

# Metropolitan Area Planning Forum

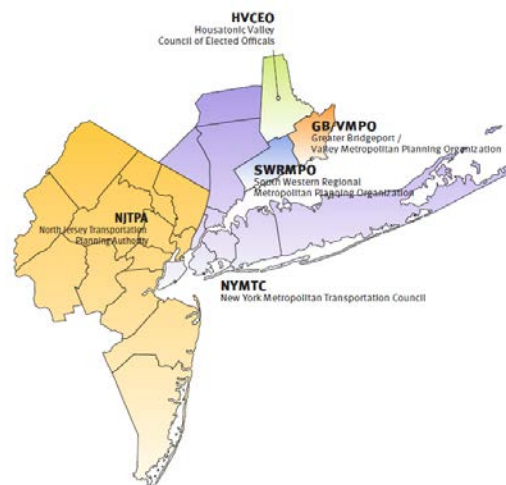
## *Regional Models of Cooperation Case Study Series*

### Forum Enhances Tri-State Metropolitan Planning

The Metropolitan Area Planning (MAP) Forum enables MPOs in the tri-state New York City metropolitan area to address shared transportation challenges that stem from the region's unique scale and population density. The MAP Forum crosses the boundaries of New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey and includes five primary MPOs that address multimodal transportation issues.

#### Motivation for Establishing the Collaboration

The jurisdictions of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC), North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO), the South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (SWRMPO), and the Greater Bridgeport/Valley MPO (GB/VMPO) were originally part of the Tri-State Regional Planning Commission, which was disbanded in 1982 after a decline in federal funding to support regional councils. These areas continued to face the same issues that the commission addressed, however, as they are connected by shared commuter patterns and geography. The MPOs found new ways to cooperate across state lines. In response to recommendations from FHWA and FTA Transportation Planning Certification Reviews to formalize the group's coordination on transportation planning documents and National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) attainment efforts, the five MPOs entered into an MOU in January 2008 to create the MAP Forum. The Forum enabled the agencies to more formally continue their efforts to reduce duplication of effort, promote consistency, and respect the interests of each MPO within the region.



Metropolitan Area Planning Forum map

#### Collaboration Structure

The MAP Forum's MPOs meet in person at least once a year and hold conference calls every few months to discuss current policy issues that affect the region. Executive Directors and key managers from each of these MPOs attend the meetings and calls, as do representatives from the three State DOTs, public transit agencies, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and other resource agencies, depending on the agenda.

In the formal MOU, the MPOs agreed to collaborate on modeling, Unified Planning Work Programs (UPWPs), Long-Range Transportation Plans, Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs), and air quality State Implementation Plan conformity. However, the partners have successfully leveraged the established relationship to discuss a broad range of issues that arise and benefit from coordination across the metropolitan region.

The MPOs decide on the agenda for each meeting through consensus by talking through a list of issues to focus on over the course of a day-long meeting. Topics include transportation projects that cross MPO and state



boundaries, common challenges facing the agencies, and long-range planning efforts that, due to the region's integrated nature, strongly benefit from all members' input. When collaborating on long-range planning, the members consult each other on principles, scenarios, strategies, major project assumptions, and key issues addressed in their Long-Range Transportation plans, as well as share draft copies of the plans.

### Collaboration Accomplishments

Perhaps the MAP Forum's most significant accomplishment is its ongoing work on the Hurricane Sandy Follow-up and Transportation Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Analysis. After Hurricanes Sandy and Irene, the Forum's three State DOTs and four of its MPOs secured FHWA funding to identify vulnerabilities in the region's transportation system and determine how to address them. The MPOs are each contributing staff resources to manage the project and conduct the study. The partners have thus far identified 10 representative transportation assets, including the New Haven Line of the MTA Metro-North Railroad, the NJ 37 East Bound Barnegat Bay Bridge, and the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, and are working to develop adaptation options for each asset.

Another important effort includes the 2010/2011 Regional Household Travel Survey, which was sponsored by NYMTC and NJTPA. Because the MPOs know they have to understand trends across the entire metropolitan area to successfully plan for current and future projects, NYMTC and NJTPA used the household survey data to develop a transportation model that covers almost the entire region. Each MAP Forum MPO contributes relevant information, including data from their own household travel surveys, socioeconomic and census data, and border traffic volumes.

NYMTC and NJTPA have also closely coordinated on the development of the socioeconomic/demographic (SED) forecasts for their Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs). For the 2013 RTP forecasts, NYMTC and NJTPA used essentially the same county-level forecasts. For the current 2050 SED forecasts under development, NJTPA is working closely with NYMTC to ensure that the forecasts for the two MPOs are consistent. The MPOs in southwestern Connecticut were also included in the development of the forecasts.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned

One of the challenges the MAP Forum has faced is the inherent complexity of the larger Northeast Corridor region, particularly as it relates to planning topics such as freight and air quality. Although multi-state, multi-jurisdictional forums, including the I-95 Corridor Coalition, do facilitate collaboration in this region, the MAP Forum complements such institutions by addressing issues from the unique perspective of the greater NYC metro area.

While an MOU formalized the relationship, the MAP Forum maintains flexibility in the issues it addresses. The MPOs retain the ability to discuss any project or challenge that arises, which allows the partnership to adapt to changes in the larger Northeast Corridor megaregion. This flexibility also helps the partners address the many challenges involved in planning for a multimodal system across three states. To ensure the effectiveness of this strategy, the MPOs acknowledge that some issues are outside their control and focus instead on goals they can realistically achieve through their partnership.

Overall, the MAP Forum presents an impressive model of collaboration in one of the largest and most densely populated metropolitan areas in the U.S. Sharing data and models, coordinating on boundary projects, and regularly discussing current issues have been effective in improving transportation planning on a regional level.

