotation is reported by MPOs of all sizes, the condition is more common in larger MPOs. Seat rotation may become more necessary within larger regions where new areas or municipalities are more likely to be absorbed into the MPO planning area. Table 2-3 shows the number and percent of MPOs in each population group that have at least one seat that rotates among a subset of local governments.

Table 2-3 Governing Board Seat Rotation Frequency

MPO Population Category	Number of MPOs	Percent of Category
50,000-100,000	4	15%
100,000-200,000	5	17%
200,000-500,000	11	42%
500,000-1,000,000	3	23%
1,000,000 or more	13	57%

Some seat rotation arrangements prescribe the office a person must hold to occupy the seat, or limit the length of time that one individual may serve on the MPO board. At one southeastern MPO, a board seat rotates every two years among the mayors of three small barrier island municipalities. Another arrangement allocates a seat to a set of qualified local governments and lets those governments choose their representative. For example, one pacific northwest MPO allocates one seat to the municipal league from an outlying county, and the league is free to install or withdraw an elected official for that seat at any time. Other arrangements are even less formal—an MPO in the Great Plains reported one

seat rotating between two small counties “at their convenience.” Frequently, local governments who are rotated off the board will be assigned a non-voting seat on the MPO board.

The survey showed that some MPOs strive to be inclusive through non-voting and rotating memberships. Non-voting membership allows people not eligible for voting membership to fully participate in board level discussions. Rotating board seats allow the smallest of governments to have their voice heard at the largest of agencies.

Another means for balancing local intergovernmental politics is to establish a weighted voting scheme within the bylaws. There is no requirement for every board member’s vote to count equally. Weighted voting is relatively uncommon—it was reported by only 13.5 percent of MPOs. No correlation appears between agency size and weighted voting. The most common method reported for assigning weight to votes is in accordance with the population of the local government represented by the board member. Several MPOs reported that although the MPO’s bylaws established a weighted voting scheme, it had never been exercised by the governing board.

Weighted voting is a frequently discussed topic in MPO circles.⁸ However, the survey revealed that among respondents, the presence of weighted voting is an exception to the rule rather than the norm. Several MPOs with bylaws permitting weighted voting reported that it had never been used. Proper communication from professional staff, early consideration of board member concerns, and thorough public involvement can minimize divisive votes on the MPO floor. If little or no division exists, the utility of weighted voting is minimal. Further, an MPO with voting seats for state officials or modal agencies will have difficulty designing a weighted voting scheme. This is because it is difficult to assign weight to the votes of members who represent the entire MPO area (such as a state DOT representative), or operate an agency that has no real boundary (such as a port authority or transit agency).

⁸ Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program (TPCB), “Peer Exchange Report: Best Practices for Small and Medium Metropolitan Planning Organizations.” Ft. Smith, AR: April 18-20, 2004. Available from: <http://www.planning.dot.gov/Peer/Arkansas/arkansas.htm>



METROPLAN

Metroplan

Little Rock, AR

Metroplan is a voluntary association of local governments that functions in a similar fashion to a regional council. Although Arkansas has state-mandated regional planning and development districts—including one around Little Rock—the private sector and local governments in the area created and charged Metroplan with the 3-C metropolitan planning process and select other regional tasks. Most of Metroplan’s staff is devoted to MPO activities, but projects on air quality, environment, and land use are undertaken on a regular basis. The agency traces its roots to 1955, when a group of business interests and local officials formed the organization to perform long range infrastructure planning. Metroplan was designated the MPO for the Little Rock area after the 1973 Federal Aid Highway Act. It took on its current organizational structure after the passage of ISTEA in 1991.

Although private sector representatives once served on the board of directors, today Metroplan is governed by a 27-member board that includes mostly municipal elected officials. Each dues-paying member local government is entitled to one voting seat. The Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department and the Central Arkansas Transit Authority vote on transportation items only, and are not required to pay dues. Three eligible entities in the planning area choose not to pay dues, and so are afforded a non-voting seat. Dues are currently set at 85 cents per capita. The dues are used to meet the required local match of federal planning funds. Travel, employee training, equipment and food are always paid for using money collected as dues. This avoids potential violations of rules concerning use of federal funds.

Each local government has an equal vote on MPO issues. In the past, some large local governments had raised concerns about a perceived power imbalance. To remedy the situation, Metroplan’s bylaws allow for a vote to be tabulated under a weighted voting system. During a regular business meeting, votes are tabulated on a one seat/one vote basis. However, at any time, a member of the Board can call for a weighted vote. If a weighted vote is called, each member receives the number of weighted votes equal to their percent of the population of all members, except each member has at least one whole vote. The maximum number of votes shifts from 27 to 111. To prevail, a weighted vote must carry 57 votes from a

Hosting Arrangement:	Freestanding Independent
2008 Population:	542,577
Planning Area Square Mileage	1,603
Establishment date	1973
UZAs in Planning Area	2
Air Quality Attainment Status	Non-Attainment
Total Employees	15
Part-time Employees	0
Director Tenure	22 years
Voting Members of the Governing Board	27
Non-voting Members of Governing Board	3
UPWP Annual Dollar Amount	\$2,507,000
Percent of UPWP Spent on Consultants	27.4%
Percent of UPWP Shown for Informational Purposes	0%

minimum of three members. Every local government is guaranteed one vote, as is the Highway Department and the transit provider. The option to request a weighted vote has been in place for 18 years, but has never been exercised.

The governing board has delegated substantial authority to a 45-member "Transportation Advisory Council." The Council is charged by the Board of Directors to draft the long range transportation plan. The Council also oversees all of Metroplan's public involvement activities. Although the Board of Directors retains the final authority, the Transportation Advisory Council functions as an active—and influential—Citizens Advisory Committee. The Council has thirty seats appointed by the Board of Directors. The remaining fifteen are recommended by Metroplan staff to fill gaps in representation. The full Council meets regularly, but delegates some work to subcommittees. Subcommittees include a) Land Use, Urban Development, and the Environment; b) Roadways, Systems Management, and Goods Movement; and c) Transit and Non-Motorized Modes. The Council's purpose is to directly involve a variety of stakeholder representatives, such as:

- The airport
- Chambers of Commerce
- The river port
- Railroad and trucking companies
- Environmental groups
- The transportation disadvantaged , including the disabled
- Bicycle and pedestrian interests

Date Collected

March 2010

Non-Voting Board Membership

Non-voting board members may be advantageous to MPO operations. Non-voting members allow for the inclusion of people not qualified for full membership in MPO discussions and communications. Since they have no vote, they do not detract from local control of the process. Eighty-four of the 133 MPOs (63%) responding to the survey reported having non-voting members on their board. Among MPOs that have at least one non-voting member, the mean number of seats is five. The presence of non-voting members is spread evenly across MPOs, but there tends to be more non-voting seats on larger MPO boards.

Several dozen MPOs reported municipal and county elected officials serving as non-voting members. These officials often represented small jurisdictions that do not qualify for an apportioned voting board seat. In other cases, the elected officials were from jurisdictions that lie outside the planning area boundary, sometimes including jurisdictions in neighboring states.

Many MPOs grant the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Division and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Region a non-voting seat on the board. Federal officers are excluded from voting membership on the MPO, but representation by FHWA and FTA ensures that the MPO proceedings are meeting federal expectations. Another frequently reported non-voting member is the chair of the MPO's citizens advisory committee (discussed later in this chapter). Some MPOs also include minor transit operators (such as paratransit operators) as non-voting members.

Examples of non-voting board members included:

- State legislators
- Chamber of Commerce representatives
- Chairs of adjacent MPOs
- Appointed city and county managers
- Career-service planning department directors
- Neighboring state DOT representatives
- Canadian and Mexican consular officers
- Rural transportation planning organization representatives
- State Department of Environmental Protection representatives
- State or regional elderly service agency representatives
- Chairs of MPO advisory committees (freight, air quality, bike/ped, etc)
- Chairs of the region's ridesharing/carpool agency
- School board representatives
- Seaport and airport authority representatives

Advisory Committees

Advisory committees can play an important role in drafting MPO products and providing advice to decision-makers at the governing board level. Unlike non-voting board members, advisory committee members are not entitled to participate in the governing board meeting. Advisory committee members provide recommendations to the MPO governing board, help direct staff members, review proposed documents, and serve as liaisons with other agencies and the general public on MPO-related issues.

Typically an advisory committee has a chair and meets in person on a semi-regular basis. Advisory committees are not mentioned in federal law, but are sometimes required by state law. The frequency of MPO advisory committees is shown in Table 2-4.

Table 2-4 MPO Advisory Committee Frequency

Type of Committee	Total	Percent of MPOs
All Respondents	133	--
Technical Advisory	121	91%
Bicycle and Pedestrian	59	44%
Citizens Advisory	54	41%
Transit	32	24%
Transportation Disadvantaged	29	22%
Air Quality	27	20%
Congestion Management	25	19%
Land Use	13	10%
Freight	12	9%
Corridor Management	9	7%
Water	8	6%

Over 91 percent of the MPOs maintain a technical advisory committee (sometimes dubbed TAC), which is usually comprised of career-service employees of member local governments and modal agencies. A TAC and its members can help board members understand complex planning methodologies and decipher MPO documents regarding their impact on each member’s constituents. A strong TAC can provide leadership to MPO staff. Further, TACs can help facilitate the flow of local information to MPO professional staff.

Other types of advisory committees are less common. Less than 45 percent of survey respondents reported maintaining other advisory committees. Citizen advisory committees (CACs) are found within 41 percent of MPOs. CACs are composed of non-expert citizens, often appointed by elected officials or through an application process administered by the MPO. These committees are useful for collecting public input. They also assist board members in gauging the popularity of MPO proposals and plans. Similarly, transportation disadvantaged advisory committees are found within about one-fifth of MPOs.

Some MPOs have advisory committees devoted to one mode of transportation. A substantial number of MPOs (44%) maintain a bicycle and pedestrian advisory committee. This committee is often charged with guiding or even approving the bicycle and pedestrian elements of all MPO documents. Transit committees help guide the transit planning process within the MPO planning structure, and are found at about a quarter of MPOs. Bicycle/pedestrian, transit, and transportation disadvantaged advisory committees are reported more often by large MPOs presumably because these modes tend to be more developed. Several MPOs reported forming ad-hoc committees to deal with specific issues, direct cyclical documents (such as the long range transportation plan), or to study an issue, such as for a corridor study.

With the sole exception of technical advisory committees, advisory groups are not common among reporting MPOs. Many MPOs supporting advisory committees reported the value of receiving input through such a forum. MPOs have long-struggled to involve the public in their activities,⁹ yet less than one-half of the MPOs responding have a citizens advisory committee. Forming a CAC is a way to incorporate public input into the transportation planning process—and to communicate in the opposite direction.

Specific-issue committees are even less frequently encountered. Such committees can help bring important issues to the MPO's attention and can be a source for ideas in solving problems. Freight and land use are prominent issues today, yet were reported in ten percent or fewer responding MPOs. Freight and goods movement, specifically mentioned in the SAFETEA-LU planning factors, requires close coordination with the private sector. Similarly, planning literature strongly suggests a close coordination between land use and transportation. Both freight and land use planning could be advanced through dedicated advisory committees.

Committees dedicated to congestion management or air quality are found in only a fraction of the MPOs that are required to maintain a Congestion Management Process or to conduct an air quality conformity analysis. Given their prominence in federal law, subject areas like transit and transportation for the disadvantaged could be better integrated into the MPO process through an advisory committee process. All of these are important issues that need the attention of stakeholders who want to be a part of the solution. The only subject committee type that appears on a comparatively frequent basis is a bicycle/pedestrian advisory committee. The reason for this is unclear, but other studies have shown that bike/pedestrian planning is at a more advanced stage of integration in MPO plans than transit.¹⁰ Perhaps this is one reason why bike/pedestrian committees are more common.

Board Meeting Frequency

Federal law is silent on how often the MPO board should meet. Instead, individual MPO bylaws govern meeting frequency, although state statute may impose certain restrictions. MPO boards are required by statute and rule to adopt five to seven¹¹ documents—some of which must be updated annually. This establishes a de facto minimum MPO governing board meeting frequency of once per year. However, most MPOs meet more frequently. Table 2-5 illustrates the frequency of MPO governing board meetings reported by survey respondents.

⁹ Larry Goode,, Joseph Milazzo, Justin McCurry, Krista Tanaka, Brad Forbis, Stacie Hill, Jacob Garrison, and Nicholas Guidice, "Analysis of the Governance of Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the United States for Potential Applications in North Carolina." Raleigh, NC: Institute for Transportation Research and Education. Report # FHWA/NC/2002-019. December 2001. Available from: <http://www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/tpb/research/download/PPF-0100FinalReport.pdf>

¹⁰ Alexander Bond and Jeff Kramer, "The 2008 Review of Florida's Long Range Transportation Plans." Tampa, FL: Center for Urban Transportation Research. October 2008. Available from: http://www.mpoac.org/documents/LRTP_Review.pdf

¹¹ MPOs lying in air quality nonattainment areas must complete conformity analyses. MPOs with more than 200,000 are required to adopt a Congestion Management Process or System. All other MPOs must adopt five documents on a cyclical basis.

Table 2-5 Frequency of Governing Board Meetings

Frequency of Meeting	Number	Percent
Monthly	72	54.1%
Bi-Monthly	22	16.5%
Quarterly	23	17.3%
Semi-Annually	5	3.8%
Other	11	8.3%

The most common meeting frequency is monthly, which is the practice at 54 percent of MPOs. A substantial number of MPOs meet less frequently. A handful meet only twice per year, while 17 percent meet quarterly, and another 17 percent meet every other month. Eleven MPOs reported “Other” for this question, with several explaining the MPO met “as needed.”



Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization

Leesburg, FL

MPO CASE STUDY

The Lake-Sumter MPO was chosen as a case study because it is a relatively new MPO - established February 2004. While the Lake County Public Works Department initially served as staff to the MPO, an executive director was hired by March 2005 and the agency moved to an independent location. This executive director is still in place. Although some thought that Lake County would be the host agency for the MPO, an overriding desire for a strong municipal role led to the establishment of an independent agency. This independence is considered key to the success of the MPO. All municipalities have a seat at the table to create an inclusionary environment that seeks consensus, rather than one that relies on divisive votes.

The Lake-Sumter MPO office is located halfway between the Lake and Sumter County seats. The location was chosen due to its central location within the MPO area. Initial struggles for MPO staff included putting necessary agreements in place to establish a lease. During the transition from Lake County staff to independent staff, the unified planning work program (UPWP) was misplaced and had to be reconstructed by the new executive director. In addition, information technology (IT) issues provided regular frustrations. The MPO leases its own space within the building with office furniture and custodial services included. Governing Board meeting locations are held off site in rotating locations due to lack of sufficient space on site. The MPO has the opportunity to lease additional space for Governing Board meetings.

List of Voting Members

- Lake County (5)
- Sumter County (1)
- City of Clermont (1)
- City of Eustis (1)
- Town of Lady Lake (1)
- City of Leesburg (1)
- City of Minneola (1)
- City of Mount Dora (1)
- City of Tavares (1)
- Rotating small municipalities seat (1)

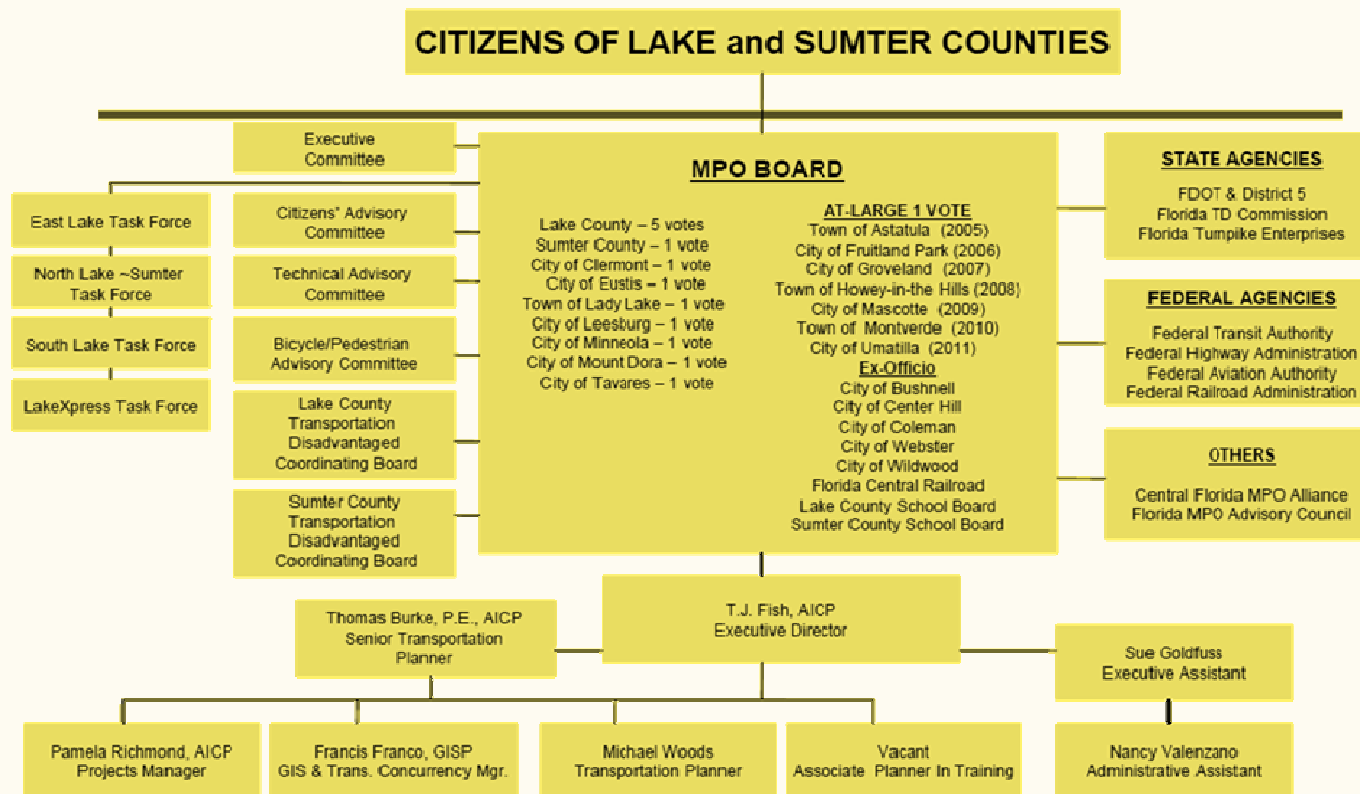
List of Non-Voting Members

- City of Bushnell
- City of Center Hill
- City of Coleman
- City of Webster
- City of Wildwood
- Florida Central Railroad
- Lake County School Board
- Sumter County School Board

Hosting Arrangement:	Freestanding Independent
2008 Population:	221,638
Planning Area Square Mileage	1,172
Establishment date	2004
UZAs in Planning Area	2
Air Quality Attainment Status	Attainment
Total Employees	8
Part-time Employees	1
Director Tenure	4 years
Voting Members of the Governing Board	14
Non-voting Members of Governing Board	8
UPWP Annual Dollar Amount	\$767,252
Percent of UPWP Spent on Consultants	8%
Percent of UPWP Shown for Informational Purposes	None

The Governing Board includes 14 voting members and 14 non-voting members. However, a reapportionment plan has been sent to the Florida Governor’s office. This plan proposes expanding the voting membership from 14 to 16 members, which is the maximum allowed by Florida law.

The executive director reports to the Governing Board, particularly the Executive Committee. The executive director communicates with the Executive Committee to address business matters in a timely manner when holding items for the Governing Board meeting may not be feasible. The MPO Chairman, Chairman-Elect, 1st vice Chairman/Treasurer, 2nd Vice Chairman, Immediate Past Chairman, and the at-large small-municipality representative make up this committee. The Executive Committee’s purpose is to address business matters that arise when it is unfeasible to wait for a Governing Board meeting. As a whole, Executive Committee members have more background regarding agenda items and are generally more engaged in the entire MPO process. Because the at-large small-municipality representative is on the Executive Committee, the rotating municipalities feel they have both a role and authority. The figure below illustrates the MPO organization.



The Governing Board holds the power to hire and fire the executive director. They perform an annual evaluation each September giving them the opportunity to address performance issues. In addition, the executive director's contract is evaluated every three years (by March 1).

MPO operational finances, planning (PL) funds, are treated as pass-through funds by Lake County. In return, they receive 5 percent of the PL funds. In 2008, participating local governments agreed to provide an in-kind match on a per capita basis. Lake County contains the greatest population and contributes nearly \$70,000 annually. These funds enable the MPO staff to review all traffic studies and monitor compliance with the local government's transportation concurrency (state-mandated growth management monitoring) requirements within the MPO area. As a result, transportation consultants deal with only one entity—the MPO. MPO reviews identify the transportation system impacts of proposed development, but do not dictate a local course of action.

This small MPO has eight staff positions with all positions reporting to the executive director. There are two administrative positions and six planning positions. Each planner within the organization acts essentially as a department unto themselves. Historically, MPO staff members have performed most travel demand modeling with one employee taking the lead and one assisting. One employee handles geographic information systems work (GIS) and transportation concurrency management system (CMS) database maintenance. Consultants developed the interactive transportation improvement program (TIP) and CMS and, subsequently, trained an MPO staff member to maintain the systems.

One staff member is designated the public information officer and all MPO staff are engaged in public involvement and outreach. No individual staff member devotes more than 50 percent of their time to these activities. The executive director is often a public speaker for MPO efforts. One staff member addresses safety, bicycle/pedestrian planning, and transit planning, devoting less than 50 percent of their time to any one of these planning activities.

The Lake-Sumter MPO maintains a positive outlook with large county interests balanced with municipal interests. Recently, the MPO has branched out from addressing only transportation issues to some land use issues—recognizing the transportation and land use connection. Their motto is: Our community, our issues.

Date Collected

February 2010

Collaboration with Nearby MPOs

Survey respondents were asked if their MPO participated in various types of collaboration with a nearby MPO. Ninety-seven of the 133 respondents (73%) reported some sort of formal collaboration with a neighboring MPO.

The most common form of collaboration is regular meetings between MPO leadership, as reported by 62 percent of MPOs. Scheduled meetings take place between senior staff members or between governing board members. In some cases, a joint governing board meeting is held. About half of MPOs have undertaken joint planning tasks, such as building a travel demand model or conducting a modal study. Thirty percent of MPOs have collaborated to jointly purchase goods or services.

About 37 percent of MPOs have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a neighbor, thereby formalizing the relationship. Sometimes the MOU forms a new entity that serves a planning purpose, such as adopting a joint air quality conformity analysis or congestion management process.

MPOs also reported joining together to form state associations. Associations serve as a forum for MPOs to share information, jointly purchase goods and services, or advocate for state and federal policy. Some form of statewide association is currently in operation in twenty states: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Washington.¹²

State Statute

Federal law is silent on many areas of MPO governance and operation; however, states may assign additional roles, regulations, and rules to MPOs. In the survey, respondents were asked if their state's statute governs a variety of subject areas. MPOs in forty-one states responded to the survey. Table 2-6 details the states with statutes governing the various subject areas as reported by participating MPOs.¹³

Some state statutes simply mirror federal law or regulation. Therefore, it is possible for state statute to mention a subject area without adding new substance to MPO governance. In addition, state statutes may govern only specified MPOs in the state. For example, a statute may relate to MPOs in air quality nonattainment areas.

More than one-half of states in the survey mentioned MPOs in state statute. California, Florida, North Carolina, Oregon, Texas, and Washington address many of the topic areas in their state statutes. State statutes are commonly being used to empower MPOs in state transportation planning, air quality, and land use planning. A majority of states consider MPOs to be tantamount to state agencies for the purposes of purchasing and contracting.

¹² MPOs from nine states did not participate in the survey. It is not known whether associations exist in those states.

¹³ There is at least one MPO in all fifty states. The District of Columbia is covered by an MPO from a neighboring state. MPOs in Puerto Rico were excluded from the survey. There are no MPOs in other insular areas of the United States.

Table 2-6 States with MPO-Governing Statutes

Subject Area	Number of States	States
Board Composition	8	CA, CO, FL, NY, OR, PA, TX, WA
Advisory Committees	7	CA, FL, IA, OR, PA, TX, WA
Staffing Requirements	3	FL, TN, TX
Pay Scales	3	FL, ID, NY
MPO Core Documents	16	AZ, CA, CO, FL, GA, IA, IL, KY, MD, NC, OR, TN, TX, VA, WA, WV
Comprehensive Planning or Land Use	15	CA, FL, GA, IL, KS, MD, ME, MN, MT, NC, OR, PA, SC, TX, WA
Air Quality or Pollution	19	AZ, CA, CO, FL, ID, KY, MA, MD, MT, NC, NM, NY, OR, PA, SC, TX, VA, WA, WV
Modal Plans	3	FL, TX, WA
Statewide Transportation Planning	18	AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MT, NC, NM, OR, SC, TX, VA, WA
Coordination with Other MPOs	6	CT, FL, MA, NC, WA, WV
Purchasing and Contracting	26	AL, AR, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MT, NC, NH, NJ, NM, NY, OH, SC, TN, TX, VA, WA

Chapter 3: Administrative Structure

One of the primary purposes of this research effort is to examine MPO administrative structures. Prevailing MPO thought held that MPOs belong to one of two broad administrative categories—hosted or independent. However, this and other assumptions are based more on anecdotal evidence, state-level information, or limited cross-sectional analysis.

It has long been known that many MPOs operate as a component of another agency. MPOs that operate from within another agency are often described as being *hosted MPOs*. For this project, the definition of a hosted MPO is considered to be: “[when]...another organization acts as the fiscal agent for the MPO and holds the power to hire and fire the MPO’s employees.” Alternatively, MPOs are considered to be *independent* for the purposes of this project if, “the MPO acts as its own fiscal agent and if the director can only be hired and fired by the MPO board.”

There is no guidance in Federal legislation or regulation on the topic of hosting. Some states address the issue of hosting in statute. Examples range from the permissive, such as in Florida where MPOs are permitted to be staffed by a host agency through interlocal agreement, to the more controlling, such as in Ohio where MPOs are required to be hosted by a Council of Governments. Decisions on hosting are usually made during the initial designation of the MPO, but those decisions are sometimes altered later as demographic, economic and political changes occur in the MPO area.

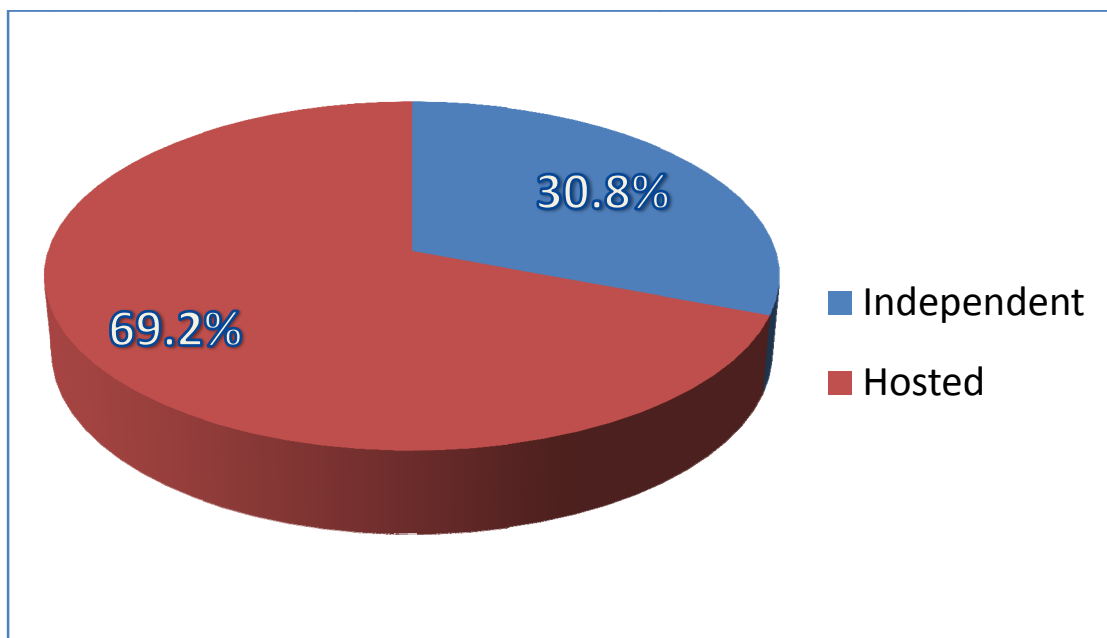


Figure 3-1 Percentage of Independent and Hosted MPOs

As seen in Figure 3-1, the majority of MPOs responding to the survey are hosted, with 92 of 133 (69.2%) reporting being administered by another agency. TMAs (MPOs with more than 200,000 people) are more likely to be an independent agency than non-TMAs. This is particularly true among MPOs with a population of over 1 million people, where nearly half of MPOs reported being independent. Table 3-1 summarizes the proportion of independent MPOs by population. There does not appear to be any correlation between agency hosting and air quality attainment status.

Table 3-1 Independent MPOs by Population Class

MPO Population	Number Hosted	Number Independent	Percent Independent in this Class
50,000-100,000	22	9	29%
100,000-200,000	23	6	21%
Total Non-TMA	45	15	25%
200,000-500,000	25	12	32%
500,000-1,000,000	11	2	15%
1,000,000+	12	11	48%
Total TMA	48	25	34%

Host Agencies

A large majority of MPOs are hosted by another agency. However, the level of integration between the host agency and MPO varies. Some MPOs—although hosted—retain a separate name and identity from their host. For example, Grand Strand Area Transportation Study is hosted by the Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments (Myrtle Beach, SC) but does not share the same name and logo. Others do not differentiate products produced by the MPO as being different from the host, such as the Pikes Peak Council of Governments in Colorado Springs, CO. Several MPOs reported that there was full integration between the MPO and the host agency. Managers at these agencies had difficulty differentiating MPO employees and MPO activities from those of the host agency.

The MPO’s governing board composition does not have to mirror the host agency’s governing board. The composition of the MPO governing board is guided by Federal law and, in some cases, by State statute. The MPO and the host are permitted—and in some cases required—to be different legal entities. This has the potential to create conflicts of interest for employees of the MPO, because their work environment may be overseen by one group, but the work product is overseen by another. It can also create confusion among board members and the public if the distinction between boards is not clearly defined.

The most common type of hosting agency is a regional council. The survey defined a regional council as “an agency established by two or more local governments to address issues of regional significance.” Regional councils frequently administer government programs or offer services to member local governments. Regional councils are also known as Councils of Government, Planning and Development Districts, Regional Planning Councils, Associations of Government, or Area Councils, among others. Regional councils host 26 percent of MPOs operating in the United States. MPOs hosted at regional

councils fall into all population classes, but have a tendency to be in the larger (above 500,000) categories.

Table 3-2 Types of Host Agencies

Host Agency Type	Number	Percent of all Hosted MPOs	Percent of all MPOs
Regional Council ¹⁴	34	37.4%	25.6%
County Government ¹⁵	27	29.6%	20.3%
Municipal Government	26	28.5%	19.5%
Modal Authority	2	2.2%	1.5%
State DOT	1	1.1%	0.8%
University	1	1.1%	0.8%

County governments are the host of over 20 percent of all MPOs. Municipalities are the host of approximately 20 percent. When combined, local governments host about 40 percent of all MPOs in the United States; eclipsing regional councils hosted MPOs as the most common organizational structure.

¹⁴ Two respondents reported “Other,” and explained their MPO was hosted by an Economic Development District. Economic Development Districts are regional bodies authorized by the US Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration. Almost all are multi-county, so these responses were re-coded as “Regional Council.”

¹⁵ Four respondents reported “Other” and stated in narrative form that they were hosted by a consolidated city/county planning commission or joint government. The survey did not offer joint city/county government as an option to this question. These responses were re-coded to “County Government” because that response reflects the geographic scale of the planning area.

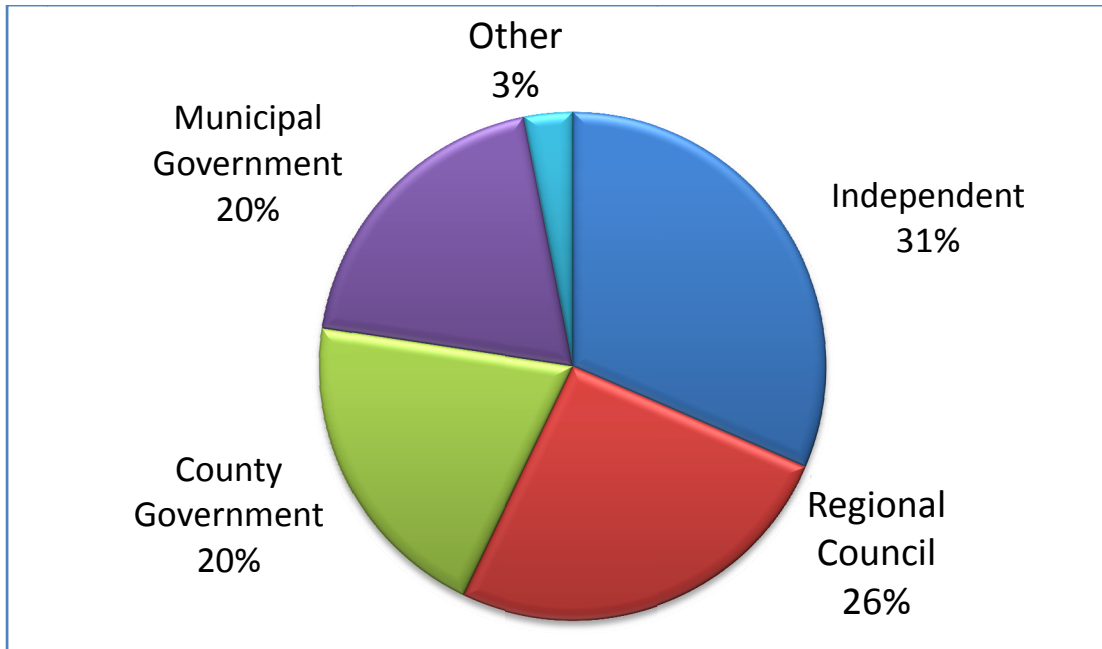


Figure 3-2 MPOs by Hosting Status

Local government-hosted MPOs are not evenly distributed across population size classes. County-hosted MPOs are predominantly in the 200,000–500,000 population class, as shown in Table 3-3. Relatively few county-hosted MPOs are found at the lowest population category (100,000 and smaller) or in the largest population categories (500,000 and up).

Table 3-3 Percent of County-Hosted MPOs by Population Classification

Population Class	Percent of Participating MPOs	County-Hosted	Differential
50,000-100,000	25.4	14.8	-10.6
100,000-200,000	25.7	29.6	+3.9
200,000-500,000	25.7	40.7	+15.0
500,000-1,000,000	11.5	7.4	-4.1
1,000,000+	11.8	7.4	-4.4

Municipally-hosted MPOs tend to be more prevalent in smaller urbanized areas. Table 3-4 compares the percentage of MPOs in each population class that participated in the survey with the percentage of municipally-hosted MPOs in each population class. Municipally-hosted MPOs are overwhelmingly located at the bottom of the population scale. In fact, over 65 percent of all municipally-hosted MPOs are not large enough to qualify as Transportation Management Areas.

Table 3-4 Percent of Municipal-Hosted MPOs by Population Classification

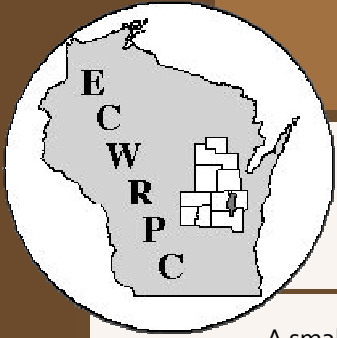
Population Class	Percent of Participating MPOs	Municipal-Hosted	Differential
50,000-100,000	25.4	38.4	+13.0
100,000-200,000	25.7	26.9	+1.5
200,000-500,000	25.7	19.2	-6.5
500,000-1,000,000	11.5	7.7	-3.8
1,000,000+	11.8	7.7	-4.1

A handful of other hosting arrangements were also encountered in the survey. The only university-hosted MPO was the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, which is located at the New Jersey Institute of Technology.¹⁶ The New York Metropolitan Transportation Commission was the only MPO that reported being hosted by the state department of transportation¹⁷. Two agencies reported being hosted by an independent authority. The Genesee Transportation Commission in Rochester, NY is hosted by the local public transit provider.¹⁸ The other is the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization, which is hosted by the South Jersey Transportation Authority—a combined expressway, aviation, and commuter services authority.

¹⁶ The Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments is an independent agency, but receives office space and internet services from the Northwest Shoals Community College in Muscle Shoals, AL.

¹⁷ Other MPOs hosted by state DOTs are known to exist, but did not participate in the survey. The entire state of Rhode Island is an MPO hosted by the state DOT. In addition, the three MPOs in Puerto Rico are hosted by the Commonwealth’s equivalent of a state DOT.

¹⁸ Other MPOs are known to be hosted or integrated with the local public transit provider, but did not participate in the survey. Notable examples include the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (Las Vegas, NV) and the Metropolitan Council (Minneapolis, MN)



East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

Appleton, Oshkosh, and Fond du Lac, WI

A small subset of MPOs are operated in a way that could not be accurately surveyed under this project's methodology. This type of MPO had a single professional staff, but more than one designated MPO. Responses for these MPOs could not be compared to other MPOs because of blended staff and administrative resources. The research team encountered four agencies with this structure, encompassing eleven MPOs. A case study was selected from this group to ensure that this type of MPO is discussed—the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC).

Three MPOs in Wisconsin are staffed by the ECWRPC: Appleton/Fox Cities MPO (pop. 205,615), the Oshkosh MPO (75,024), and the Fond du Lac MPO (55,365). The East Central Wisconsin RPC is a general purpose regional council that covers the boundary of three separate urbanized areas.¹ The ECWRPC performs a variety of non-transportation tasks, including environmental management, open space preservation, economic development, and GIS services. The ECRPC also performs non-MPO transportation tasks. Each of the urbanized areas has a transit development plan drafted by the RPC. Safe Routes to School, regional/rural transportation planning, and bicycle/pedestrian planning are among the other transportation tasks performed by the RPC.

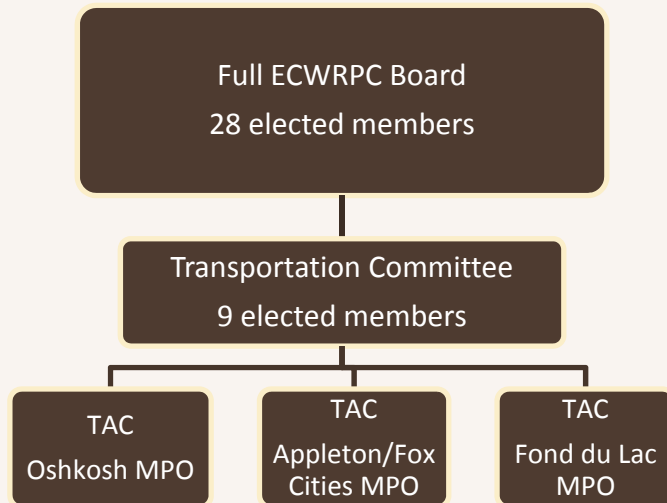
The RPC receives a small portion of local property taxes—0.000217 mills. This generates about \$805,000 each year, which is 41 percent of the RPC's total budget. Most of the proceeds are spent in support of the non-transportation duties of the RPC. The remainder is used to meet the local match requirement to receive Federal transportation planning assistance.

MPO operations are overseen by an assistant director of the RPC. This position reports to the executive director, but is considered to be the second-in-command at the RPC. The MPO director oversees the work of seven full-time staff members. These staff members move interchangeably between tasks required for each of the three MPOs. Up to 13 other RPC staff can be called upon to work on MPO projects, although this has rarely been exercised.

¹ There are three separate urbanized areas (UZAs) and Metropolitan Planning Areas (MPAs) that carry the names listed above. All three, however, are a part of a single Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The MSA forms the basis for the geographic boundary of the ECWRPC.

Hosting Arrangement:	Component MPO
2008 Population:	336,000 (combined)
Planning Area Square Mileage	387
Establishment date	1973,1973,2002
UZAs in Planning Area	3
Air Quality Attainment Status	Attainment
Total Employees	7
Part-time Employees	0
Director Tenure	20 years
UPWP Annual Dollar Amount	\$253,605 combined

The ECWRPC performs travel demand modeling tasks for all three MPO areas. Two long range transportation models have been in operation since 2005: one for the Oshkosh and Appleton MPOs, and one for the Fond du Lac MPO. A new model, developed in cooperation with the Wisconsin DOT, will provide a super-regional model that will cover thirteen counties, including all three ECWRPC MPOs, plus the Green Bay and Sheboygan MPOs. Development of this new model was spurred in part by designation of US Highway 41 as a new Interstate segment in SAFETEA-LU. Large parts of US 41 and supporting roadways must be upgraded to reach Interstate standards.



The Oshkosh MPO and the Appleton/Fox Cities MPO have been in simultaneous operation since 1973, and thus have more integrated planning products. The two MPOs have separate long range transportation plans, but share a single transportation improvement program. The Fond du Lac MPO is among the smallest MPOs in the country, and was established after the 2000 Census. Fond du Lac has a separate set of all 3-C documents.

Each MPO area retains control over their respective 3-C documents through Technical Advisory Committees. These TACs are made up of professional staff and officials from the local governments of each MPO area. In order for a 3-C document to be adopted, it must gain the approval of the respective TAC. Then the document is considered by the RPC transportation committee, which is a select group of RPC board members, most of whom represent urban areas. Finally, the document is adopted by the full 28-member RPC board.

Date Collected
December 2009

Advantages and Disadvantages of Administrative Structures

MPOs were asked to respond in narrative form about the advantages and disadvantages of being independent or hosted. Response to this question was very high; 105 of 133 respondents provided written information about their hosting status. The results of this question highlight the wide range of issues MPOs must consider when choosing or modifying their administrative structures. Responses clearly solidified around several themes common across the MPO community, and are discussed below.

Advantages of Hosted Structures

The most frequently cited advantage of being a hosted MPO is that it reduced the cost of operation, primarily by being able to take advantage of economies of scale. Respondents indicated that operating costs are reduced in a variety of ways including:

- Eliminating or substantially reducing office rent.
- Reducing the cost of pooled office support services. Specific services referred to included human resources, payroll, benefits, and IT support.
- Reducing the cost of office or durable goods through leveraged purchases of such bulk items as office supplies, paper, furniture, etc.

The cost to operate an MPO lies not only in dollars, but in administrative effort that could otherwise be directed toward the 3-C planning process. One large Midwestern MPO summarized the cost savings as follows, “We have definite economies of scale and are able to take advantage of [employee benefits], human resources, IT, and other services that we would otherwise have to hire our own staff for.”

Another commonly cited advantage to being hosted is financial assistance from the host agency with the “capital float.” Several hosted MPOs reported that capital float from the host is necessary for their operation, and that any attempt to change their administrative arrangement would be difficult due to the unavailability of capital to pay for operational expenses ahead of quarterly federal reimbursement. As with most federal transportation programs, MPOs receive reimbursement for eligible expenses from the federal government, either federal PL or transit planning funds. In order to operate until federal reimbursements are received, MPOs require a mechanism for covering up-front costs.

Financial assistance is also needed to match federal planning funds. Both of the major federal programs that fund MPO operation¹⁹ require a 20 percent local match. Some state DOTs meet this match on behalf of the MPO. However, in most states the MPO, its members, or the MPO host is expected to deliver local money to match the federal share. In cases where the local match is not met, the amount of federal assistance is reduced. Several MPOs reported difficulty raising the local match, including a handful that reported an inability to claim full federal funding. Many hosted MPOs claimed that meeting local match requirements would be a major impediment to separating from a host.

¹⁹ MPOs receive funds principally from FHWA Planning (PL) funds and FTA Section 5303 transit planning funds. Both programs require a 20% local match. These programs are discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

Another oft-cited advantage is the ability to share expertise with the host agency. Employee diversification can be more easily achieved at hosted MPOs because the host often employs land use planners, economic development specialists, housing specialists, environmental scientists and other staff members with specialized knowledge and skills. Being part of an agency with a wider focus makes it simpler for a specialized employee to be brought in on MPO tasks. As a small northeastern MPO said, “We can use a COG staff [the host agency] on a project without having to hire someone temporarily.”

Sharing of specialized employees can create opportunities to blend program areas. For example, land use planners can be used to develop the MPO long range plan and the host agency’s future land use plan. Expertise built during one program feeds into another. As a mid-sized southwestern MPO said, “[Our] MPO is housed in the city's Planning Department which allows for much greater coordination between development and traffic impacts.”

Disadvantages of Hosted Structures

A frequently cited disadvantage to being hosted is a blurring between MPO and host agency responsibilities, identities, and boundaries. This confusion is reported at the board level, among staff, and while interacting with the public. In some cases, the MPO and the host agency are known by the same name and logo. Exacerbating the problem is overlap in governing board membership. In these situations it can become difficult for the board and staff to keep track of which capacity they are functioning at any given time. A very large MPO described the situation as follows, “A disadvantage is the potential confusion as to who the MPO staff reports to/is employed by. Is it the “MPO” or is it the fiscal agent. We are working with our fiscal agent right now to finesse an agreement stipulating all of this.”

Members of the public may also become confused as to which agency they are interacting with. Some local government-hosted MPOs reported that the public and even some other local governments are not aware that the MPO is a regional agency due to the perceived affiliation with the host. As one municipally-hosted, mid-sized MPO put it, “Members of the general public tend to not realize that we conduct transportation planning for the entire region, not just the City.”

Another frequently cited disadvantage to being hosted is that the MPO is subject to host agency rules, budget and oversight. Several MPOs indicated that this can lead to a deficit in managerial authority and autonomy. For example, some MPOs indicated that they are tied to host agency personnel policies, including salary levels, which could limit their ability to attract and retain staff. Other commonly cited issues included cumbersome procurement procedures, hiring freezes, and having to dedicate time to the host’s budgeting process. A mid-sized MPO from the southwest described the issue as follows, “The disadvantage is that our UPWP budget must match up with the City's budget. Also, even though I am MPO Director, I must answer to a Department Head and do a lot of City business instead of mapping out my own strategies for the future of the MPO.”

An often cited disadvantage to being hosted is interference in MPO policy setting and implementation. Based on comments made by some MPOs, the issue is related to both perceived and real interference. In some cases it seemed to be a matter of interference in determining technical approach and planning

priorities. A mid-sized MPO from the southwest stated that they experienced, “philosophical and technical differences on the best approaches to address transportation issues.”

In other cases, the interference surrounds the governance of the MPO. As one large northern MPO stated on the issue, “A disadvantage is that the host agency can withhold services from the MPO to pressure the MPO to reconsider decisions with which the host disagrees.” Another smaller MPO from the Midwest put it even more bluntly by describing the situation as follows, “confusion about independent role of MPO; attempts to interfere in MPO business (can get ugly).”

Some MPOs reported that the host agency is unfamiliar with the MPO mission, work and processes. This could lead to misunderstandings over what work activities staff can undertake using federal planning and transit planning funds. It could even lead to a potential conflict between the interests and mission of the host agency and the MPO. As a non-TMA MPO hosted by a Council of Governments explained, “A host agency decision can often NOT be in the best interests of ...the MPO...”

Advantages of Independent Structures

The most frequently cited advantage of being independent is political and administrative autonomy from a host agency. The term “political autonomy” is used broadly by many independent MPOs to reflect both the separation of the MPO from any policy positions taken by member governments and policy interference in MPO processes. The term “administrative autonomy” is used broadly to describe a variety of administrative functions including employee compensation, budgeting, procurement and more. In both cases (political and administrative), independent MPOs described the advantage of being autonomous primarily in terms of having the ability to control their own agenda and to make their own decisions without perceived or real interference. One large, western MPO described the advantage of autonomy as follows, “Independence provides: less political influence, HR flexibility and less costly overhead ... and board full authority over everything.”

A commonly cited advantage of being independent is clarity in the chain of command. Several MPOs indicated that independent status means there is no confusion for staff regarding which agency or supervisor they are taking direction from or whose policy directives they are implementing. This removes any potential for conflicts of interest, accusations of inconsistency, or contradictory policy directives. One southwestern non-TMA MPO summarized the advantage as follows, “[Independence] ensures that the director only takes direction from the MPO board and personnel issues are handled within the MPO organizational structure. [This] minimizes conflicts in staff supervision, evaluation, and compensation.”

Several independent MPOs reported that their agency enjoys a distinct identity—one separate from other transportation and planning agencies in their region and state. Internally, this sense of identity often translates into an entrepreneurial agency spirit and the ability to address local issues relatively quickly. Externally, this allows independent MPOs to establish a role in the region that is unique, focus on customer service, and fill a local and regional niche beyond the federally required roles of an MPO. As a large southeastern TMA stated, independence gives them an, “opportunity to establish a separate organizational culture.”

A few MPOs cited cleaner finances as an advantage of being independent. Comments from independent MPOs indicate that advantages are gained by control of their own finances, the absence of host agency rules or procedures, and the lack of possible administrative entanglements with another agency's bureaucracy.

Disadvantages of Independent Structures

The most frequently cited disadvantage of being an independent MPO is trouble with cash flow. This is primarily linked with the issues of "capital float." Most independent MPOs report that they rely heavily on federal transportation planning funds to support agency operations. Federal transportation planning (PL) and transit planning funds are funds that are distributed to MPOs in the form of a reimbursement for eligible expenses which have already been incurred over the past quarter. This creates a "capital float" problem for independent MPOs which do not receive the financial assistance of a "host" agency to pay for operating costs ahead of the federal reimbursement. Instead, independent MPOs have to rely on their own financial resources to cover the short-term capital costs of business operations.

Independent MPOs raise funds to cover their "capital float" and other agency operations through a variety of mechanisms including collecting dues from MPO members and performing contract work for other governmental agencies and local governments. One large southeastern MPO described the issue as follows, "Assessments of member counties and authorities are needed to operate because federal funds are [only] provided as reimbursements for work completed."

Another cash flow issue is related to the match requirement for federal planning and transit planning funds. As is common with federal funds, MPOs are required to provide a 20 percent local match to receive federal planning and transit planning funds. Independent MPOs must meet the match requirement using their own financial resources, unlike hosted MPOs which rely on their host to provide the federally required local match. A few independent MPOs reported that they have insufficient resources to provide a large enough match to allow them to claim their full allocation of federal planning and transit planning funds. More information on local match can be found in Chapter 5.

Another frequently cited disadvantage of being an independent MPO is the high cost of operation relative to MPOs operating under a hosted structure. Costs are typically higher for independent MPOs than for hosted MPOs because they do not enjoy the economies of scale associated with being part of a larger organization. Where hosted MPOs are able to pool costs for a variety of services and goods, independent MPOs have to pay for goods and services on their own. These goods and services typically include:

- Support services such as human resources, payroll, IT and office machine repair;
- Rent for office and/or meeting space;
- Employee benefits such as health insurance, long and short-term disability insurance and training; and
- Office and other durable goods such as office supplies, paper, furniture, and office machines (copiers, etc.).

One eastern non-TMA MPO put it bluntly by simply saying, “It’s expensive to operate a small agency independently.”

A few independent MPOs cited staffing issues as a disadvantage, particularly the need for MPO staff members to have a broad skill set. This is particularly true for the MPOs that have a relatively small staff, and don’t have the benefit of sharing staff with a host agency. For example, urban planners may be asked to perform administrative, public involvement or financial management tasks where the MPO doesn’t have sufficient resources to hire a specialist in those areas. Some of these MPOs may find it advantageous to hire consultants to perform specific tasks that are beyond the technical competency of the MPO staff. Consultants may even be used to perform general staff tasks as a way to supplement MPO staff during particularly busy periods of the planning and programming cycle. A large southeastern TMA stated that they have a, “greater dependence on versatile staff members and outside contractors for business support services.”

Independent MPOs Hosting Other Agencies

Nothing prohibits MPOs from acting as the host to another agency. Independent MPOs were asked if they hosted another agency, and seven of the forty-one responded affirmatively. The agencies that are hosted by these independent MPOs included:

- A “port authority” that governs an international border crossing in the Yuma (AZ) MPO’s planning area.
- An Economic Development District (EDD) in Washington. EDDs are regional bodies created by the US Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration. A handful of MPOs reported being hosted *by* an EDD, but this was the only occurrence of an MPO acting as the host *to* an EDD.
- A land use and transportation coordination body chartered by a single county in the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho’s planning area.
- A public transit service provider.
- A rural transportation planning organization (RPO). RPOs exist separately from MPOs in several states, but the Des Moines MPO operates a nearby RPO under a contractual relationship.
- An agency that provides mobility services to the transportation disadvantaged.

Fees Paid to Host Agencies

Many MPOs that are hosted pay money to the host agency. Sometimes referred to as *indirect charges*, these monies are intended to pay the MPO’s share of certain goods, services, and supplies necessary to their operation. Fees may be levied as a percentage of the MPO’s budget, as a flat fee, or on a cost-reimbursable basis. The survey asked hosted respondents the amount of money paid to the host, expressed as a percent of the MPO’s budget. Among the ninety-two hosted MPOs, forty-seven reported making at least some payment to the host agency.

The remaining hosted MPOs are not charged an indirect rate. There are two primary reasons why an indirect rate could not be calculated: 1) the MPO’s finances and employee structure may be so intertwined with the host that a formal transfer of money is not necessary; or 2) the MPO is operated as a separate function of a local government’s transportation planning agency, and money is pooled to support both operations. In general, the lack of a formal indirect charge indicates the MPO is more dependent on the host agency than MPOs that have a formal indirect rate with their host agency. Conversely, high indirect rates indicate that the MPO functions more independently.

The mean indirect rate paid was 23.8 percent. However, this number varied substantially, from a maximum of 62 percent to a minimum of 1.3 percent. A more instructive number is the standard deviation of 17.2 percent. Using this information, it can be inferred that the middle two-thirds of MPOs had indirect charges somewhere between 41 percent and 6.6 percent. There does not appear to be a statistically significant difference in indirect charges when MPOs of different population classes or staff sizes are compared.

Table 3-5 Indirect Charges Paid to Host Agencies

Statistic	Percent of MPO Budget
Maximum	62.0%
Mean	23.8%
Minimum	1.3%
Standard Deviation	17.2%

Indirect charges are levied in return for goods and services consumed by the MPO. Table 3-6 shows the percentage of respondents who received those goods and services from the host agency. The list is not exhaustive, but is included so that MPOs can compare which goods and services are provided when re-evaluating or renegotiating their indirect rate.

Table 3-6 Goods and Services Received in Exchange for Indirect Charges

Good or Service	Percent of Indirect-Paying MPOs Receiving
Payroll	91.5%
Human Resources	80.9%
Utilities	70.2%
Office Space	68.1%
Computers and IT Support	66.0%
Phone	61.7%
Administrative Employees	55.3%
Procurement and Purchasing	51.1%
Postage	48.9%
Office Supplies	46.8%
Equipment	42.6%
Shipping	29.8%
Fleet Vehicles	29.8%

The most common items received as a part of indirect charges are payroll services and human resources. This indicates that the MPO shares administrative employee staff time to process employment-related documents. Utilities, office space, and computer support were included in more than two-thirds of MPO indirect charges.

All of the goods and services discussed in Table 3-6 must be secured in some fashion. MPOs that did not report receiving this good or service as a part of the indirect rate, say that it is provided to them free of charge or on a fee-for-service basis.



MISSOULA

Missoula MPO

Missoula, MT

MPO CASE STUDY

In Missoula, Montana, the city and county governments have identified several governmental services that perform better when shared. An interlocal agreement between the two creates a City-County Office of Planning and Grants. The Office is responsible for a number of City and County programs, including: current planning and land use permitting, long range planning, transportation planning, historic preservation, housing, transportation demand management program, and the Crime Victim Advocates Program. The Office of Planning and Grants is also home to the city-county transportation division, as well as the Missoula MPO. The Missoula MPO is a blend of a Component MPO and a Dual Purpose MPO. The Office of Planning and Grants uses some MPO money to pay for a portion of its administrative staff, charges an indirect rate, and sometimes shares staff—all characteristics of a Dual Purpose MPO. However, the Missoula MPO has a defined MPO director position (styled “Senior Planner”) who reports directly to the Office of Planning and Grants director. Further, MPO employees spend their time exclusively working for the MPO. On paper, all joint city-county employees receive their paychecks and benefits from Missoula County.

There are only two local governments in the MPO area—Missoula County and the City of Missoula. These local governments support the Office of Planning and Grants, but do not pay any dues to the MPO. The required local match for PL and 5303 funds is met by crediting the value of planning work done by the Montana Department of Transportation and Mountain Line, the local transit provider.

Board Members

- Mayor of Missoula
- Missoula City Councilmember
- Missoula County Commissioners (2)
- Mountain Line (transit agency) Board Member
- Montana DOT District Administrator
- City/County Planning Board Member
- Adjacent county commissioner (nonvoting)
- County public health department (nonvoting)

Hosting Arrangement:	Dual Purpose MPO
Host Agency:	Missoula City/County Office of Planning and Grants
2008 Population:	84,133
Planning Area Square Mileage	220
Establishment date	1982
UZAs in Planning Area	1
Air Quality Attainment Status	Non-attainment
Total Employees	4
Part-time Employees	1
Director Tenure	4 years
Voting Members of the Governing Board	7
Non-voting Members of Governing Board	3
UPWP Annual Dollar Amount	\$998,000
Percent of UPWP Spent on Consultants	20.5%
Percent of UPWP Shown for Informational Purposes	0%

MPO activities are governed by a seven-member board of directors. The City of Missoula is represented by the Mayor and a city councilmember. Two (of three) county commissioners also sit on the board. The board is filled out with the district administrator of the Montana DOT, a member from the Mountain Line board, and a member of the joint city/county planning board.

Attracting consultants to Missoula is more complex than at other comparably-sized MPOs. Missoula is located more than a day's drive from cities that have offices of major consulting firms. In years past, bids offered to the MPO were often higher than expected, due to the need to hire local subcontractors and charge travel expenses. These high bids have reduced recently, as firms have decentralized their operations, airfares have become cheaper, and the recession has made competition for work more intense.

The same distance issue can affect employee recruitment. The County maintains a rigid system of pay scales that dictate all employee salaries based on experience, academic degrees, and other factors. These pay scales effectively set the salary of the MPO employees, although the Office of Planning and Grants has a degree of leeway. The pay scales offered by Missoula County are generally lower than those found in other mid-sized US cities. The MPO has found the most effective way to attracting employee talent is to actively search using personal networks instead of passively accepting applications. Recent hiring rounds have shown that employees are attracted by Missoula's quality of life and access to nature. These act as unique "fringe benefits" to offset the lower salary scale.

The MPO has a supervising Senior Planner and three full-time staff. One MPO staff member is a full-time public involvement specialist. Another full-time staff member specializes in GIS and other technical aspects of planning. The remaining full-time staff member is a generalist planner. IT, purchasing, payroll, and other services are received from the Office of Planning and Grants.

The MPO sets aside about \$90,000 per year toward its long range transportation plan. After four years, a sufficient sum of money has been collected to let a contract to draft a plan for the ensuing cycle. The MPO went through a rigorous visioning process in support of the last plan adoption, called "Envision Missoula." Future long range plans will build off this vision, and will be styled as updates rather than brand new plans.

Date Collected

April 2010

MPO Boundaries

Responses from the survey suggest there are a variety of MPO boundary shapes and sizes. US Code Title 23, Section 134(E)2(a) states that MPOs are to be organized around urbanized areas. After every decennial Census, the Bureau releases a list of urban areas that have a population density of 1,000 people per square mile and a total of more than 50,000 people. Through a cooperative process these urban areas are expanded and smoothed to include territory that is expected to become urbanized over the next twenty years. The new boundary is known as a metropolitan planning area. Federal law requires that an MPO must be in operation covering all of the land area falling within a metropolitan planning area. Common parlance uses the term urbanized area, or UZA, to discuss the land area that must be planned under a 3-C process. The law leaves open several different boundary delineation arrangements, which are discussed in this section.

There is not a one-to-one ratio of MPOs to UZAs. The 484 UZAs identified following the 2000 Census have been organized under 385 MPOs. However, the arrangement of UZAs within MPOs is even more complex. There are five possible situations for MPOs to cover UZA territories, and all possibilities were encountered during the survey collection. An MPO could:

- a) Cover the entirety of only one UZA.
- b) Cover the entirety of two or more UZAs.
- c) Cover the entirety of one UZA, and cover only part of another UZA.²⁰
- d) Cover only part of one UZA.²⁰
- e) Cover only part of one UZA and part of another UZA.²⁰

According to the survey, the average MPO has 1.44 unique UZAs within its planning area boundary. The number of unique UZAs within each MPO is summarized in Table 3-7. Although having only one UZA is the most common response, having more than one UZA is encountered at more than a quarter of MPOs in the United States. Twenty-one percent of MPOs reported sharing a UZA with a neighboring MPO.

Table 3-7 Number of Urbanized Areas in the MPO Planning Area

Number of UZAs	Frequency	Percent of MPOs with this Type
One	89	73.0%
Two	20	16.4%
Three	8	6.6%
Four	2	1.6%
Five	3	2.3%
Total Valid for Question	122	--

²⁰ Types 3, 4 and 5 also include the possibility of cover multiple full or partial UZAs. For example, under type three, the MPO could cover two full UZAs and three partial UZAs.

Another measure of the scale of the MPO planning area is how many counties it covers. Among MPOs responding to the survey, 77 of 133 MPOs (57.9%) reported being multi-county. An MPO boundary can also cross state lines. The survey found 18 of 133 respondents are multi-state MPOs, or 13.5 percent. Most multi-state MPOs lie in two states. However, a handful tri-state MPOs are currently in operation.

Types of MPO Structures

As noted earlier, the conventional wisdom has been that there are two types of MPOs—hosted and independent. Instead, it appears that MPO structures span a continuum ranging from fully independent free-standing MPOs to MPOs that are so integrated with their host that they form a single, indistinguishable all-in-one agency. The five types of agencies are discussed in this section and shown in Figure 3-3. In some cases, an MPO can exhibit characteristics of more than one category, as shown by the possible overlaps in the graphic.

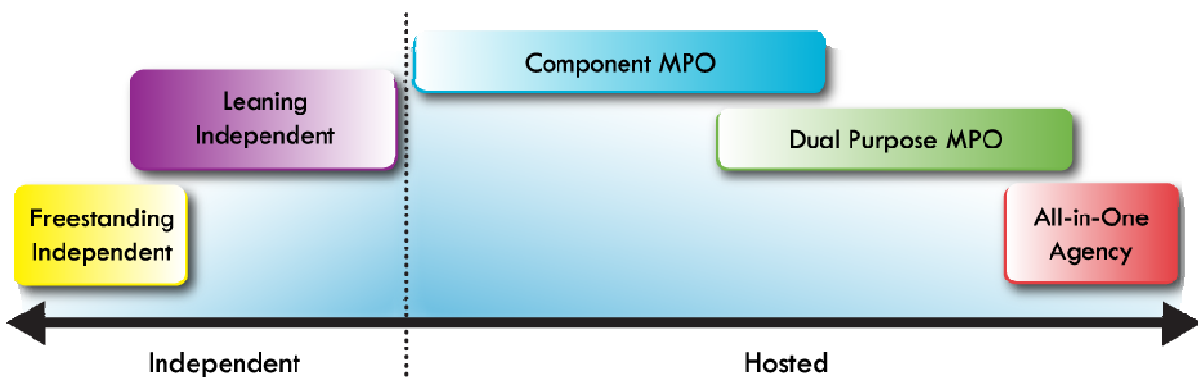


Figure 3-3 MPO Hosting Continuum

All-in-One Agency- This type of agency does not differentiate between MPO functions, non-MPO transportation functions, and all other functions of the broader agency. Some distinguishing characteristics of an All-in-One Agency are:

- The MPO functions operate under the same name as the host agency.
- A board with identical membership governs the entire agency, including the MPO.
- Agency employees are engaged in MPO and non-MPO related work activities.
- The MPO is found within a Regional Council, with few exceptions.

Dual Purpose MPO- In this type of structure, the host leverages MPO planning funds to maintain transportation planning staff that performs both MPO planning and local government transportation planning functions. This leveraging allows the local government to build a more robust planning program that would otherwise be possible. Often found in smaller regions, this type of agency sometimes provides transportation planning services for areas outside the urbanized area.

Distinguishing characteristics of the Dual Purpose MPO include:

- Staff members frequently shift between MPO and local government transportation planning tasks.
- The MPO takes policy direction from the MPO board and employment direction from the host agency board.
- The MPO director reports to a manager within the host agency for administrative purposes.
- The MPO board has a different composition from the host board, but often will be predominantly composed of officials from the host agency.
- The MPO is hosted by a local government.

Component MPO- In this type of hosting relationship, the MPO functions are separated from all other functions of the host, but the MPO director still reports to the host agency employee. The MPO staff generally does not perform non-MPO tasks. Conversely, host agency staff members generally do not work on MPO tasks. The MPO often adopts a moniker and brand that is different from the host agency. Component MPOs are probably the most common type of hosting arrangement. Characteristics include:

- The MPO director reports to a manager within the host agency for administrative functions, but takes policy direction directly only from the MPO board.
- The director of the MPO does not regularly supervise employees performing non-MPO duties.
- The MPO usually has a distinct name, logo, and website from the host agency.
- The host's governing board membership significantly differs in composition from the MPO governing board's membership.

Leaning Independent MPO- This is a type of independent MPO that “leans” on one of its member local governments for support. In this type of relationship, the MPO receives some services under a *severable* contract. The most common service rendered is employee benefits—MPOs may be able to secure superior rates and benefits by “buying in” to a local government benefits plan. The MPO might also purchase goods and services on an as-needed basis, such as legal representation or fleet vehicle use. Further, the MPO may be extended “gratis” benefits, such as discounted printing or office supply purchases through the affiliated local government. Last, some MPOs will adopt the personnel policies of the affiliate local government without significant amendment. Characteristics of these MPOs include:

- The MPO board supervises the director and staff.
- The MPO director does not have a supervisor, other than the MPO board.
- The MPO board or the member agency providing services can sever the contractual relationship with the MPO.
- The MPO may adopt all of the personnel policies of the agency it leans on.

- The MPO oversees its own finances, payroll, and purchasing, either directly or through a contractual relationship.

Freestanding Independent MPO- This is a truly independent agency. The MPO must meet all of its operating needs by itself. This is the most expensive way to operate an MPO, but since no resources are shared the MPO is free to do what it pleases. Characteristics include:

- The MPO independently provides employee benefits and maintains its own set of personnel policies.
- The MPO board supervises the professional staff.
- The MPO manages its own finances, payroll, and purchasing.

Chapter 4: Employment, Employees, and Specialization

All MPOs employ people to perform tasks for the MPO board. To better understand the number of employees, how they are specialized, and the terms of employment, a battery of 21 questions was asked of survey respondents.

Respondents were asked how many full-time and part-time employees are found at the MPO. Survey respondents were instructed to consider employees to be part-time if they worked a fraction of their time for the host agency in a non-MPO function and the balance of their time for the MPO.

Extrapolating the survey responses to this question, it is estimated that approximately 4,100 people are on MPO payrolls nationwide.²¹ About 860 work for non-TMAs, which are the smallest of MPOs.

The average MPO has 11.7 full-time employees. However, this figure is not representative of most MPOs in the United States. It is influenced upward by several high outliers, as indicated by the median of only 5 full-time employees.

Many MPOs supplement their full-time workforce with part-time employees. Seventy-three percent of MPOs have at least one part-time employee. The mean number of part-time employees is 2.2, but this figure is also influenced by high outliers. The median number of part-time employees is one. Table 4-1 summarizes the number of employees for the entire sample.

Table 4-1 MPO Staff Size Measures of Central Tendency

Statistic	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total Employees
Mean	11.7	2.2	13.7
Median	5	1	6
Mode	3	0	3

For the remainder of this chapter, MPO staff sizes are discussed in terms of total employees—meaning the combined number of full-time and part-time positions. The number of employees should not be confused with the number of full-time equivalent positions. Total employees means a head-count of people who work at the MPO in permanent positions, regardless of the number of hours worked.

The mean number of total employees at an MPO responding to the survey is 13.7. Again, this figure is not representative of the majority of MPOs, as indicated by the median of six employees. The difference between these two statistics comes from a minority of agencies with very large staff sizes. The largest MPO in the survey has 121 employees. At the other end of the spectrum, five MPOs have only one employee. Two agencies reported having only one part-time employee.

²¹ This figure was calculated using the mean staff sizes for each of the five population categories shown in Table 4-1. The mean for each category was multiplied by the number of MPOs in the United States eligible to take the survey. Each population class was totaled, reaching a figure of 4,067. The number was rounded up to 4,100 to account for staff members of the eleven MPOs that were not eligible to take the survey.

To better understand the typical MPO size, the median and quartiles should be given greater consideration than the mean. The median staff size is six. Half of MPOs have a staff size between three and eleven. A quarter of MPOs have staff sizes smaller than three.

A Pearson’s r test²² was performed to establish the correlation between MPO staff size and other variables. The test revealed that the number of MPO employees is strongly correlated with the MPO population ($r = +0.840$). The size of the MPO staff is moderately to strongly correlated with the square mileage of the MPO’s planning area ($r = +0.698$). There is substantial cross-correlation between square mileage and population, meaning that these two variables influence each other, and therefore influence staff size in concert. Correlation analyses with other variables did not yield consequential or reliable information.²³

Table 4-2 summarizes the number of employees found in each of the five MPO population classes (as discussed in Chapter 1). The largest MPOs (1 million or more) have by far the largest staff sizes. This population class holds all of the high outliers in the dataset.²⁴ These MPOs are able to hire more employees because they often receive higher contributions of local funds, a greater formula share of FTA 5303 transit planning funds, funding from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program, and direct urban allocation funds from the Surface Transportation Program.

Table 4-2 MPO Employees by Planning Area Size

Population in Planning Area	Full-Time Employees (mean)	Total Employees (mean)	Total Employees (median)	Maximum Total Employees	Minimum Total Employees
50,000-100,000	2.9	3.5	3	16	1
100,000-200,000	4.3	5.5	5	19	3
200,000-500,000	6.1	7.8	7	20	2
500,000-1,000,000	12.6	14.8	13	33	6
1 million or more	41.1	47.1	37	121	9
All MPOs	11.7	13.7	6	121	1

Using information from the sample, several metrics can be derived to help MPOs compare themselves to their peers. One metric is the number of residents per MPO staff member. Using nationwide averages, an MPO can be expected to have one employee per 47,963 people in the MPO planning area.

²² A Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson’s r) is a statistic used to measure the linear dependence between two variables. The statistic varies from +1 to -1. A positive r means that when one variable increases, so does the other.

²³ The variables tested were: MPO population, planning area square mileage, governing board seats, number of UZAs, the year the MPO was founded, and UPWP dollars. It was later determined that the UPWP information collected was not reliable, due to inconsistent information given by respondents who had UPWPs of different lengths. MPO creation dates were discarded due to unreliability of the true establishment dates of the agency.

²⁴ One explanation for the very large MPO staff sizes is a high degree of integration with the host. It is possible that some of the staff members reported to be employed by the MPO in fact spend some or all of their time doing work with the host. Respondents may not have been able to separate the employees of the MPO from the employees of the host agency.

Another metric for evaluation of the MPOs staff size is the square mileage of the planning area. MPOs average one employee per 665 square miles.

Staff Specialties

At smaller MPOs, the professional staff must be generalists out of budgetary necessity. However, larger and more complex regions require specialized planning tasks. Respondents were asked to check a box if any staff member spent more than half of his or her time in a specialized planning area. No attempt was made to calculate the number of positions or number of full-time equivalents being dedicated to this specialization. The results are summarized in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3 Specialization of MPO Employees

Specialization	Percent of MPOs with this Specialty on Staff	Median Staff Size of MPOs with this Specialization
GIS	44.4%	9
Travel Demand Modeling	38.7%	12
Transit	36.3%	10
Bicycle and Pedestrian	30.6%	8.5
Public Involvement	25.0%	12
Traffic Operations	20.2%	10
Intergovernmental Relations	16.1%	8.5
Air Quality	15.3%	15
Safety	12.9%	10
Transportation Disadvantaged	12.1%	11
Freight	11.3%	15.5
Socio-cultural Impacts	4.0%	12

The median figures as a whole are closely clustered around 8 to 12 employees. This suggests that MPOs reach a critical mass of employees around this level and are able to assign specialized activities to their employees. Using the metrics developed earlier in this report, the average MPO reaches eight employees when there are about 380,000 people or 5,300 square miles in the MPO planning area. MPOs smaller than eight employees are certainly capable of dedicating an employee to a specialty, but managers of smaller agencies face employee time constraints as staff sizes shrink.



Bryan/College Station MPO

College Station, TX

MPO CASE STUDY

The Bryan/College Station MPO has been the MPO for Brazos County, TX since 1982. Although the MPO was at one time hosted by the state, it has been operating as an independent agency since the 1990's. The Bryan/College Station MPO is an example of a Leaning Independent MPO. The agency enjoys policy and administrative independence: the staff can be fired only by the board, the MPO makes its own financial decisions, and the governing board grants ultimate approval over all policy documents. However, the MPO receives a suite of goods and services from a member local government—in this case Brazos County. The County provides the MPO with employee benefits, contract oversight, payroll, and IT services. These services are offered free of charge, or on a cost reimbursement basis. Unless drastic steps are taken to provide all of these services through other providers, the MPO could not continue operations. The MPO is classified as independent because the board is permitted to sever the relationship with Brazos County without nullifying any charters, breaking any interlocal agreements, or undergoing an MPO designation process.

Very little of the MPO's budget (8%) is expended on consultants, and all 3-C documents are drafted in-house. The staff of four full-time staff members includes an administrative employee who handles mailings, board management, and other non-planning tasks. The bulk of the MPO director's time is spent liaising with other agencies and overseeing MPO projects, although the director has some involvement in planning work during long range plan updates. Two professional employees and an intern provide most of the planning work. One professional position is paid for using traditional MPO funds. The other position is focused on developing and operating a travel demand model. This employee's salary is paid for using a cost-sharing arrangement between the MPO, Brazos County, Texas A&M University, and the cities of College Station and Bryan. The municipalities pay the employee's salary, and all three agencies get access to a travel demand model.

The MPO operates from space rented in an office building midway between the Bryan and College Station city halls. No other public-sector tenants are in the building. Since this space is not governmental, the MPO must locate suitable locations for board meetings and public involvement activities. The policy

Hosting Arrangement:	Leaning Independent
2008 Population:	152,415
Planning Area Square Mileage	591
Establishment date	1972
UZAs in Planning Area	1
Air Quality Attainment Status	Attainment
Total Employees	5
Part-time Employees	1
Director Tenure	7 years
Voting Members of the Governing Board	5
Non-voting Members of Governing Board	5
UPWP Annual Dollar Amount	\$358,000
Percent of UPWP Spent on Consultants	8.3%
Percent of UPWP Shown for Informational Purposes	0%

board meets at the Brazos County Center complex. The technical advisory and other committees meet at the transit agency offices and/or city owned meeting rooms. For public involvement workshops and hearings, a variety of locations have been used. Libraries and city halls offer free meeting space, and local restaurants and churches have been used in the recent past.

The Bryan/College Station MPO expects to become a Transportation Management Area (TMA) in 2010 or 2020. Attaining TMA status will mean a greater formula share of PL and 5303 funds. Along with this extra money will be new planning requirements, including a Congestion Management Process, an expanded UPWP, and possibly air quality conformity planning. At least one additional staff member will be needed to cover the additional duties.

List of Voting Members	List of Non-Voting Members
➤ Mayor of Bryan	➤ Brazos Valley Council of Governments
➤ Mayor of College Station	➤ TxDOT Headquarters
➤ Brazos County Judge Executive	➤ Federal Transit Administration Region
➤ Texas A&M University	➤ Federal Highway Administration Division
➤ TxDOT District Engineer	➤ Brazos Transit District

The Texas DOT (TxDOT) plays a large role in the MPO’s operation. TxDOT provides all matching funds for PL and 5303 money. TxDOT is a decentralized agency, with an appointed district engineer in Brazos County. This provides a single point of contact for the MPO. Most intergovernmental activities are directed to the district engineer, including interactions with FHWA and FTA.

The Bryan/College Station MPO is an active member of the Association of Texas Metropolitan Planning Organizations (TEMPO). TEMPO is a membership group composed of all twenty-five MPOs in Texas. It provides a forum for statewide information sharing, coordinated policy development, and professional development. TEMPO also acts as a unified source for TxDOT public hearings on MPO issues, such as establishing a formula for PL fund distribution. TEMPO is governed by a 7-member executive committee, which has reserved slots for non-TMAs. TEMPO meets quarterly and is staffed by the MPO who employs the elected executive director—currently the Dallas-Fort Worth MPO.

Date Collected
May 2010

Staff Time Spent on Involvement, Committees and Administration

Working at an MPO entails more than preparing the planning and programming documents required by law. MPO staff members must handle general agency administration, management of committees, and public involvement. Respondents were asked to give an estimate of how much staff time is spent on each activity.

Public Involvement includes a variety of methods of engaging the public. Traditionally, public involvement by MPOs has involved formal hearings and document review periods. In recent decades, effort in this area has increased to include proactive workshops, websites, newsletters and other active engagement efforts. MPOs spend a mean of 15.3 percent of their total staff time on public involvement activities. There does not appear to be a significant variation when the results are broken out by population. Independent MPOs spend slightly more time (16.5%) compared to hosted MPOs (14.8%).

Committee Management includes the time spent preparing for, working with, and documenting the activities of the MPO's governing board and advisory committees. Every MPO has a governing board, and each meeting requires preparation of an agenda packet, time in meeting, and transcription of minutes. Staff may also expend time preparing to present information to the board, such as results from a study or the staff's recommendation for or against an amendment to a document. Advisory committees to the governing board also require similar tasks. The mean percentage of staff time devoted to committee management is 21.7 percent. Less overall staff time is spent on committee management as staff size grows. MPOs with more than 20 employees spend 17 percent of staff time on committee management.

General Administration is a catch-all term to describe the tasks related to operating an organization, but not related to transportation planning and programming. Sample tasks that fall under general administration include staff management, procurement, office management, and contracting. For all MPOs, the mean percentage of time spent on general administration is 23.5 percent. Hosted MPOs spend substantially less time on general administration—21.3 percent versus 28.1 percent—reflecting the additional burdens of managing all facets of the organization for independent MPOs. There is also a correlation between general administration and staff size. The smallest of MPOs (less than 3 employees) spend 29.6 percent of staff time on general administration. Meanwhile, the largest (1 million plus) spend only 12.5 percent of their staff time.

Legal Services

MPOs typically need an attorney for such activities as reviewing contracts, evaluating the legality of agency actions, and defending itself in the event of a lawsuit. The most common source of legal counsel is through the host agency. Approximately 47 percent of all MPOs receive representation from the host agency for free or as a part of indirect charges paid. Another 8 percent have access to the host's attorneys on a cost-reimbursable basis. Approximately 18 percent of MPOs reported receiving legal services from one of its member local governments, but not the host. For example, a Florida MPO hosted by a regional council has access to attorneys employed by the largest member county.

About 20 percent of MPOs have a contract with a private law firm, which is the most common response from independent MPOs. Two large independent MPOs (1.5%) maintain an in-house attorney. Five percent of MPOs indicate that they do not have access to legal representation of any kind. A handful of MPOs reported legal advice has never been needed. Other MPOs reported that sometimes a conflict of interest arises, and outside counsel needs to be secured. For example, if the MPO is in a dispute with the city that hosts it, the city attorney is not an option for representation. In this case, the MPO needs to secure an outside law firm for representation.

Employee Benefits

Like other employers, MPOs offer fringe benefits to attract and retain employees. However, the ability to offer other benefits can be limited by available resources. Table 4-4 shows the percentage of MPOs that offer certain fringe benefits. As public agencies, MPOs frequently have the option of participating in benefits programs offered by host agencies, member local governments, or the state.

Table 4-4 Fringe Benefits Offered by MPOs

Benefit	Less than 3 Employees	4 to 9 Employees	Ten or more Employees	All MPOs
Health Insurance	97%	97%	97%	97%
Retirement Plan	97%	97%	97%	97%
Other Insurance ²⁵	80%	87%	94%	86%
Life Insurance	77%	88%	91%	85%
Disability Insurance	70%	77%	85%	77%
Flexible Spending Accounts	68%	81%	70%	74%
Professional Dues	64%	75%	56%	66%
Tuition	30%	57%	74%	52%
Free Parking	57%	43%	58%	52%
Free/Discounted Transit	13%	25%	56%	30%
Carpool Incentives	5%	14%	32%	16%
Child Care	3%	3%	11%	5%

Since most households receive insurance through employers, MPOs offer an array of policies to attract and retain workers. Life, disability, and other²⁵ insurances are available to employees at the vast majority of MPOs. Flexible spending accounts, which offer employees a method to spend tax-free money on health care and dependent care, are offered by three-quarters of MPOs. This question did not attempt to uncover whether the MPO paid all, part, or none of the insurance premium.

²⁵ The survey defined “Other Insurance” as group or employee-paid insurance such as dental, vision, elder care, or any other insurance type.

MPOs often provide tuition and dues benefits so employees can improve their skills and network with peers, benefiting the MPO in various ways. About two-thirds of all MPOs pay for employee professional dues, while just over half provide tuition reimbursement.

The survey asked respondents to report how health insurance and retirement benefits were obtained. Table 4-5 shows the results of this question. An MPO can receive employee benefits from several different sources. Over 80 percent of MPOs procured health insurance through another government agency, such as through their host agency or a member local government.

Table 4-5 Procurement of Health Insurance Plan

Procurement Method	Percent
The host provides insurance as a component of the indirect rate	49%
The host agency directly bills the MPO	18%
The MPO contracts directly with an insurance provider	11%
The MPO contracts with a government agency that is not the host	10%
Other	8%
The MPO does not provide insurance	3%

Chapter 5: MPO Funding and Work Programs

Metropolitan Planning Organizations need operating funds to complete their federally-required mission of managing the 3-C transportation planning and programming process. MPOs receive operating funds from federal, state, and local levels of government, along with occasional non-profit or private sector sources. Operating funds pay the salaries and benefits of professional staff. Money is also needed to pay the hard costs of operating an office, such as rent, supplies, and equipment. MPOs also value flexible funds to pay for discretionary goods and services, such as government relations, employee training, and food.

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the sources and expenditures of operating funds. Also included were a series of questions about the nature of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), consultant use, revenue estimation, and pass-through funds.

Federal Sources

The largest source of MPO operating funds comes from the Metropolitan Planning set-aside described in 23 USC §104(f), commonly referred to as “PL funds.” The pool of PL funds is created by diverting 1.25 percent from six major highway programs. The PL program provided \$304 million in fiscal year 2009. These funds are distributed to states, who in turn distribute the money to individual MPOs. Each state has a different formula for distributing PL funds in their state, but at least some PL must be distributed to each MPO. In practice, 100 percent of MPOs receive PL funds. However, in the survey only 92.5 percent reported receiving PL money. It is not clear why the response was below 100 percent, but may be attributed to poor knowledge of funding schemes or state naming conventions.²⁶

Most MPOs have access to Metropolitan Transit Planning funds, which are described in 49 USC §5303. Commonly known as “Section 5303” funds, this money is distributed to state DOTs based on a formula. The purpose of 5303 money is to support transit planning in metropolitan areas. Each state is free to distribute Section 5303 money by its own formula. The survey indicated that 84 percent of MPOs receive Section 5303 money. States are permitted to combine 5303 and PL funds into a single funding stream, which may explain why 16 percent of respondents reported not receiving 5303 funds. Transit metropolitan planning provided \$94 million nationwide in 2009.

MPOs are not required to spend all PL or 5303 money internally. The MPO is free to pass funds through to another agency, so long as the money supports transportation planning tasks. It is a common occurrence for 5303 money to be passed through to the local transit provider. PL and 5303 money is sometimes made available for planning projects at other agencies like toll authorities, member local governments, or local nonprofits that focus on transportation.

²⁶ The “no” responses came primarily from two states. These states may distribute PL money differently, lump it together with other funding streams or simply use a different nomenclature making the term “PL funds” unfamiliar.

Money from both programs may be stored year-over-year in the MPO's reserve fund. At small MPOs, several years worth of PL and 5303 money is required to conduct a major planning project, such as building a travel demand model or drafting the metropolitan transportation plan.

PL and 5303 funds are not the only federal sources of MPO operating money. Some MPOs reported using funds "flexed" from two other federal sources—Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Surface Transportation Program- Urban Allocation (STP).²⁷ Money received under these programs for planning or operations must appear as a task in the UPWP.

Regions of the country that fail to meet air quality standards under the Clean Air Act are eligible to receive funding through a formula program known as the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program.²⁸ There is no dedicated planning money attached to CMAQ. Instead, CMAQ money can be programmed for a variety of project implementation, public education and planning uses including MPO planning tasks. Among MPOs in air quality non-attainment or maintenance areas, thirty percent have scheduled planning tasks using CMAQ money. Any CMAQ money spent on planning tasks must support the goals of the State Implementation Plan, which generally means the project will improve air quality.

The federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) has a special set-aside (23 USC § 133(d)(3)) for metropolitan areas with more than 200,000 people. Dubbed "urban allocation" or "urban attributable" funds, this money is sent directly to MPOs, and is therefore not subject to state funding formulae. The purpose of the entire STP program is to construct infrastructure. Instead of using this money to construct an infrastructure project, an MPO can choose to reserve some of the STP urban allocation funds for planning tasks. Among eligible MPOs, fifty-two percent choose to flex STP funds for planning.

²⁷ SAFETEA-LU allows two other programs to be flexed into agency operations and planning activities: Equity Bonus, National Highway System (NHS). No MPOs reported receiving funds flexed from these programs for these purposes.

²⁸ CMAQ's authorizing statute is found at 23 USC §149



New York Metropolitan Transportation Council

New York City, NY

The New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) has a complex planning task. NYMTC was created in 1982 when the Tri-State Regional Planning Commission (CT, NY, NJ) was dissolved. NYMTC's originating memorandum of understanding provided that the MPO be hosted by the New York State Department of Transportation. Today, NYMTC remains administratively hosted by NYSDOT, although the agency is not actually located in a DOT office. NYMTC's planning area falls entirely within the state of New York, but the agency has forged formal ties with the MPOs that cover the remainder of the urbanized area in Connecticut and New Jersey.

The MPO planning area includes the five boroughs of New York City, along with Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island, and Westchester, Putnam, and Rockland counties in the lower Hudson Valley. The board itself has nine voting members and seven non-voting members. NYMTC's board is co-chaired by the State DOT Commissioner (permanent co-chair) and the Director of the New York City Department of City Planning (rotating co-chair).

NYMTC's governing board must to approve actions through consensus. Dubbed a "consent agenda," even a single dissenting vote causes the action to fail.

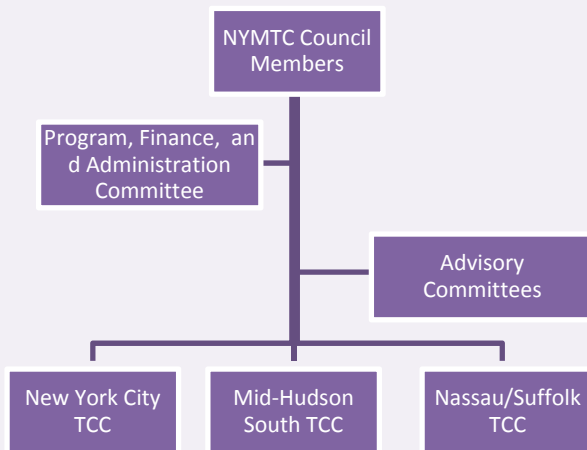
List of Voting Members	List of Non-Voting Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Five elected county executives ➤ Commissioner of NY State DOT ➤ Commissioner of New York City Department of City Planning ➤ Commissioner of New York City Department of Transportation ➤ Metropolitan Transportation Authority (transit provider) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ EPA Region, FHWA Division ➤ FTA Region, North Jersey Transportation Planning Agency ➤ NY Department of Environmental Conservation ➤ New Jersey Transit ➤ Port Authority of New York & New Jersey

Hosting Arrangement:	Component MPO
Host Agency:	New York State Department of Transportation
2008 Population:	12,580,000
Planning Area Square Mileage	2,440
Establishment date	1982
UZAs in Planning Area	> 1
Air Quality Attainment Status	Non-Attainment
Total Employees	59
Part-time Employees	7
Director Tenure	4 years
Voting Members of the Governing Board	9
Non-voting Members of Governing Board	7
UPWP Annual Dollar Amount	\$43,647,000
Percent of UPWP Spent on Consultants	37%
Percent of UPWP Shown for Informational Purposes	24%

A consensus voting system is the rough opposite of a weighted voting system. Consensus voting systems can be useful if the MPO has several non-elected officials on the board, since it difficult to assign a weight to that seat's vote. Consensus voting systems can also help stimulate participation from high-level officials, since each vote is so crucial. The consensus system results in unanimity on important decisions for the region. Often, decisions are agreed to only after difficult negotiations. The ongoing discourse helps to keep parties interested in the regional perspective of transportation issues. Even though the board has a consensus voting system in place, agenda items are rarely—if ever—turned back. Bottom-up planning, early communication, strong leadership, and compromise all help to prevent contentious votes from ever reaching the Council floor.

NYMTC has a wide variety of advisory committees and working groups. The purpose of all advisory committees is to liaise between the MPO, member local governments, and the general public. Advisory committees help inject stakeholder expertise into the planning process. NYMTC has standing advisory committees covering goods movement, bicycle and pedestrian issues, and services for the transportation disadvantaged. There is also a Program, Finance, and Administration Committee which meets bi-monthly to review and vote on items and resolutions critical to the MPO's operation. PFAC members are empowered to vote on behalf of NYMTC Council members (governing board). The Council members meet two-to-three times a year to formally adopt major products.

New York Metropolitan Transportation Council Organizational Chart



One unique aspect of NYMTC's advisory board hierarchy is three sub-regional Transportation Coordinating Committees—one for New York City, one for Long Island, and one for the lower Hudson Valley. Each TCC oversees much of the MPO planning process in their respective sub-region. Some NYMTC employees are assigned to work with a specific TCC, including a handful of staff that work in satellite offices. A TCC is composed of ex-officio elected and appointed officials. Some members of the NYMTC Council also serve on a TCC. For example, the Mid-Hudson South TCC is composed of the three elected county executives, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Executive Director, the New York State DOT regional administrator, and the Executive Director of the local toll authority. The TCC also has non-voting members from Federal agencies, State agencies, and the Southwestern (CT) Regional MPO. Each TCC meets regularly to oversee the development of planning and programming documents in their sub-region, some of which are later combined to produce a document covering the entire NYMTC planning area. Documents are approved by the TCC and sent to the NYMTC governing board for final approval. The figure to the left shows NYMTC's organizational structure.

Date Collected
November 2009

State and Local Sources

The federal government is not the only source of operational funding for MPOs. State and local governments also supply a substantial amount of funding. The survey did not attempt to quantify the amount of state or local funding, because much of the support is offered in the form of in-kind goods or services.²⁹ All MPOs receive either in-kind or monetary support from their state government, host agency, and/or member local governments.

Some MPOs are assigned additional tasks, responsibilities, or duties by state government. The state may ask MPOs to perform tasks such as growth management reviews, hazardous materials transportation regulation, land use planning, or evacuation planning, among a myriad of other tasks. State governments contribute to MPO planning in at least 29 states.³⁰ In several cases, only a portion of MPOs in that state reported receiving state planning money. This may indicate that state funding systems favor certain MPOs over others. Among all MPOs, fifty-four percent reported receiving state funding.

Federal funds (PL, 5303, CMAQ, STP) require a 20 percent match, meaning state and/or local governments must supply two dollars for every eight dollars supplied by the federal government. In some states, the match is met by the state DOT through general revenues or toll-related offsets. In most states, however, each MPO area must supply a monetary or in-kind match in order to receive federal assistance. In narrative comments, some MPOs reported an inability to consistently raise enough local money to meet their match obligation. When the match is insufficient, the MPO is unable to claim the full available amount of federal assistance.

For some MPOs, PL and 5303 funds (plus required local match) are the only sources of operating income. To determine if these two funding streams were sufficient, respondents were asked if they felt PL and 5303 funds provide enough funding to pay for the tasks required of them by federal law. Figure 5-1 shows that only 49 percent agree with the statement, with 38 percent answering no.

²⁹ In-kind support means the unreimbursed contribution of goods and services. For many MPOs, the host agency provides an array of in-kind support. Even independent MPOs can receive in-kind support. Examples of in-kind support are free office space, equipment, participation in a fringe benefits program, or use of fleet vehicles. In-kind support is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

³⁰ The survey received responses from MPOs in 41 states. MPOs in the following states reported receiving state planning funds: AL, AR, AZ, CA, CT, FL, GA, ID, IL, KY, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, NH, NY, OH, OR, PA, SC, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WV.

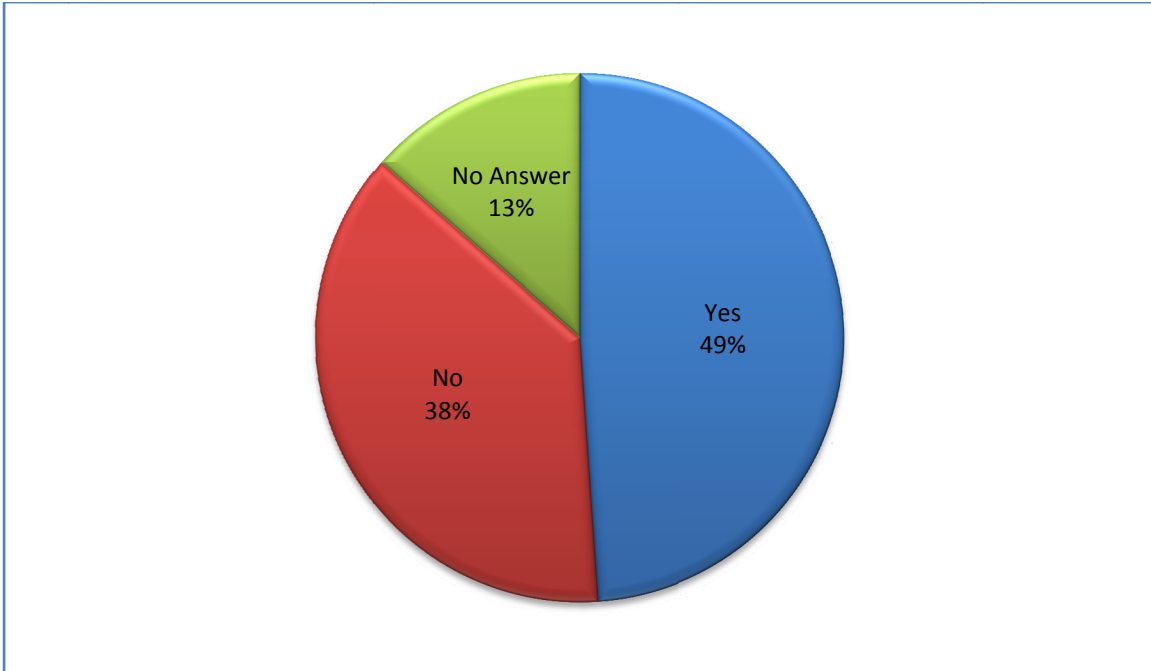


Figure 5-1 Are PL and 5303 funds sufficient to pay for core MPO activities?

Expenditure of Local Funds

For 104 of the 133 agencies participating in the survey, local funds are an important part of the operational funding of the agency. Figure 5-2 shows the cost centers where local funds were applied at MPOs that reported using local money for operations.

Federal sources of planning money do not appear to be sufficient to cover the costs of 3-C planning, since eighty-seven percent of MPOs report spending local money on MPO core activities. A sizable number of MPOs (68%) spent local money operating their office.

Local funds can also support non-MPO core projects or regional leadership activities. MPOs are in an excellent position to convene the local governments in their planning area and organize activities that extend beyond the MPO core requirements. Local funds are used for non-core transportation studies at 59 percent of MPOs. Many of these MPOs are conducting non-core studies on behalf of the state government. State-required tasks are funded with local money at 45 percent of MPOs.

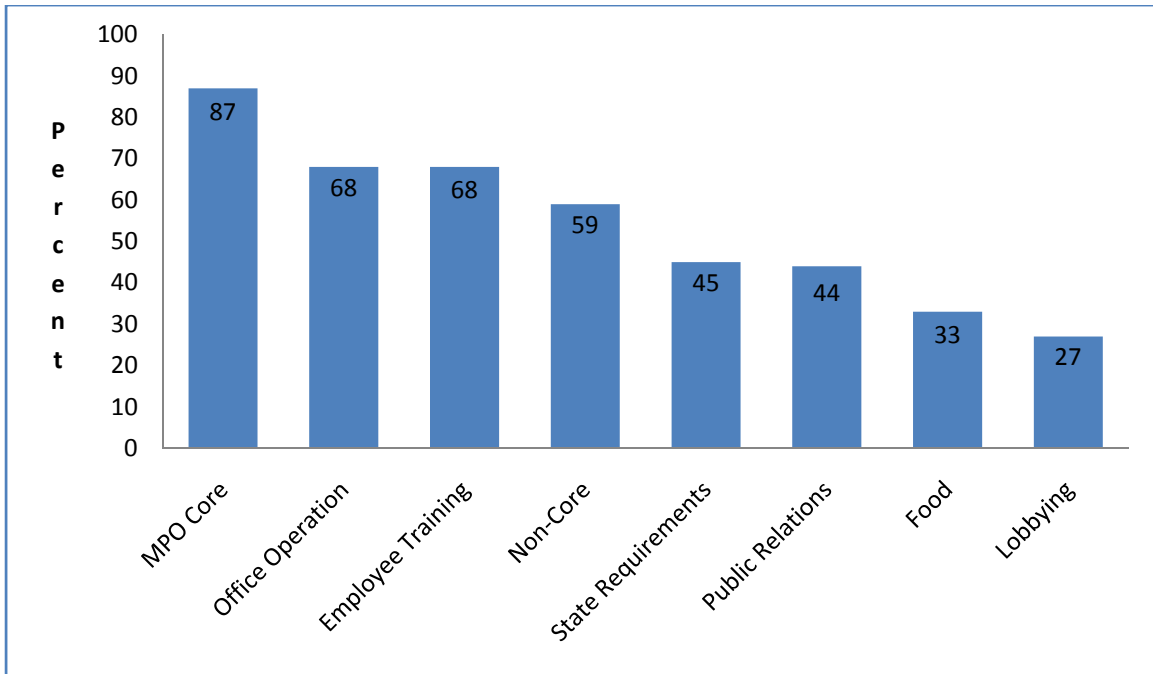


Figure 5-2 Expenditure cost centers for locally-supplied funds.

Regulations prohibit the use of federal money on certain cost centers. Federal money cannot be spent on food, lobbying, or any non-transportation planning related expense. A third of MPOs avoid this prohibition by spending local funds on food for staff, visitors, or the general public. Lobbying is also a forbidden cost center for federal money. Federal money cannot be expended on activities involving lobbying, which is often defined as advocating the passage or defeat of a specific piece of legislation. However, MPO staff is not forbidden from performing policy education³¹ or improving intergovernmental relations³². There is a fine line between policy education and direct lobbying, and some MPOs find it wise to use local money for any activity that borders on lobbying. Expenses may include salary, travel, telephone calls, and meals. Twenty-seven percent of MPOs use local funds for lobbying purposes.

Some employee training also does not qualify for federal money expenditure, if the training is not focused solely on transportation. Many MPO directors and staff prefer that their staff have a broad knowledge base, while in other cases staff members may be required to undertake continuing education requirements to retain a professional certification, such as a CPA license. Local funds are able to bridge the gap in eligibility and pay for employee training that has a wider focus than transportation: sixty-eight percent of MPOs use local funds to support employee training.

³¹ Policy education means producing materials for and speaking with the public and policymakers on issues related to transportation. Examples of this type of activity would be producing a document showing the merits of rail transit, or producing a radio message encouraging drivers to not use mobile phones while driving.

³² Improving intergovernmental relations may include forming a multi-MPO roundtable, meeting with state legislators, or holding a meeting with representatives from a neighboring local government.

Raising Local Funds

Most MPOs (78%) raise money from local governments. Local money is derived by charging dues or accepting voluntary donations from member local governments. The most common method of raising local funds appears to be charging local governments in the MPO area a per-capita rate for dues. Under this method—used by 54 percent of all MPOs collecting local money—each local government is assessed dues based on the proportion of residents living in that jurisdiction relative to the entire MPO planning area population.

There are two methods for calculating per capita dues. Under the first method, the MPO determines how much local money is needed, then divides that amount by the proportion of people in each jurisdiction. For example, the MPO identifies needs of \$100,000 per year, so a city with 14 percent of the region's population is charged \$14,000. The second method of calculating per capita dues is to charge a fixed rate per resident. For example, each local government is charged 8 cents per resident. The second method will result in more money as the region grows, while the first method will bring in the same amount year after year.

Local governments can also be charged a fixed fee. For example, each of the ten member local governments is charged \$10,000 in dues, regardless of the jurisdiction's size. A fixed fee is employed by 30 percent of MPOs that collect local dues. The remaining 16 percent reported "other" when asked about collecting local dues. Narrative comments show that some MPOs collect dues on a voluntary basis or only some local governments paid dues.

Some MPOs are generating revenue through more innovative means. MPOs are able to collect fees for services rendered, such as data distribution, special report production, or facility rental. Nine of the 133 respondents (7%) reported operating income from fees. Some MPOs (16%) pursue competitive grants for pilot projects, research, or tool/data development. In narrative comments, individual MPOs reported income from investments/interest, rental income from subleasing office space, transportation disadvantaged planning funds, foundation money, and corporate donations.



Mid-America Regional Council

Mid-America Regional Council

Kansas City, MO

MPO CASE STUDY

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) is a bi-state MPO covering the greater Kansas City area. MARC encompasses nine counties—four in Kansas and five in Missouri. The MPO area is somewhat smaller, covering seven counties. MARC was formed by a merger of two former regional organizations in 1972, and was designated as the MPO for the Kansas City region in 1974.

Today, MARC is governed by a Board of Directors composed of 33 local elected officials. However, this board has non-transportation responsibilities beyond the MPO role, so a separate 40-member Total Transportation Policy Committee was established after ISTEA to oversee the 3-C process. There is some overlap in membership—by coincidence five members currently serve on both boards—but most local governments choose to send different representatives to the Total Transportation Policy Committee than to the general purpose government regional council Board of Directors.

The Transportation Committee has a detailed set of bylaws that enumerate the qualifications for each seat. The Transportation Committee attempts to assign seats in proportion to the population of the local government being represented. The bylaws require a new appointment (or reappointment) at least every two years. Many seats are occupied by elected officials, but about a quarter of the Transportation Committee are career-service officials. Every seat has one or more pre-designated alternates. Committee membership includes:

- At least one representative from each of the seven counties in the planning area, for a total of thirteen seats. Jackson County, MO has the most representatives, with five.
- Nine seats designated for “joint municipal” representation. Over 110 municipalities share these seats through a group system. Pre-defined groups of municipalities meet and choose from among themselves a representative to the MPO. In general, the municipalities are grouped by county. A group of municipalities can be allocated more than one seat. There is no requirement that the person holding the seat rotate among the group.

Hosting Arrangement:	All-in-One
Host Agency:	Mid-America Regional Council
2008 Population:	1,582,372
Planning Area Square Mileage	2,167
Establishment date	1974
UZAs in Planning Area	2
Air Quality Attainment Status	Attainment
Total Employees	37
Part-time Employees	12
Director Tenure	18 years
Voting Members of the Governing Board	40
Non-voting Members of Governing Board	4
UPWP Annual Dollar Amount	\$26,911,000
Percent of UPWP Spent on Consultants	20.1%
Percent of UPWP Shown for Informational Purposes	54.0%

- Four municipalities are large enough to qualify for a dedicated seat. Eleven seats are allocated to this category. Kansas City, MO has the most seats, with six.
- Three seats allocated to the unified city-county government of Kansas City, KS and Wyandotte County, KS.
- One seat each for the Kansas and Missouri Departments of Transportation.
- Two seats for the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, which provides public transit service in both states.
- Two outlying counties are afforded a non-voting seat on the Transportation Committee.

The full MARC Board of Directors retains the ultimate authority over the MPO. Bylaws allow the MARC Board to turn back an action approved by the Transportation Committee. However, this power has rarely been necessary due to an institutional emphasis on consensus building and bottom-up planning. To support the bottom-up planning process, a set of sixteen committees oversee individual transportation programs. For example, funding available under the Transportation Enhancements program is programmed in the TIP by one committee, while funding from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program is overseen by another. Some committees, like goods movement, set broad policies that impact the long range plan more than the TIP. All MPO committees have elected, appointed, and career-service individuals serving on them.

Committees

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Aviation ➤ Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality ➤ Highway ➤ Kansas Transportation Enhancements ➤ Missouri Transportation Enhancements ➤ Transit ➤ Safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bicycle and Pedestrian ➤ Goods Movement ➤ Kansas STP and Bridge ➤ Missouri STP and Bridge ➤ Traffic Signal Coordination ➤ Transportation Disadvantaged ➤ Legislative |
|---|--|

Over 40 percent of MARC's population lies in Kansas, and the Kansas side of the region has been growing at a faster rate than the Missouri side. Being a bi-state MPO means maintaining relationships with two state DOTs. In MARC's case, each state DOT is organized in a very different fashion. The Kansas DOT maintains an organization that is heavily centralized in the capital, Topeka. Meanwhile, the Missouri DOT is decentralized; administering most of its programs through district offices. However, both DOTs assign a single point of contact for the MPO, which helps to facilitate information sharing. MARC's staffing structure also helps lessen the burden of operating in two states. Non-MPO staff working in public affairs, research services, and financial affairs assist the MPO as needed.

Member local governments are charged per-capita dues. Counties pay around 14 cents per capita. Large cities are charged 12 cents, with smaller cities 10 cents. Dues raise over \$300,000 for the MPO each year. This amount is above the dues charged by the non-MPO components of MARC. However, dues are not used to meet MARC's local match to receive federal planning funds.

In order to meet the required match, MARC uses in-kind project participation matching. In this form of match, the costs of planning projects by member local governments and state DOTs are credited toward the required local match. For example, MoDOT keeps track of the state-funded hours and expenses used to collect data that feeds into MARC's travel demand model. Projects that are used for participation matching are shown in the UPWP, which explains the high proportion of informational money reported by MARC.

Date Collected

May 2010

Unified Planning Work Programs

Every MPO must adopt a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP),³³ which is a document that explains the disposition of transportation planning funds in the MPO area. The UPWP is not mentioned in federal statute, but it is mandated by regulation implemented after ISTEA and reiterated after SAFETEA-LU. The document must contain “a description of the planning work and resulting products, who will perform the work, time frames for completing the work, the cost of the work, and the source(s) of funds.” The UPWP is expected to show planning funds from all sources.

The UPWP contains several important pieces of information. The UPWP serves as the budget of the MPO’s planning activities, including planning studies, programming, public involvement, consultant expenses, administration, and general office operation. The UPWP also includes scopes of work for consultant contracts that are to be let during the document’s effective term.

Funds under control of the MPO can be passed through to another planning agency. For example, transit planning money (5303 funds) might be passed through to the public transit provider to perform a feasibility study on regional buses. Any pass-through activity must appear in the UPWP.

As encouraged by federal regulation, the UPWP often shows non-MPO projects and funding for informational purposes. For example, if a toll authority is examining the feasibility of a new toll bridge, the cost and scope of that study is usually shown in the UPWP, even though the MPO has little or no control over those funds.

New implementation regulations stemming from SAFETEA-LU allowed the UPWP to be one or two years in length.³⁴ Respondents were asked four questions about the UPWP: the total dollar amount, the amount reserved for consultants, the amount reserved for internal use, and the amount shown for informational purposes. However, the survey instrument did not ask whether the UPWP was one or two years in length. If the effective length of each UPWP was known, descriptive statistics could have been calculated. Since this information was not collected, only ratio-based statistics are available. Figure 5-3 shows the types of funds shown in all UPWPs in the survey.

Informational Purposes

Many UPWPs contain money that is presented for informational purposes. For example, the UPWP may show money being expended by the local public transit agency. This money cannot be used by the MPO for internal expenses. Generally, informational funds are shown to highlight relevant transportation planning work occurring in the region, which could impact the MPO’s documents or decisions.

Informational money can also be included in the UPWP to meet the MPO’s local match requirements for federal planning assistance.

³³ MPOs with less than 200,000 people in the planning area are eligible to complete a “simplified work program” in lieu of a formal UPWP. Regulation does not clarify how this document differs from a UPWP.

³⁴ Section 450.308 Code of Federal Regulations.

Forty-nine of the 133 respondents reported that there is informational money shown in their UPWP. In cases where money is shown, informational funds average 17 percent of the total UPWP. Larger MPOs (over 500,000, 10+ employees) tend to show more informational money in the UPWP.

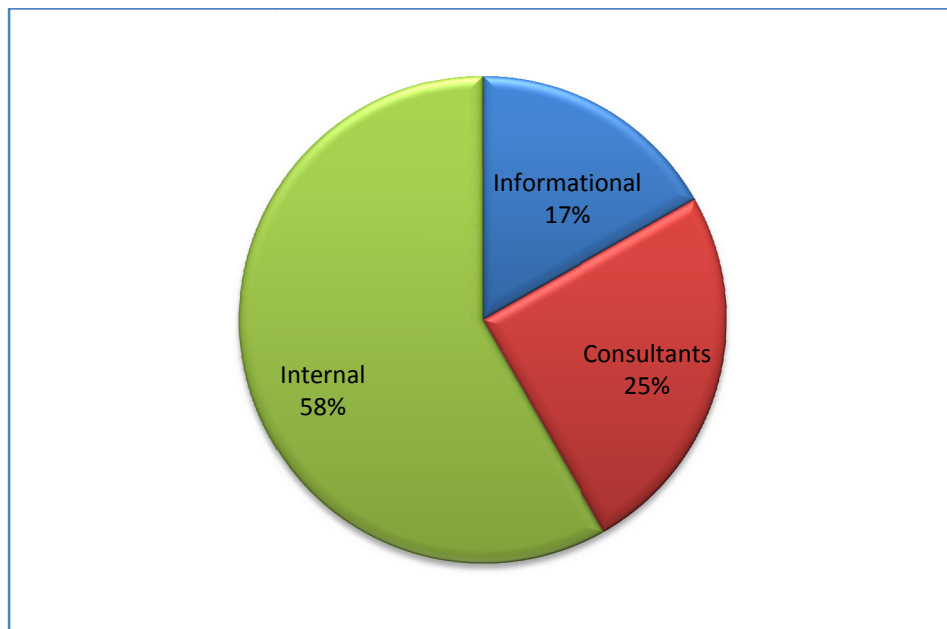


Figure 5-3 Type of funding in UPWP.

Consultants and Contractors

Respondents were asked to report the dollar amount from their UPWP that was slated for expenditure with outside groups. The majority of the money in this category is spent with consulting firms specializing in urban planning, engineering, public involvement, or other services that support the transportation planning process. Under the definition given in the survey, this category also includes contractors who provide goods and services not related to transportation planning, such as computer support or office maintenance. The average amount spent on consultants is 25 percent. When informational money is eliminated from the calculation, forty cents of every dollar spent by the MPO goes to contractors. There does not appear to be a trend when the respondents are broken into population or staff size categories.

Consultant Work

Consultants play a large role in the metropolitan planning process. Among survey respondents, only one reported not using consultants. Some MPOs use consultants for *supplemental labor*. Supplemental labor is often necessary due to the cyclical nature of MPO document adoption. Several comments were received about the need to employ consultants at critical points during the planning cycle. A metropolitan transportation plan is completed every 4-5 years, and takes about 18 months to draft. It can be more efficient to hire a consultant during the busy periods of plan drafting than it is to hire a permanent employee. Other MPOs use consultants as *substitute labor* in lieu of a full-time staff member. In these situations, the MPO will hire a consulting firm on a semi-permanent basis to provide

staff services to the MPO. One advantage of a substitute labor arrangement is the ability to deploy different specialties under one contract.

General services consultants are often on a retainer to perform work on-demand for the MPO for a fixed period of time, usually to a maximum number of hours. The tasks given to the general services consultant may be of any size or complexity. An MPO that employs a general services consultant is likely deploying a substitute labor strategy. General services consultants are employed by 19.5 percent of survey respondents.

Most consultant contracts are awarded for the completion of a specific task. The largest category is special studies, defined as documents or plans that are not a part of the MPO core.³⁵ Some examples of special studies are: corridor plans, subarea studies, modal plans, freight studies, or safety audits. Consultants are given contracts for special studies by 82.7 percent of MPOs. This compares with only 23.3 percent of MPOs employing consultants to draft core documents.

Travel demand modeling is a complex task that some MPOs cannot complete using in-house staff—39.1 percent of MPOs hire a consultant to operate or assist with the development of their model. In narrative comments, several MPOs point out that consultants often build the travel demand model, while MPO staff operates the model on an on-going basis.

Respondents were asked to check boxes if any of the core MPO documents are drafted using consultant support or entirely in-house. The metropolitan transportation plan is the only document to receive serious assistance from consultants. Almost all respondents reported completing other core MPO documents in-house.

³⁵ The MPO core is defined as the following documents: metropolitan transportation plan, transportation improvement program, and unified planning work program. At TMAs, the congestion management process is considered to be part of the MPO core. In air quality non-attainment or maintenance areas, conformity analyses are considered to be part of the MPO core.



Indianapolis MPO

Indianapolis, IN

The Indianapolis MPO is one of the largest local government-hosted MPOs to participate in the survey. The MPO is hosted by the City of Indianapolis¹ Department of Metropolitan Development. The Department includes land use planning, economic development, historic preservation, and housing. The MPO generally does not share staff with other offices in the Department. However, the MPO often engages the public through joint events and publications with related city offices. The MPO pays a flat fee to the City for a package of services including human resources, payroll, legal, procurement, and IT services.

The Indianapolis MPO is overseen by two separate bodies: the Metropolitan Development Commission (MDC), and the Indianapolis Regional Transportation Council (IRTC). A new set of bylaws approved in 2009 delineates the responsibilities of each oversight group.

The IRTC Policy Committee is the group that most resembles a traditional MPO Board. It is responsible for overseeing and adopting all MPO documents. The Council is composed of thirty eight voting members. Every local government—36 in total—is afforded a seat on the Council. Each seat has an equal vote. Indiana has two types of municipal government: cities and towns. The elected mayor of each city sits on the IRTC. Towns, which do not have elected mayor, are free to designate anyone to occupy their IRTC seat. Some towns designate a career-service town administrator to serve on the IRTC, while others designate an elected councilmember. The eight counties send one of the elected executive commissioners to sit on the Council. In addition to the local government seats, the transit authority and the chair of the Metropolitan Development Commission (discussed below) have a voting seat. The Mayor of Indianapolis has traditionally been elected the chair of the IRTC. FHWA, FTA, and the Indiana Department of Environmental Protection are afforded non-voting seats. The MPO sends a population-based dues invoice to all of its member local governments to raise matching funds for the PL and 5303 programs. Members who do not pay their dues are not entitled to vote on the IRTC board.

¹The City of Indianapolis is a unified government with Marion County, IN.

Hosting Arrangement:	Component MPO
Host Agency:	City of Indianapolis
2000 Population:	1,299,722
Planning Area Square Mileage	1,337
Establishment date	1974
UZAs in Planning Area	1
Air Quality Attainment Status	Non-Attainment
Total Employees	14
Part-time Employees	0
Director Tenure	5
Voting Members of the Governing Board	38
Non-voting Members of Governing Board	3
Standing Advisory Committees	Technical
UPWP Annual Dollar Amount	\$2,500,000
Percent of UPWP Spent on Consultants	64.7%
Percent of UPWP Shown for Informational Purposes	2.9%

The IRTC meets quarterly. More frequent or emergency meetings are very difficult to arrange, due to the complex schedules of such a large board. To help fill this gap, the MPO is forming an executive committee of the IRTC. The executive committee will be able to make temporary decisions until the next meeting of the full Council. This will help the MPO operate under short timeframes, such as emergency TIP amendments or extremely tight approval schedules like the one mandated by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The IRTC does not have total control over the MPO. The MPO's budget is approved by the Indianapolis City-County Council, and the Metropolitan Development Commission (MDC) is charged with allocating and disbursing the funds. The MDC also has oversight and approval authority over the UPWP and all MPO contracts. The MDC is an organ of the City of Indianapolis, and in many other cities would be called the 'planning commission.' It is composed of citizens appointed by the Mayor and City Council of Indianapolis, several of which have served for long periods on the Commission. The MDC meets regularly to consider other planning-related issues such as zoning variances, economic development plans, and historic preservation issues. MPO issues come before the MDC during regular meetings.

The MPO has fourteen staff members organized into five functional groups. The administrative group covers the UPWP, budgeting, contracting, and board management. This group is headed by the assistant director, who oversees two other staff members including the MPO's sole administrative assistant. The data group (3 employees) performs technical tasks like building the GIS database, operating the travel demand model, and performing traffic counts. A three-member long range planning group has primary responsibility for the 20-year metropolitan transportation plan, along with special studies that support the plan such as the congestion management process and freight corridor studies. The transportation improvement program—and the intergovernmental coordination that goes with it—is handled by a 2-member TIP group. Finally, transit studies and bicycle/pedestrian planning are covered by two staff members.

Besides the bylaws overhaul in 2009, the MPO has had the same administrative structure since its founding in 1974. However, forecasted growth in the region may result in changes to the MPO over the coming decades. The Anderson Urbanized Area (hosted by the Madison County Council of Governments) ends less than a mile from the Indianapolis UZA. It is expected that the 2010 Census will show only one UZA. Preliminary discussions have taken place about alternative organizational structures, although no decisions will be made until at least 2012 when Census results are announced.

Revenue Estimates

In order to complete a long range transportation plan and a transportation improvement program, the MPO must have access to accurate revenue estimates. The financial figures are used to determine which projects are cost-feasible.³⁶ Revenue estimation can be a complex issue because the projects in MPO documents are funded with federal, state, local, and sometimes private money. Each of these sources must be analyzed separately, and then pooled for analysis. The survey asked respondents to check a box if any of the following statements were true. The percentage of MPOs answering affirmatively is shown in parentheses:

- The MPO performed all revenue forecasts in-house (36.8%)
- A state agency provides state and federal revenue projections (66.9%)
- A state agency provides local revenue projections (12.0%)
- Local governments provide the MPO with revenue information (39.1%)
- The MPO's consultant provides some or all revenue estimates (24.8%)

It was possible for the respondent to check more than one box. For example, the MPO might receive local revenue estimates from a consultant, and also get state or federal information from the state government. The majority of MPOs do not perform revenue estimation in-house, although a sizable minority is able to complete this task without assistance. The results suggest that state agencies³⁷ generally take the lead in providing revenue estimates, although these estimates are often developed cooperatively with MPOs and transit agencies.

Although local roads must be a part of system analysis, there is no requirement that improvements to non-federal aid roadways be included in MPO documents. Some MPOs choose to include non-federal aid improvements on an equal basis; others include these projects for informational purposes only, and still others make no mention of local projects.

There does not appear to be any difference in the source of revenue projections between hosted and independent MPOs. This suggests that host agencies are generally not involved in revenue forecasting. MPOs with larger staffs (ten or more) are more likely to perform revenue forecasting in-house. This may indicate that MPOs with larger staffs have the capacity, tools, and specialization to perform revenue forecasting. Local governments play a larger role in revenue forecasting at MPOs over 200,000 in population.

³⁶ The term cost feasible means that adopted projects can be built with funds that can be reasonably anticipated to be received within the timeframe of the planning document. The metropolitan transportation plan and the transportation improvement program are required by law to be cost feasible.

³⁷ The term "State agencies" refers to the Department of Transportation (or equivalent) or the Department of Revenue/Taxation (or equivalent). Often, revenue projections are issued as a joint effort between the two state agencies.

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Chapter 6: Workforce Issues

All MPOs in the survey employed staff³⁸ to carry out the 3-C planning and programming process under the direction of the MPO board. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, MPO staff members are employed in a wide variety of circumstances. Collectively, MPOs face a common set of workforce issues including employee turnover, appropriate salary, career progression, competition for specialized labor, and impending retirement of senior staff.

Using the following definitions, survey respondents were asked to assign MPO employees to one of four staff categories including directors, senior managers, professional employees, and administrative employees.

- *Directors* are the chief staff person who reports to the MPO governing board. The director may have a supervisor if the MPO is hosted. However, the MPO director is the person responsible for interacting with the governing board and federal agencies. The Director of record is listed in the official FHWA database of MPOs.
- *Senior managers* are individuals who direct major components of the MPO operation, and supervise multiple employees.
- *Professional employees* comprise the bulk of the MPO workforce. Professionals generally hold a bachelors degree or higher, and have specialized skills that contribute to the 3-C process. Professionals exercise considerable independence in their day-to-day operations, although they are supervised by senior managers or the director.
- *Administrative employees* perform tasks that are not central to the 3-C process, but are essential to operation of the MPO. These tasks include clerical, office management, computer support, and secretarial work. Administrative employees do not exercise independence in daily operations. Very few questions were asked about administrative employees, although they are counted in figures describing the size of MPO staffs.

MPO Directors

Every MPO must designate a manager who interacts with the FHWA Division and FTA Region, and is responsible for the MPO's operation and planning products. While independent MPO directors report only to the MPO board, the director at a hosted MPO may report to one or more supervisors in addition to the MPO board.

The mean tenure of an MPO staff director in his or her current position is 8.5 years. The highest quarter of MPO directors have been in their position for more than eleven years, while the bottom quarter for less than three. As urban area population increases, so does the tenure of the MPO director. At MPOs with less than 200,000 people, the mean director tenure is 7.2 years. Mean tenure increases to 9.3

³⁸ The research team is aware of at least three MPOs where all staff services are contracted to a consultant. None of these MPOs answered the survey.

years at MPOs with 200,000 to 500,000 people. Tenure jumps again to 10.4 years at MPOs with over 1 million people.

There are several possible reasons why director tenure is longer at larger MPOs. Foremost is the presence of newly established MPOs in the smallest population categories. Since MPOs designated after the 2000 Census were established in 2003/2004, the maximum director tenure would be 6-7 years, pulling down the mean at small MPOs. Other factors affecting lower tenure in smaller MPOs include low pay or little opportunity for career progression.

As a group, current directors have been in charge of the MPO for a substantial portion of the MPO's existence. The ratio of total years of service of all directors to total years of MPO operation is 0.34. This means the average MPO director has been in place for 34 percent of his or her agency's existence. Twenty-two percent of MPO directors reported being in charge since the MPO was formed.

In part due to the "staying power" of MPO directors, many are approaching the end of their career. A sizable portion of MPO directors are approaching retirement age. Table 6-1 shows the number of respondents who are approaching retirement age.³⁹ More than half of MPO directors are expected to retire within the next ten years. The impending retirement of a sizable number of MPO directors raises difficult questions about the talent pool of MPO managers.

Table 6-1 Retirement Horizon of MPO Directors

Retirement Horizon	Number	Percent
Less than five years	36	29%
Five to ten years	31	25%
Ten years or more	57	46%

Federal law and regulation do not comment on the independence of the MPO director. There is no requirement that the MPO director be a completely independent manager. In situations where the MPO is independent, the director answers only to the MPO board. However, the hierarchy of leadership at hosted MPOs varies considerably.

Many MPO directors report a split in authority over their supervision. Several dozen survey responses indicate that the MPO director reports to one, two or even three supervisors. In all cases, the MPO director looks to the Governing Board for supervision and adoption of the MPO's planning products. However, the MPO Governing Board does not always hold the authority to hire, fire, promote, or renegotiate the salary of the MPO director. These supervisory tasks may rest with a manager in host agency, the host agency board, or even a solitary elected official.

The survey asked respondents to identify the individual or group who has the power to hire, fire, promote, and negotiate the salary of the MPO director. The responses from hosted agencies included:

³⁹ For the purposes of this question, "retirement age" was considered to be the age when the individual is eligible for full retirement benefits. If no fixed age was available, respondents were instructed to use 65 years of age.

1. The Host agency director (43%), such as the executive director of a regional council.
2. The MPO governing board (32%).
3. The host agency board (12%). Often two boards are in operation at a single host agency: the host agency board and the MPO board.
4. A host agency employee who is not the host agency director (9%). In this type of arrangement, there are two or more career service employees in the hierarchy above the MPO director.
5. A solitary elected official (4%), such as an elected county executive or mayor.



Salisbury-Wicomico MPO

Salisbury, MD

MPO CASE STUDY

The Salisbury-Wicomico Metropolitan Planning Organization (S-W MPO) was established in 2004. The planning area encompasses one urbanized area, but two counties—each in a different state. The policy board or Council is made up of 11 members—9 voting and 2 non-voting. They represent the cities of Salisbury and Fruitland, the Town of Delmar, and a portion of Wicomico County on the Maryland side. In Delaware, the Town of Delmar and a portion of Sussex County are included in the planning area. All voting members have one vote with the exception of Wicomico County, which has three, and Salisbury, which has two votes.

The MPO is hosted by Wicomico County. The Council meets quarterly in a board room shared with the host agency. The Council has established an Executive Committee to address minor business issues when it is not feasible to wait for the next Council meeting. The Executive Committee is made up of the Council’s Chairperson, Vice-Chair, and one other Board Member.

When the 2000 Census showed that the population of the Salisbury area exceeded 50,000, a new urbanized area was designated. Salisbury, Maryland and Wicomico County have a joint city/county planning commission, and a joint Planning Department. After being designated as an urbanized area and, therefore, required to form an MPO, this planning department seemed the logical choice for hosting the agency. In particular, it did not seem feasible to establish an independent agency based on anticipated planning funds of about \$100,000. No particular operational issues arose for this start-up MPO. On the other hand, political issues such as the number of votes allocated to the various jurisdictions and the name of the organization were the topic of several discussions.

List of Voting Members

- Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)
- Wicomico County (3)
- City of Salisbury (2)
- City of Fruitland
- Town of Delmar, Maryland
- Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland

List of Non-Voting Members

- Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT)
- Town of Delmar, Delaware

Hosting Arrangement:	Dual Purpose MPO
Host Agency	Wicomico County
2008 Population:	59,426
Planning Area Square Mileage	65
Establishment date	2004
UZAs in Planning Area	1
Air Quality Attainment Status	Attainment
Total Employees	2
Part-time Employees	2
Director Tenure	6 years
Voting Members of the Governing Board	9
Non-voting Members of Governing Board	2
UPWP Annual Dollar Amount	\$106,000
Percent of UPWP Spent on Consultants	60%
Percent of UPWP Shown for Informational Purposes	0%

The Director of Planning, Zoning, and Community Development for Salisbury and Wicomico County has also served as the MPO Director since its inception. He was perceived as the logical choice for Director due to his position in the joint city/county planning department. As a county employee, the Director reports to the elected Wicomico County Executive who has hiring and firing authority over him. The Director is a career service employee of Salisbury, and draws no salary from MPO funds. The Director of Planning, Zoning, and Community Development supervises the Chief of Transportation and Long Range Planning who charges only about 5-10 percent of his time on the MPO. A professional planner spends about half of his or her time on MPO work, and is the main source of 3-C process labor.

Funding sources include federal planning (PL) funds, state-supplied planning funds, and federal transit planning funds (5303), but no local funds. The required match is provided in-kind. Available funds are spent exclusively on MPO core activities. Documents prepared in-house include the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and Public Participation Plan (PPP). Work on the long range transportation plan is performed by a consultant funded entirely through the Maryland Department of Transportation. No travel demand modeling is performed by the MPO.

No employees are devoted specifically to public participation. However, public participation is a task in the UPWP. The MPO website is devoted to providing information to the public. In addition, necessary public involvement activities take place in coordination with the development of MPO products. No employees are devoted to safety, bicycle/pedestrian, or transit planning; however, these modes are addressed in the long range transportation plan and the transportation development plan.

Of MPO PL funds received, 40 percent goes to salaries and the remaining 60 percent goes for direct expenses or special projects. These projects include corridor studies or other special studies including participation in a current freight movement study. These studies are commonly performed by consultants, although some data and mapping work is performed by the city/county planning department. A management agreement between the city and county governs cost-sharing of the building; the MPO pays no money for office space, utilities, etc.—these costs are incorporated into the 10 percent MPO match. If additional funds were available, the MPO would perform more long range corridor studies and seek to make a better connection between land use and transportation.

Date Collected

May 2010

Senior Managers

Over seventy percent of MPOs have at least one senior manager. There are 216 senior managers identified in the survey, with a mean of 1.8 per MPO. The most common number of senior managers is one. Since the definition of a senior manager was to supervise multiple employees, the frequency of senior managers is naturally more common at larger MPOs.

Like MPO directors, a sizable proportion of senior managers are approaching retirement. The preponderance of senior managers nearing retirement age may indicate a pending leadership vacuum at MPOs. Table 6-2 shows the retirement horizon of senior managers.

Table 6-2 Retirement Horizon of Senior Managers

Retirement Horizon	Number	Percent of all Senior Managers
Less than five years	52	24.4%
Five to ten years	67	30.8%
Ten years or more	97	44.9%
Total	216	--

Professional Employees

The survey recorded 853 professional employees at participating MPOs. Professional employees tend to be in the first five years of employment with the MPO. Table 6-3 shows the distribution of professional employee tenure.

Table 6-3 Professional Employee Tenure with the MPO

Tenure with the MPO	Number	Percent
Less than five years	331	38.8%
Five to ten years	240	28.1%
Ten years or more	282	33.1%
Total	853	--

In narrative comments, several respondents reported that professional staff members are in early stages of their career, such as recent graduates. A handful of MPOs reported that under-qualified individuals—such as those lacking a college degree—are performing professional job tasks on a regular basis. High rates of turnover are anecdotally reported among professional employees, and are discussed in depth later in this chapter. Many respondents cite an inability to recruit individuals with specific skills, such as travel demand model operators. Modelers (and modeling managers) were reported to be paid more than others, and are particularly difficult to retain for long periods.

Employee Turnover

The number and scope of the available positions at each MPO may change over time to meet the evolving needs of the organization. It is important to separate the concept of a position and an employee. A position is a semi-permanent budget line item or organizational title. Employees are hired to fill a position. Positions can be eliminated and created, but this typically happens less frequently than employee turnover.

It appears that the number of positions on MPO staffs, on the whole, is growing. Forty-four MPOs reported creating a new position over the previous two years (2007 and 2008). Only twenty-four MPOs eliminated a position over the same timeframe. Respondents were asked to explain the type of positions that were created or eliminated. After narrative comments were reviewed, a pattern emerged. It appears that the positions being created are due to increased emphasis on certain planning tasks, and a need for para-professional support. Eliminated positions seem to be more related to budget uncertainty, expiration of projects/grants, or trending away from general administrative services.

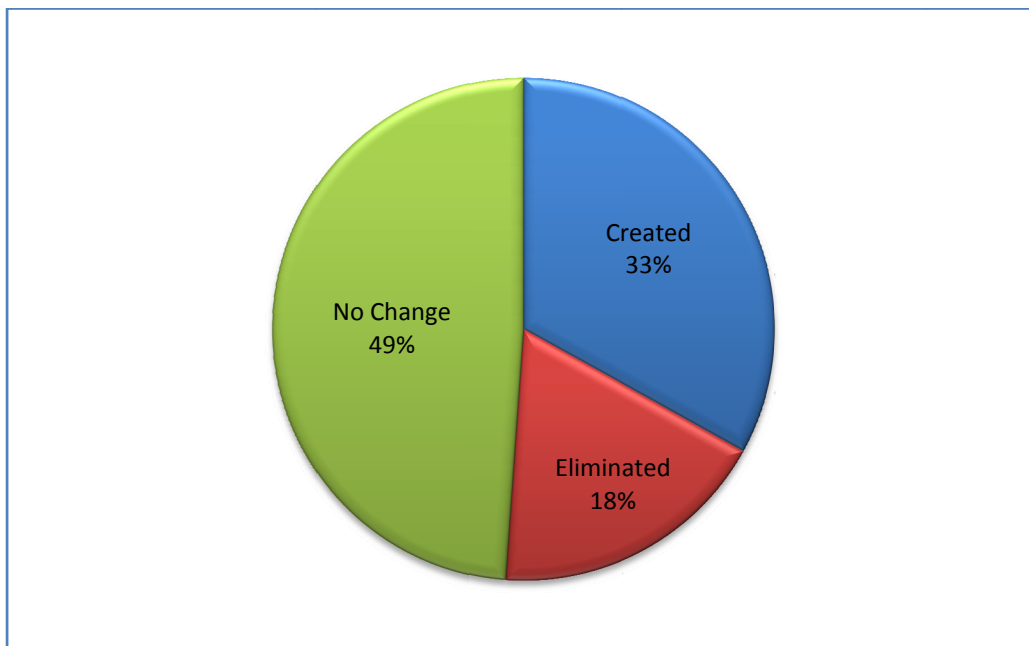


Figure 6-1 Position Creation and Elimination 2007-2008

Several MPOs commented that their travel demand model or GIS systems were moved in-house during the past two years, and funds being spent on consultants are instead used to hire full-time employees. Some MPOs created positions for a bicycle/pedestrian coordinator, safety specialists, or administrators relating to Safe Routes to School. These are new emphasis areas—and therefore funding sources—under SAFETEA-LU. Another trend observed from the narrative comments is a trend away from traditional administrative employees toward specialized para-professionals. For example, several administrative assistant positions were eliminated while several planning technician positions were

created. While it is likely the planning technician continues to perform duties similar to the administrative assistant, the position now requires additional training and skills.

MPOs were asked to report the number of people occupying professional jobs that left the MPO for another job over the last two years (2007 and 2008). MPOs were asked for figures over the past two years to collect a more robust information set. The number of jobs turned over was annualized (recalculated into one year) for the calculation of the following statistics.

MPOs appear to have fairly stable staff rosters, particularly among larger agencies. The mean number of positions that are vacated at any MPO in any given year is calculated to be 0.88. When compared to the number of jobs available at all MPOs in the study, this can be expressed as a percentage—12.47 percent of MPO jobs can be expected to turn over each year.

It appears that smaller MPOs have more difficulty retaining employees. Table 6-4 shows the mean number of employee departures and percentage staff turnover rate. There is a trend for higher staff turnover at smaller MPOs. Large and mid-sized MPOs (10 or more employees) enjoy lower turnover rates.

Table 6-4 Turnover Statistics by MPO Staff Size

Employees at the MPO	Mean Number of Employee Departures Per Year	Percentage Staff Turnover Per Year
More than 20	1.8	4.09%
10 to 20	0.96	6.12%
4 to 9	0.76	10.74%
0 to 3	0.61	20.12%
All MPOs	0.88	12.47%

Employee retention is also better at MPOs with a more populous planning area. Agencies with population under 500,000 people have experienced double-digit percentage annual staff turnover at nearly 15 percent. Staff turnover at MPOs with over one million people averaged 3 percent.

Table 6-5 Turnover Statistics by Planning Area Population

Population in Planning Area	Average Number of Employees in this Class	Mean Number of Employee Departures Per Year	Percentage Staff Turnover Per Year
1 million or more	47.1	1.37	3.26%
500,000-1,000,000	14.8	0.95	9.14%
200,000-500,000	7.8	0.90	16.06%
100,000-200,000	5.5	0.89	13.55%
50,000-100,000	3.5	0.40	14.77%
All MPOs	13.7	0.88	12.47%

Where Employees Go

Respondents were asked to report last three non-administrative employees who left the MPO to pursue other employment. Retirements and administrative-type positions were expressly excluded. Two pieces of information are collected about the departed employee(s): 1) the staff specialization of that person; and 2) the type of employer that the departed person worked for immediately after leaving the MPO. Respondents reported 188 positions being vacated over the last two years.⁴⁰

As shown in Table 6-6, the vast majority of departed professionals were urban planners (58%). The “Other” category included air quality, public involvement, and financial specialists, along with other uncategorized positions, and comprised 16 percent of vacated positions. Computer tool specialists like GIS and travel demand modeling made up 10 percent each.

Table 6-6 Position Types Vacated 2007-2008

Position Type	Number
Planner	109
Other	31
GIS	19
Modeler	18
Engineer	11
Total	188

Next, respondents were asked to categorize the new jobs of people who left the MPO. The purpose of this question is to determine which kinds of employers are attracting MPO workers. The results are shown in Figure 6-2. About 26 percent of departing MPO employees secured employment working for consultants. This is the second most common result, trailing only behind Non-Transportation Government jobs.

As many as 40 percent of all departing MPO employees leave the transportation field upon separating from the MPO—thirty percent take jobs in other arms of government, while 10 percent take unrelated positions.

⁴⁰ Forty-eight MPOs (36%) reported no staff departures.

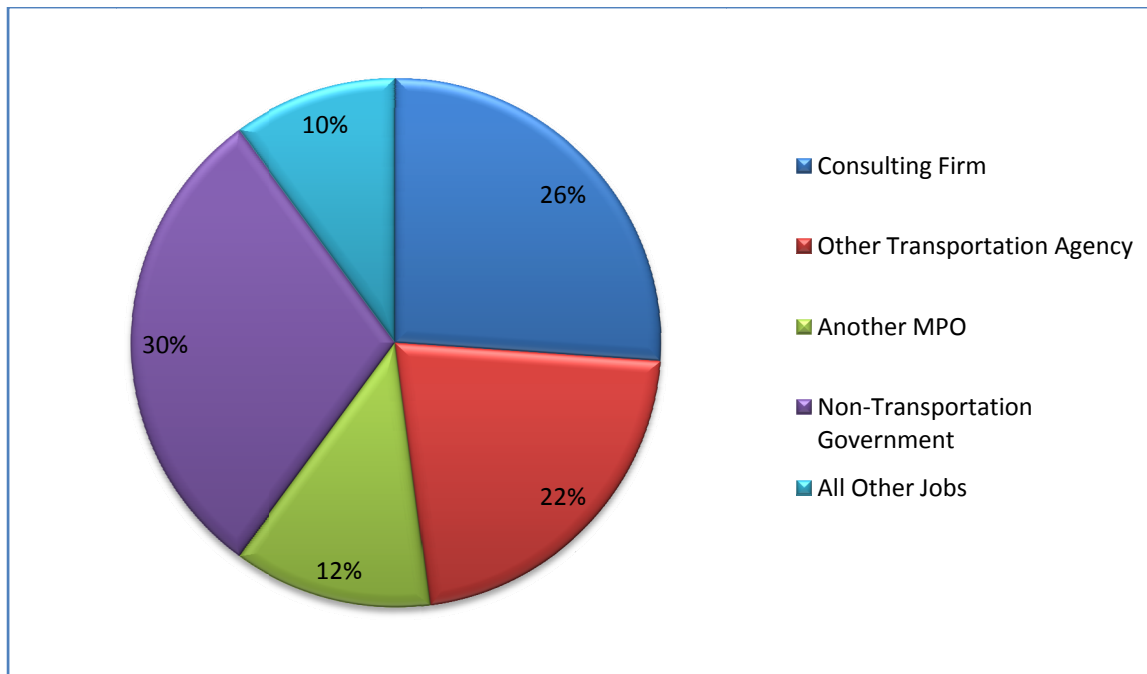


Figure 6-2 Destination of employees recently separated from MPOs.

Modelers and engineers seem to be highly valued by consultants, as more than half of those professionals are hired by consulting firms. Urban planners are the least likely to be hired by a consulting firm, but are the most likely to be hired by another transportation agency.

Table 6-7 Destination of Departed Employees

Type	Percent to Consulting Firms	Percent to Transportation Agencies	Percent Leaving Transportation
Planner	20.2%	40.3%	39.4%
Other ⁴¹	25.8%	9.7%	32.3%
GIS	21.1%	31.5%	47.4%
Modeler	50.0%	38.9%	11.1%
Engineer	54.4%	36.5%	9.1%
Total	26.1%	34.0%	39.9%

⁴¹ In addition to the position titles shown in table 6-10, several other choices were offered as potential responses. Because the frequencies were so small, they were grouped with the "Other" category for analysis purposes. The available responses, along with the number answered were: Intergovernmental/Public Relations (1), Environmental Specialist (1), and Air Quality Specialist (5).



Corvallis Metropolitan Planning Organization

Corvallis, OR

MPO CASE STUDY

The Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) is located in Corvallis, Oregon. It was established in 2002 after the population of Corvallis reached 58,229 as determined by the 2000 US Census. Despite the City of Corvallis' interest in hosting the MPO, CAMPO was established as an independent agency to avoid over-reliance or control by any single local government. It is governed by a Policy Board consisting of representatives from the following member agencies: City of Corvallis, City of Philomath, City of Adair Village, Benton County, and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). All members have one vote on the Policy Board with the exception of the City of Corvallis which has three votes due to its larger population.

List of Voting Members

- City of Corvallis
- City of Philomath
- City of Adair Village
- Benton County
- Oregon Department of Transportation

All necessary interlocal agreements were in place prior to the hiring of the CAMPO Director. The Policy Board contracted with Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (OCWCOG) for personnel, bookkeeping, and computer services. CAMPO also pays rent for office space within a branch office of the OCWCOG in downtown Corvallis. The director position was advertised in various planning job lists and interviews were conducted by the OCWCOG Director and several Policy Board members.

The Director initially hired has been in place since November 2003. The Director receives direction from the Policy Board; however, he meets regularly with the COG Director. The Policy Board may turn performance concerns over the OCWCOG Director to address with the CAMPO Director, including termination of employment. It is unclear if the OCWCOG Director may terminate the CAMPO Director without the authorization of the Policy Board.

Hosting Arrangement:	Leaning Independent
2008 Population:	58,229
Planning Area Square Mileage	49
Establishment date	2002
UZAs in Planning Area	1
Air Quality Attainment Status	Attainment
Total Employees	1
Part-time Employees	0
Director Tenure	6 years
Voting Members of the Governing Board	5
Non-voting Members of Governing Board	0
UPWP Annual Dollar Amount	\$356,000
Percent of UPWP Spent on Consultants	0%
Percent of UPWP Shown for Informational Purposes	8%

The Director is CAMPO's only full-time employee. Therefore, the Director performs all planning functions required by the Policy Board including public involvement, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian planning—all which are important to local governments within the MPO area. An employee that CAMPO shares with OCWCOG (0.33 to 0.66 FTE) performs bookkeeping and other administrative work. Operational finances are limited to federal PL funds (90%) with a 10 percent match from ODOT; member local governments have hesitated to contribute local funds to MPO efforts.

Some planning activities cannot be accomplished due to lack of funds including more detailed travel demand modeling, development of a transportation infrastructure database, and identification of sidewalk and bike lanes deficiencies. Currently, ODOT maintains the travel demand model in exchange for local data needed to run the model. Additional modeling of specific alternatives or scenario planning would cost additional funds. In the past, the CAMPO Director was able to secure supplemental funding from Oregon's Transportation Growth Management Program to perform a study in the MPO area. CAMPO has the greatest difficulty in following federal guidelines for transportation operations management. The focus is on congestion management and CAMPO has no tools to meet the requirements. Good relationships with local government agencies have allowed CAMPO to comply to-date.

The Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization has one standing committee—a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC is comprised of representatives of the following: City of Adair Village, City of Corvallis, City of Philomath, Benton County, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), and City of Albany Transit System. Ex-officio members include: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD), Oregon Department of State Land (DSL), and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). In addition, ad hoc committees have been formed for special purposes such as the development of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the 9th Street Project Advisory Committee.

CAMPO must coordinate with the Area Commissions on Transportation (ACT) regarding transportation funding investments. Oregon has five regions—each with an ACT that advises the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) primarily on funding state transportation projects. The Cascades West Area Commission on Transportation (CWACT) encompassing the counties of Linn, Benton and Lincoln also includes the Corvallis Area MPO. CAMPO and CWACT have adopted the ACT-MPO Coordination Protocol outlining the procedures for coordinating with each other on funding transportation priority projects. Communication is facilitated by cross membership—all five governmental entities represented on the CAMPO Policy Board are also members of the Area Commission on Transportation.

Date Collected

November 2009

Competitive Pay

Respondents were asked if their MPO is able to be competitive in terms of pay. This question was asked to gauge whether MPO leadership feels their organization could offer attractive compensation packages. Overall, respondents feel that MPOs offer competitive pay—over 63 percent of respondents answered “yes.” Only 20 percent answered “no,” but 17 percent did not answer.

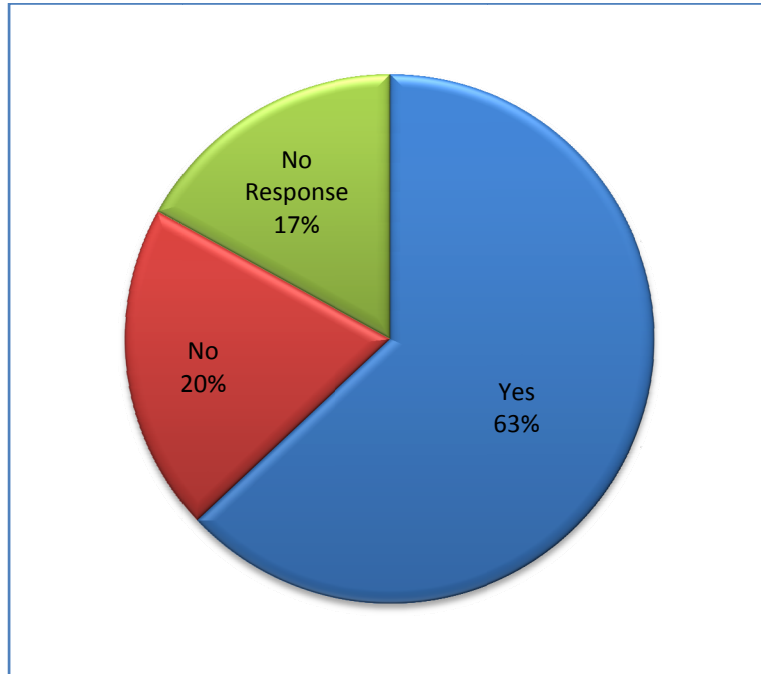


Figure 6-3 Is MPO pay competitive?

The competitive pay question generated an unusually large amount of commentary. Of the 133 respondents offered this question, fifty-nine wrote a narrative response. Major themes include:

- The MPO pays comparable salaries to other public-sector employers such as the state DOT, local government, or public transit agency. However, the MPO could not offer a cash salary comparable to those offered by consulting firms.
- The benefits package or work environment offered by the MPO outweighs a lower salary.
- At some hosted MPOs, the staff is paid on fixed pay-scales that mirror the pay of job titles in the host agency. In these cases, the MPO has little flexibility to raise salaries to be competitive.
- Many MPOs conduct regular salary surveys, sometimes using their state association as an information collection conduit. Others simply review comparable-sized agency UPWPs or online job postings.
- At smaller or remote MPOs, the salaries paid are among some of the highest-paying jobs in the region. However, when compared to a major metro area, the salary is not comparable.

Payscale

Survey respondents were asked to report the minimum and the maximum salary for three types of positions: the MPO director, senior managers, and professional staff members. This survey did not attempt to collect salary information on administrative employees. Respondents were asked to report a pay scale, meaning a minimum and a maximum rate of pay for particular position types. Most employees do not earn the maximum or minimum salary, instead earning an amount somewhere in between. Pay grades and scales are set by the MPO governing board, the host agency, or through a collective bargaining agreement.

Respondents gave a dollar amount for the minimum salary and the maximum salary. In the tables below, salaries are reported as a “mean minimum” and a “mean maximum,” which are the averages of all responses. Cash wages vary from region to region, based on a number of factors. The variation in pay is not based on geographic region of the United States (i.e. Great Lakes vs. Southeast). Instead, variation is dependent on the size of the MPO planning area, and the size of the MPO staff. Additional salary scales are included in Appendix C.

MPO Directors

MPO directors are the highest-paid group of MPO employees. Since there is only one MPO director, many respondents did not report a range of answers, instead reporting the actual pay of the MPO director. The lowest reported pay (the lowest minimum) of an MPO director is \$37,000 per year, while the highest reported pay (the highest maximum) is \$239,000.

A Pearson’s r test⁴² shows that the maximum salary is moderately to highly correlated to population and staff size, with staff size having the strongest correlation.⁴³ Salary is not weakly correlated to director tenure and the age of the MPO.

Table 6-8 shows the pay ranges of directors at independent and hosted MPOs. Independent MPOs paid more than hosted MPOs. Directors at independent MPOs are paid substantially more money. This disparity is likely due to the fact that some hosted MPO directors are not the head of the host agency, and therefore are not classified in the senior-most pay strata.

Table 6-8 MPO Director Pay Ranges

	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	\$78,480	\$103,220
Independent	\$88,590	\$117,610
Hosted	\$74,000	\$96,890

⁴² A Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson’s r) is a statistic used to measure the linear dependence between two variables. The statistic varies from +1 to -1. A positive r means that when one variable increases, so does the other.

⁴³ Population = 0.543 and Staff Size = 0.638

Pay rates for MPO directors increase with the size of the MPO planning area. The national average is not reached until the MPO has more than 500,000 people. Pay tables for MPO directors separated into planning area population are shown in Table 6-9.

Table 6-9 Director Pay Ranges by MPO Size

Planning Area Population	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	\$78,480	\$103,220
50,000-100,000	\$58,730	\$78,040
100,000-200,000	\$66,130	\$89,090
200,000-500,000	\$72,580	\$100,870
500,000-1,000,000	\$96,250	\$117,500
1,000,000 and over	\$118,790	\$151,280

The most powerful predictor of MPO director salary is the size of the MPO staff. Table 6-10 summarizes the pay of directors at MPOs by the number of total employees. Until the MPO surpasses ten employees, the director’s salary does not approach the mean for all MPOs. Directors with more than twenty employees receive by far the highest compensation.

Table 6-10 Director Pay Ranges by Staff Size

Staff Size	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	\$78,480	\$103,220
3 or less	\$62,970	\$82,180
4 to 9	\$72,750	\$98,550
10 to 20	\$85,080	\$114,210
20 or more	\$125,760	\$157,370

Senior Managers

Senior managers were defined as individuals who direct major components of the MPO operation, and supervise multiple employees. Over 70 percent of MPOs reported at least one senior manager, and most could respond with salary information for those positions.

Senior managers earn substantially less than the MPO director, but some top senior managers earn six-figure incomes. Among all MPOs, senior managers earn a mean salary of \$57,450 and a mean maximum of \$84,860. As with MPO directors, salaries increase when:

- The MPO planning area population increases
- The number of employees increases
- The MPO is independent.

Professional Employees

Professional employees experience the largest variation in pay. The mean minimum professional employee salary is \$41,520, while the mean maximum salary is \$67,050. The maximum salary earned increases at independent MPOs, MPOs in larger areas, and at agencies with more employees. However, the minimum salary hovers around \$41,000 regardless of the characteristics exhibited by the MPO. This indicates that salaries for entry-level employees are relatively equal across the country. Detailed salary tables for professional employees are shown in Appendix C.

Appendix A: MPO Background and History

Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are regional agencies charged under 23 USC § 134 to plan and program transportation infrastructure in urban areas with more than 50,000 people. MPOs are established for urbanized areas (UZAs), which are defined by the Census Bureau after each decennial Census.⁴⁴ All of the land area inside a UZA—along with all land are projected to become urbanized in the next twenty years—must be included in the planning area of an MPO. An MPO is not required for each UZA. As of 2009, 385 MPOs have been designated for 484 UZAs.

MPOs receive federal funds to perform a planning process that is continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative, or “3-C.” At the core of MPO operations are the adoption of five to seven documents required by statute. The metropolitan transportation plan (MTP or LRTP) guides the region’s vision over at least the next twenty years. The MTP must contain projects that are “cost feasible,” meaning projects that can be built with funds that are reasonably expected to be obligated over the plan’s timeframe. Using this cost feasible pool of projects, the MPO selects and often prioritizes a list of projects to be constructed within a five-year time frame. This short term list of projects is known as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).⁴⁵ The projects in the TIP are required to be included in the appropriate state department of transportation’s work program. At the conclusion of each fiscal year, the MPO also must publish a list of obligated projects, which describes the projects that received funding allocation during the previous year.

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) describes the MPO budget, tasks to be completed, and contracts to be let during the next one or two years. Each MPO also must adopt a Public Participation Plan that guides the MPO’s public involvement activities during the adoption of all other documents.

Some MPOs are required to perform additional tasks under federal law. MPOs in urbanized areas with 200,000 people or more must complete a Congestion Management Process/System (CMP or CMS).⁴⁶ MPOs within areas that do not meet air quality standards must perform conformity analyses to accompany their MTP and TIP. Additional duties may be assigned to an MPO by state statute.

MPO History

Although agencies resembling MPOs have existed since the early 1950s, federal law did not mandate them until 1973. The idea of metropolitan-level planning was first introduced into Federal law through the 1962 Federal Aid Highway Act. This Act emphasized transportation planning efforts in areas with 50,000 or more people focusing the road network on urban and suburban travel rather than farm-to-market travel.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Urbanized Areas should not be confused with Metropolitan Statistical Areas. MSAs are geographically much larger than UZAs, and have no official bearing in MPO law or regulation, except in the analysis of air quality.

⁴⁵ The TIP can vary in length based on the air quality attainment status of the MPO’s airshed.

⁴⁶ Urbanized areas with more than 200,000 people are called “Transportation Management Areas,” or TMAs. Multiple MPOs may lie within a single TMA, but these MPOs will have to perform a joint CMP/CMS

⁴⁷ Solof, Mark, “NJTPA Issue Report: History of Metropolitan Planning Organizations.” Newark, NJ: New Jersey Institute of Technology. 1998. Available from: http://www.njtpa.org/Pub/Report/hist_mpo/documents/MPOhistory1998.pdf

The 1973 Federal Aid Highway Act authorized the creation of regional transportation planning agencies in areas with more than 50,000 people. The 1973 Act created groups called “metropolitan transportation agencies” and required a more bottom-up organizational approach than is found in law today.⁴⁸ Agencies organized after the 1973 Act were required to plan for expenditure on federal-aid highways. Further, metropolitan transportation agency plans had little legal standing with the state DOT.

MPOs gained prominence with the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. This Act prescribed the process for administering and operating MPOs that remains today. Significantly, projects located in the metropolitan transportation improvement program (TIP) area were required to be incorporated into the state transportation improvement program (STIP). This requirement has given MPOs significant control over the projects to be built in their region. Other major features of ISTEA and its reauthorizations include:

- in-depth rules on forming and the MPO establishing its planning area boundary;
- five to seven planning factors that must be addressed by the analysis and programming process;
- a multimodal 20-year metropolitan transportation plan (MTP);
- a three to five year transportation improvement program (TIP), containing projects selected from the MTP;
- a certification process that takes place every three years;
- special rules for air quality nonattainment areas;
- special rules and powers for MPOs with more than 200,000 people in the planning area;
- 1-1.25 percent takedown of major highway programs to fund transportation planning; and
- a formula-based program for transit planning.

ISTEA was reauthorized with minor amendments by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 1998, and again in 2005 by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act- a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). TEA-21 and SAFETEA-LU made only minor changes to MPO organizational legislation, with the notable exceptions of lengthening the TIP, adding new planning factors, and boosting the highway planning takedown to 1.25 percent.

MPO practice is heavily influenced by federal regulations issued in 1993 and 2007.⁴⁹ The rules contain several features of modern MPO practice. These include additional rules on MPO designation, accounting rules, regulations on expenditure of federal planning funds, consultation requirements, and a mandate to draft a unified planning work program (UPWP) that guides all MPO efforts and monetary expenditures.⁵⁰

SAFETEA-LU’s original legislation expired on September 30th, 2009, but was extended several times. Congressional leadership has indicated through statements and proposed legislation that the framework

⁴⁸ The term “metropolitan planning organizations” appears one time in the 1973 Act, where is written into the law in 23 USC §104. That section describes the eligibility of certain groups to receive money derived from the planning takedown.

⁴⁹ TEA-21 mandated a rulemaking, but for a variety of reasons this document was not approved before SAFETEA-LU was passed.

⁵⁰ MPOs with fewer than 200,000 are permitted by regulation to adopt a “simplified work program,” but the rules do not offer any information on how a simplified work program differs from a UPWP.

for transportation planning and construction will change substantially from the precedent set by ISTEA, and will not be a “reauthorization” in the model of TEA-21 and SAFETEA-LU. As of the publication date of this document, the United States is still operating under an extension of SAFETEA-LU and the regulations issued in 2007. The results of this research may help policymakers shape the framework for MPOs in future transportation authorization bills and regulation.

Table A-1 shows the establishment date of MPOs in the survey and all MPOs currently in operation. Prior to the 1973 Act, the only MPOs operating were those organized by local governments, and were usually found in some of the largest and most complex metropolitan areas in the country. Not surprisingly, about half of all MPOs were established following the 1973 Act, because this legislation was the first to require MPOs to exist. Interestingly, this group also had the lowest levels of participation in the survey. The second largest group of MPO establishments occurred after the 1980 Census. A provision was added by ISTEA that attempted to curb the formation of multiple MPOs in one urbanized area,⁵¹ and the number of new MPOs designated following the 1990 Census and 2000 Census dropped off steeply.

Table A-1 Establishment Date of MPOs

Decade of Establishment	Participating MPOs	All MPOs
Pre-1970	31	56
1970s	29	173
1980s	37	84
1990s	13	32
2000s	23	40
Total	133	385

The establishment date shown may only apply to the latest incarnation of an MPO in that region. MPOs may recognize a newer establishment date due to merger, dissolution, or hosting status change. For example, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council was established in 1982 after the Tri-State Regional Planning Council was dissolved into four separate MPOs. The Tri-State RPC had existed for at least a decade prior to this reorganization, but NYMTC considers 1982 to be its establishment year.

⁵¹ 23USC§134(d)6 states that the governor of the state and any existing MPO must find the transportation system size and complexity warrant more than one MPO. This provision only applies to designation and redesignation scenarios discussed by 23USC§134(d)4 and 23USC§134(d)5.

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Appendix B: New MPO Frequently Asked Questions

This appendix contains a list of essential questions that every new MPO has to answer. It may also be useful to MPOs that are considering an overhaul of their organizational and staffing structure. Each question will be answered considering the options encountered during this study, along with known drawbacks and advantages for those options.

This project has made clear that there is no single “best” staffing or organizational strategy. Few survey responses showed any consensus or overwhelming majority answers. A pervasive theme throughout this report is that the formation, operation, and ultimate success of an MPO depends on crafting an intergovernmental political balance.

MPO legislation is extremely flexible. Four decades of flexibility has led to an ever-widening array of MPO organizational types. No organizational structure is inherently better than the other—local political demands, historical context, and current transportation needs have dictated how each individual MPO has been formed and administered.

Regions grow and change over time, as cycles of residents, industries, economies, and cultures ebb and flow. The size and influence of member local governments changes over time. Organizations change too, as careers progress, leaders depart, and technology advances. An effective MPO for a region in 1975 may be obsolete by 2010. A regular examination of organizational structures and staffing is part of a healthy MPO.

Question: Should the MPO be independent or hosted?

Answer: The new MPO should make a decision on whether to be hosted or independent as soon as possible. Ideally, local jurisdictions will have discussed the possibility of being covered by an MPO process ahead of the actual urbanized area designation made every ten years by the Bureau of the Census and USDOT. Many other decisions are contingent on whether the MPO will be independent or hosted. Determining the optimal long-term hosting arrangement (discussed in Chapter 3) is not necessary at the earliest stage of an MPO formation. It is difficult for an MPO to convert from being hosted to independent later in its existence (and vice versa). Ultimately, the decision will be driven by cost and the need for autonomy. The following are some important factors to consider:

- *Availability of local funds from member governments, such as dues.* If local governments can commit to supporting part of the MPO’s operation with dues, the agency is more likely to succeed as an independent agency. Dues can be used as the source of capital float. If dues or other local funding mechanisms are limited or not available, the MPO is more likely to thrive as a hosted agency.
- *Availability of capital float is an important factor to consider.* The first quarterly federal reimbursement might be received 3-4 months after the MPO begins operating. A state or local government may be willing to furnish the MPO with enough start-up money to bridge the gap

between beginning operations and the first reimbursement. However, dues are the most common way to build capital float. In lieu of dues, a one-time grant, line of credit, GARVEE bonds, or direct tax revenues could also be employed. If sufficient capital float can be secured, the MPO can survive as an independent agency. Otherwise, the MPO will need to depend on the capital resources of a host agency.

- *Absence of an effective regional leader in planning activities.* Virtually all regions have some sort of general-purpose local government regional agency. However, these regional governments vary widely in their stability, expertise, financial footing, and level of regional leadership. If the regional agency is strong, it may be wise to enter into a hosting relationship. If the regional agency is weak, the MPO may be more successful as an independent agency.
- *Availability of matching funds.* Federal planning funds require matching funds, and if the MPO has the ability to meet the match then an independent structure may be appropriate. Some states cover the match on behalf of MPOs. Some MPOs may be able to credit the value of supporting planning work performed by a transit agency or local government.
- *Absence of a government agency with GIS and travel demand modeling capability.* The MPO will need GIS and in many circumstances travel demand modeling capabilities at the staff level. If an agency is currently in operation that has these capabilities, it may be a suitable host for the new MPO.
- *Eligibility to participate in state or local government employee benefits and retirement programs.* In some states, MPOs are qualified to participate in state benefit programs. In states where they are not, the new MPO may be able to secure employee benefits through an agreement with a local government. Joining a larger pool of participants dramatically reduces the cost of providing benefits, particularly health insurance. An independent MPO will incur substantial administrative and financial burdens if the agency is not part of a larger pool.

Question: Where should the MPO office be physically located, and what features should the office have?

Answer: Several MPO case studies indicated the office location can help foster regional consensus building. The office should be centrally located and offer easy access to individuals travelling from the edges of the planning area. Ideally, the office should be accessible by transit and in an area with strong bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. The office should be accessible to the disabled, since the MPO will be hosting stakeholder meetings and public events. The office location should be Class A or Class B office space, due to the need for computer equipment and meeting space. If possible, the MPO should locate in an office that has access to a room that can be used for board meetings, including sufficient space for the public and other guests.

Question: What should the MPO Governing Board composition be?

Answer: Board composition is an important consideration. After initial designation, the MPO board will be responsible for virtually all structural, administrative, and operational decisions. Therefore, it is important to establish a board that is regional in scope, free from conflicts of interest, and able to reach consensus.

The survey demonstrated that MPO boards should be sufficiently large, but not unwieldy. A fixed board size should be determined, and seats apportioned to member local governments. The most common method is to apportion seats by population, although other apportionment systems exist, including negotiated solutions. Small local governments can be represented by a rotating board seat. Seats should be reapportioned—or new ones created if needed—after each Census. If modal agencies are operating in the area, they should be afforded a voting seat on the board. The state DOT also should be represented. MPOs should generously allocate non-voting seats on the board.

Question: What MPO advisory committees are needed?

Answer: Advisory committees are a very important part of the MPO planning process. Governing board members have many other commitments, and often rely on the advice of advisory committees to provide insight prior to making a decision. Survey responses indicate that MPOs across the country have established a variety of advisory committees to participate in the MPO process. Technical advisory committees are the most common MPO advisory committee and provide very useful input from a local government and agency staff perspective. Other committees were found less frequently, but were highly valued by their MPOs. A citizens advisory committee can help coordinate and collect public input. Modal committees can provide volunteer expertise on important issues that cannot be covered by MPO staff. If a particular mode (freight, transit, bicycle/pedestrian) is an important issue in the MPO area, a committee of stakeholders and local experts should be formed to advise the board and staff. The number and composition of advisory committees is not particularly important, so long as the MPO board values their opinions and considers their input in the decision-making process.

Question: How large should the MPO staff be?

Answer: The results of the survey show that on average one staff member is hired per 48,000 people in the planning area. At least one professional staff member—generally an urban planner or civil engineer—is a required hire. Often the first engineer or planner will act as the MPO director. As the MPO grows, more internal funding will become available and more staff members can be hired.

At least one administrative employee is critical to smooth MPO operation. Administrative employees can remove office operation, board management, document preparation, contracting, and public inquiry tasks from the desks of professional staff. Adding additional administrative or para-professional employees can be cheaper than hiring professional staff, while at the same time relieving time pressure

on existing staff members. If the MPO is hosted, administrative employees can sometimes be shared with the host agency.

Question: At what point should the MPO create specialized positions?

Answer: Employees at small MPOs must cover all specialties. As the MPO grows, more specialized positions can be created. The study found that specialized positions (those spending half or more of their time in a given area) begin to be found at MPOs with five employees. Most MPOs have specialized positions by the time eight people are employed. Some of the most frequently-encountered specialized positions were related to GIS, travel demand modeling, and public transit.

Question: Who will hire and supervise the MPO director?

Answer: The MPO staff services agreement and the director's contract must clearly state who has the power to discipline, increase the pay of, or terminate the director. At many hosted MPOs, the director is overseen by multiple groups. For example, the director might take policy direction from the MPO board, but be overseen day-to-day by a full-time supervisor (who may in turn report to an elected official or another supervisor). There is less potential for discord and confusion if the same entity oversees both the employment circumstances and the work product of the MPO director.

Question: What skills are required in an MPO director?

Answer: The skill set required in an MPO director depends on how the MPO is organized. Referencing Figure 3-3, leadership skills seem to be more important when MPOs are toward the independent side of the continuum, while technical capability and process-based thinking appear more valuable on the hosted side. For example, at Freestanding Independent MPOs, entrepreneurial management and consensus building skills are important because the director must devise ways to keep the MPO on solid financial footing, while simultaneously working with all of the MPO's stakeholders: members of the MPO board, state and regional agencies, and the general public. On the opposite side, a Dual Purpose or All-in-One MPO director can focus more of his or her time on transportation planning tasks, because most of the administration is handled by host agency managers. Of course, the ideal MPO director at any type of agency brings both technical knowledge and leadership capabilities to the table.

Question: How should the MPO balance consultants versus in-house staff?

Answer: Consultants play an important role in MPO planning. Managers must carefully weigh the costs of a consultant versus hiring in-house staff members. Often, one or more full-time employees can be hired in lieu of a consultant contract. Consultants are very useful for specialized work. For example, MPOs building their first travel demand model may want to hire a specialized consultant to build the model and train in-house staff to operate it. Consultants can also be brought in to perform special

studies or other work in an area of expertise not available on the MPO staff. Consultants are also hired during busy periods of cyclical work, such as the months leading up to a long range plan adoption.

Question: How should the MPO achieve sufficient capital float and meet required local match?

Answer: Respondents said that achieving capital float and meeting the local match were the two most difficult administrative issues at their MPO. Raising cash for capital float can be very difficult for new MPOs, since federal and most states do not have a dedicated source of capital to help MPOs start operations. The most common way to achieve a stable capital float was to be hosted by an agency that has a stable current cash flow, such as a county, city, or regional council. If the MPO wants to be independent, member local governments need to provide up-front cash to fund MPO startup costs and other ongoing costs that are not eligible for federal reimbursement. Some MPOs have been able to collect a one-time payment, although regular dues are a more stable route.

MPOs can be creative with raising matching dollars for federal planning funds. Local match can be met using cash, a soft match of in-kind services, or crediting the value of local planning work. It appears, based on survey responses, that there is not a unified national understanding of which non-cash items are eligible for matching purposes. A few state DOTs supply a match on behalf of MPOs through general funds or crediting the value of toll receipts. In some states, the MPOs are able to credit the value of state-supplied or coordinated items like travel demand modeling software or data collection. Dues are a popular way to raise cash for a local match. Many hosted MPOs credit the value of goods and services received from the host toward the required match—things like office rent, supplies, utilities, and employee benefits. Some MPOs credit the cost of supporting planning projects (i.e. corridor studies, traffic counts) performed by member local governments.

Question: During the first few meetings of a new MPO board, what items will need to be approved?

Answer: At the first few meetings of a new MPO, several documents need to be adopted. The first document adopted should be bylaws, which govern how the MPO board is formed and operates. A staffing agreement with a host agency will need to be adopted as soon as possible. A document outlining the personnel policies is needed, such as supervisory guidelines, pay rates, and other policies that form an “employee handbook.” It may also be helpful to adopt guidelines for securing consultant labor and procurement policies. Many hosted or leaning independent MPOs simply adopt (or accept by default) the employee handbook, procurement guidelines, and other documents from the host. The first federally-mandated document should be the Unified Planning Work Program, which guides the tasks for the MPO. The second document should be the public participation plan, which guides the MPO’s public involvement activities through the 3-C planning and programming process.

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Appendix C: Additional Salary Ranges

Chapter 6 discusses MPO employee salaries. The survey data on salary was cross-tabulated using categories for planning area population, staff size, and hosting status. Some cross-tabulations are discussed in Chapter 6. The remaining tables are shown in this appendix.

Table C-1 Senior Manager Pay Ranges by MPO Size

Planning Area Population	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	\$57,450	\$84,860
50,000-100,000	\$46,400	\$59,400
100,000-200,000	\$47,000	\$66,380
200,000-500,000	\$52,000	\$76,460
500,000-1,000,000	\$64,000	\$92,460
1,000,000 and over	\$73,100	\$116,400

Table C-2 Senior Manager Pay Ranges by Staff Size

Staff Size	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	\$57,450	\$84,860
3 or less	\$45,000	\$63,200
4 to 9	\$53,710	\$76,370
10 to 20	\$59,690	\$89,440
20 or more	\$76,650	\$122,120

Table C-3 Senior Manager Pay Ranges

	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	\$57,450	\$84,860
Independent	\$61,350	\$96,740
Hosted	\$55,670	\$79,230

Table C-4 Professional Employee Pay Ranges by MPO Size

Planning Area Population	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	\$41,520	\$67,050
50,000-100,000	\$40,250	\$55,000
100,000-200,000	\$40,300	\$59,910
200,000-500,000	\$41,060	\$65,940
500,000-1,000,000	\$39,690	\$69,000
1,000,000 and over	\$43,750	\$82,000

Table C-5 Professional Employee Pay Ranges by Staff Size

Staff Size	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	\$41,520	\$67,050
3 or less	\$41,520	\$59,830
4 to 9	\$40,780	\$63,590
10 to 20	\$39,810	\$69,500
20 or more	\$45,120	\$86,560

Table C-6 Professional Employee Pay Ranges by Hosting Status

	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	\$41,520	\$67,050
Independent	\$42,330	\$68,400
Hosted	\$40,620	\$65,580

Appendix D: MPO Staffing Survey Questions

Name Change

NC-1: Has the MPO changed its name from the one you selected on the previous page?

- Yes
- No

NC-2: What is the MPO's new name?

Please write your answer here: _____

NC-3: Why did the MPO change its name?

Please write your answer here: _____

Board Composition

BC-1: Indicate how many voting governing board seats are allocated to the following:

- County commissioners: _____
- Municipal elected officials: _____
- School districts: _____
- Countywide elected executive officials: _____
- Governor or gubernatorial appointees: _____
- Public transit authorities: _____
- Toll or expressway authorities: _____
- Seaport authorities: _____
- Aviation authorities: _____
- Tribal governments: _____
- Colleges or universities: _____
- Military installations: _____
- State departments of transportation: _____
- Regional councils/Councils of government: _____
- Private sector representatives: _____
- Other: _____

BC-2: Does the MPO have any non-voting governing board members?

- Yes
- No

BC-3: Indicate how many non-voting governing board seats are allocated to the following:

- County commissioners: _____
- Municipal elected officials: _____
- School districts: _____
- Countywide elected executive officials: _____
- Governor or gubernatorial appointees: _____
- Public transit authorities: _____
- Toll or expressway authorities: _____
- Seaport authorities: _____
- Aviation authorities: _____

Tribal governments: _____
Colleges or universities: _____
Military installations: _____
State departments of transportation: _____
Regional councils/Councils of Government: _____
Private sector representatives: _____
Other: _____

BC-4: Does the MPO have any advisory committees, such as:

- Citizen advisory
- Technical advisory
- Policy advisory
- Transportation disadvantaged
- Land use
- Bicycle and Pedestrian
- Air quality
- Congestion management system/process
- Non-member local governments
- Water
- Transit
- Historic or cultural resources
- Corridor management
- Goods movement
- Emergency management/Homeland security
- Other

Board

B-1: How often does the MPO governing board meet?

- Monthly
- Bi-monthly
- Quarterly
- Bi-annually
- Other

B-2: Where does the MPO governing board meet?

- A board room used only by the MPO
- A board room shared with the host agency
- A board room shared with a member local government
- A board room shared with another public agency
- Privately-owned space
- Other

B-3: Are there seats on the governing board that rotate among a group of local governments? If yes, please explain.

- Yes
- No

Comments.

B-4: Does each voting member of the governing board have an equal vote? If weighted, please explain.

- Votes are equal
- Votes are weighted

Comments.

Boundary

MB-1: How many urbanized areas (including partial urbanized areas) fall within the MPO planning area?

Please write your answer here: _____

MB-2: What is the air quality attainment status of the MPO's planning area?

- Attainment
- Non-attainment
- Maintenance

MB-3: Check all that apply regarding the MPO's planning area boundary:

- The MPO is multi-state
- The MPO's planning area encompasses more than one county
- A neighboring MPO encompasses portions of the same urbanized area

Hosting

H-1: Which of the following best describes the MPO's organizational structure?

- The MPO is hosted by another agency
- The MPO is an independent agency

H-2: Which of the following type of agencies acts as the host for the MPO?

- Regional Council/Council of Governments
- County government
- Municipal or township government
- An independent authority
- State department of transportation, including district and regional offices
- University or center of expertise sponsored by a university
- Other

Comments.

H-3: Does the MPO pay an indirect rate to the host agency in exchange for services and goods that the MPO consumes?

- Yes
- No

H-4: What does your indirect rate pay for?

- Office space
- Utilities
- Phone
- Postage
- Shipping (Fedex, UPS)

- Office supplies
- Computers and IT services
- Other office equipment
- Fleet vehicles
- Procurement and contracting services
- Human resources services
- Payroll services
- Legal services
- Administrative support personnel
- Employee benefits
- Other

H-6: Approximately what percent of the MPO's annual budget is spent paying the indirect rate?

Please write your answer here: _____

H-7: In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being hosted by another agency?

Please write your answer here: _____

H-8: How are administrative and staffing services provided to the MPO?

- Directly provided by MPO staff members
- Contractual arrangement with a public provider
- Contractual arrangement with a private company
- Other

H-9: Does the MPO host another agency? If yes, please explain.

- Yes
- No

Comments.

H-10: In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being an independent agency?

Please write your answer here: _____

Office Operation

OO-1: Has the MPO adopted its own set of written personnel policies?

- The MPO has adopted its own set of written policies.
- The policies of the host agency are also used by the MPO.
- There is no written set of personnel policies.

OO-2: Estimate the percentage of overall staff time spent on the following broad tasks:

Public involvement and education: _____
 Board and advisory committee management: _____
 General agency administration: _____

OO-3: Indicate the number of in-house employees who perform the following tasks:

Graphic design: _____
 Geographic information systems operation: _____
 Travel demand model operation: _____

Database management: _____
Internet publishing: _____
IT, network operation, and computer hardware: _____

OO-4: How does the MPO receive legal services?

- The MPO maintains in-house legal counsel
- The MPO contracts directly with a law firm or private practice attorney
- The MPO receives legal services from its host as a component of the indirect rate charge
- The MPO's host agency directly bills the MPO for legal services
- Other

OO-5: What entity provided the revenue projections used in the MPO's most recent long range (20-year) transportation plan?

- The MPO performed all forecasts in-house
- A state agency provides state and federal revenue projections
- A state agency provides local revenue projections
- Local governments provide revenue information to the MPO
- A consultant provides some or all revenue estimates
- Other

Intergovernmental

I-1: Regarding relationships with nearby MPOs, has your MPO done any of the following:

- Performed joint planning tasks
- Jointly purchased data, software, hardware, or technical services
- Met with leadership on a regular basis
- Signed a memorandum of understanding or an interlocal agreement
- Other

I-2: Is there a statewide association of MPOs?

- Yes
- No

I-3: Does state statute guide MPOs in any of the following areas?

- Governing board composition
- Advisory committees
- Staff requirements
- Pay scales and benefits
- MPO core products
- Comprehensive planning or land use planning
- Air quality and pollution
- Local modal planning
- Statewide transportation planning
- Coordination with nearby MPOs
- Purchasing or procurement
- Other

UPWP

U-1: What is the total dollar amount, for all purposes, expressed in the MPO's Unified Planning Work Program?

Please write your answer here: _____

U-2: What is the total value of UPWP funds shown for informational purposes only?

Please write your answer here: _____

U-3: What is the total value of funds in the UPWP for the MPO's internal use?

Please write your answer here: _____

U-4: What is the total value of funds shown in the UPWP to be expended on outside work, including consultant contracts?

Please write your answer here: _____

Consultants

C-1: Regarding consultant labor, does the MPO:

- Employ a general services consultant(s)
- Employ consultants to draft MPO core documents
- Employ consultants for special studies
- Employ consultants for public involvement activities
- Employ consultants to operate the travel demand model
- The MPO does not employ consultants
- Other

C-2: For the most recent editions of each of the following documents, were any prepared entirely in-house?

- Metropolitan transportation plan/Long range transportation plan
- Transportation improvement program
- Unified planning work program
- Congestion management process or system
- Public participation plan

Funding Sources

F-1: Funds shown in the UPWP and controlled by the MPO come from which of the following sources?

- Federal Planning (PL) funds
- Federal 5303 Transit Planning funds
- State-supplied planning funds
- Contributions from local governments
- Competitive grants
- Fees for service
- Federal Surface Transportation Program-Urban Allocation
- Federal Congestion Management and Air Quality
- Other

F-2: Do Federal PL funds and Federal 5303 funds cover the full cost of completing the tasks required of MPOs by Federal law?

- Yes
- No

Local Funds

L-1: How are contributions from local governments collected?

- Member local governments pay a fixed dollar amount
- Member local governments pay on a per-capita basis
- Some local governments do not contribute any funds
- The MPO receives a portion of a local tax or fee
- Modal agencies contribute funds to the MPO
- Other

L-2: How are local funds spent?

- On MPO core activities
- Non-core transportation studies
- MPO functions required by the state
- Government affairs and lobbying
- Public relations and advertising
- Employee training, conferences, and education
- Office operation
- Food
- Other

Benefits

BN-1: How does the MPO provide health insurance to its employees?

- The MPO contracts directly with an insurance provider
- The MPO's host agency provides insurance as a component of the indirect rate charged
- The MPO's host agency directly bills the MPO for insurance
- The MPO contracts with a local or state government that is not the host
- The MPO does not provide insurance
- Other

BN-2: How does the MPO provide retirement benefits to its employees?

- The MPO contracts directly with a financial services provider
- The MPO's host agency provides benefits as a component of the indirect rate charged
- The MPO's host agency directly bills the MPO for benefits provided
- The MPO contracts with a local or state government that is not the host
- The MPO does not offer retirement benefits
- Other

BN-3: Which of these other benefits are available to full-time, salaried MPO employees?

- Life insurance
- Long or short term disability
- Other insurance
- Flexible spending accounts for medical and dependent care

- Child care facility or subsidy
- Free or discounted parking
- Free or discounted public transit
- Carpool/vanpool incentives
- Tuition reimbursement
- Professional association dues
- Continuing education expenses
- Other

Total Employees

E-1: How many people work for the MPO?

Full Time: _____

Part Time: _____

MPO Director

D-1: How long has the current MPO director been in his/her position? Please list only the amount of time spent as director.

Please write your answer here: _____

D-2: Is the MPO director simultaneously the director of another agency or head of another department?

- Yes
- No

D-3: You responded that the MPO director is also in charge of another agency. Which of the following agencies does the director lead?

- Regional council/Council of governments
- County transportation or public works department
- Municipal transportation or public works department
- Transit agency
- Paratransit agency
- Area agency on aging
- Environmental, air, or water quality agency
- Other

D-4: What person or group makes personnel decisions regarding the MPO director?

- The MPO governing board
- A solitary elected official
- Host agency director
- A host agency employee who is not the director
- The host agency board
- Other

D-5: Approximately how close to retirement is the MPO director?

- Less than five years
- Five to ten years
- More than ten years

D-6: Indicate which of the following credentials are held by the MPO director:

- Urban planning (AICP)
- Landscape architecture or Architecture (RLA, AIA)
- Accounting (CPA)
- Engineering (PE)
- Attorney (JD)
- Ph.D.
- Other

D-7: What is the annual salary range for the MPO director position? (in thousands)

Minimum: _____

Maximum: _____

Senior Managers

S-1: How many employees are considered to be senior managers?

Please write your answer here:

S-2: Indicate how many senior managers hold the following credentials. Include only employees who have attained the credentials allowing them to display the acronym shown in parenthesis.

Urban planner (AICP): _____

Landscape architect or Architect (RLA, AIA): _____

Accountant (CPA): _____

Ph.D.: _____

Professional Engineer (PE): _____

Attorney (JD): _____

Geographic Information Systems Professional (GISP): _____

Professional Transportation Planner (PTP): _____

Professional Traffic Operations Engineer (PTOE): _____

Information Technology (MCSE, CCNA, CISSP, Network +): _____

S-3: How many senior managers are within the following retirement timeframes? Each person should be entered in only one category.

Under five years: _____

Five to ten years: _____

More than ten years away: _____

S-4: What is the annual salary range for all senior management positions? Enter the maximum salary (in thousands) for the highest-paying position, and the minimum salary for the lowest paying position.

Minimum: _____

Maximum: _____

Professional Employees

P-1: Indicate how many MPO employees are considered professionals:

Please write your answer here: _____

P-2: Indicate how many professional employees hold the following credentials:

Urban planning (AICP): _____

Landscape architecture or Architecture (RLA, AIA): _____
Accounting (CPA): _____
Engineering (PE): _____
Attorney (JD): _____
Ph.D.: _____
Geographic Information Systems Professional (GISP): _____
Professional Transportation Planner (PTP): _____
Professional Traffic Operations Engineer (PTOE): _____
Information Technology (MCSE, CCNA, CISSP, Network +): _____

P-3: What is the annual salary range for professional employees? List the maximum salary (in thousands) for the highest-paying professional position, and the minimum salary of the lowest-paying professional position.

Minimum: _____
Maximum: _____

P-4: In the space below, please comment on any special conditions or unique situations related to professional staff salary that would be of interest to the research team. For example, is there a particular specialty that requires higher compensation than other professional staff?

Please write your answer here: _____

P-5: Please indicate the number of professional employees that have reached the following tenure benchmarks with the MPO. Each individual should be counted only once.

0-5 years: _____
5-10 years: _____
10+ years: _____

Shared Employees

S-1: How many employees are shared with another agency?

MPO Director: _____
Senior management: _____
Professional: _____
Support staff: _____

S-5: Please describe the sharing arrangement of the MPO Director.

Please write your answer here: _____

S-2: Please describe the sharing arrangement of the MPO's senior management, including information such as the title and function of the shared employee, and the amount of time spent on MPO activities.

Please write your answer here: _____

S-3: Please describe the sharing arrangement of the MPO's professional staff member(s), including information such as the title and function of the shared employee, special skills, and the amount of time spent on MPO activities.

Please write your answer here: _____

S-4: Please describe the sharing arrangement of the MPO's support staff member(s), including information such as the title and function of the shared employee, special skills, and the amount of time spent on MPO activities.

Please write your answer here: _____

Specialties

S-1: Indicate if any of the MPO's senior managers or professional employees spend more than half of their time on the following specialties:

- Public involvement
- Intergovernmental/public relations
- Bicycle and pedestrian planning
- Public transit
- Operations and management
- Air quality
- Environmental and Sociocultural Impacts (NEPA)
- Freight and goods movement
- Safety
- Geographic Information Systems
- Travel demand modeling
- Transportation disadvantaged programs
- Other

Turnover

T-1: Over the past two calendar years (2007-2008), how many employees left the MPO for any reason?

Please write your answer here: _____

T-3: Over the past two calendar years (2007-2008), were any positions created or eliminated? Please check the box and explain in the space provided.

- Created
- Eliminated

T-2: Do you feel that the MPO is competitive in terms of compensation? Please explain.

- Yes
- No

Comments.

Departure

D-1: Think about the last three employees (excluding support staff) who left the MPO voluntarily for another job. What was their primary responsibility while at the MPO?

- Planner
- Engineer
- Geographic Information Systems
- Air quality specialist
- Travel demand modeler
- Other
- Environmental or sociocultural specialist

- Public involvement
- Intergovernmental/public relations

D-2: What type of employer hired the departed MPO employees?

- Another MPO
- Transportation-related government agency
- Non-transportation government agency
- Consulting firm
- All other employers