

North Carolina Capital Area MPO and Durham Chapel Hill Carrboro MPO

Regional Models of Cooperation Case Study Series

Cross-Boundary Concerns Lead Neighbor MPOs to Create Joint Plan

Air quality and congestion issues are concerns for MPOs across the country, and they do not fit neatly within jurisdictional boundaries. Realizing that what happens on one side of the boundary affects what happens on the other, the [North Carolina Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization \(CAMPO\)](#) and the [Durham Chapel Hill Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization \(DCHC MPO\)](#) decided that working together to solve such issues would be better than working separately. After years of staff level coordination on various processes and projects, the idea to develop a plan together was approved and the [2035 Long Range Transportation Plan and Air Quality Analysis and Conformity Determination Report \(2035 LRTP\)](#) and [2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan \(2040 MTP\)](#) were adopted in 2009 and 2013, respectively. These plans have provided the region with a cohesive framework for the future of transportation in the Raleigh-Durham region of North Carolina.

Motivation for Establishing the Collaboration

The busiest freeway link in the Raleigh-Durham region lies along the boundary that separates CAMPO's jurisdiction from DCHC MPO's jurisdiction, essentially connecting the two MPOs and the areas that they serve. The freeway is one example that unites the two jurisdictions in planning processes. Coordination between the MPOs also extends to travel demand modeling and air quality management. As the staff at each MPO began working together on various projects and programs that spanned the combined areas of the MPOs, they realized that planning together could also be beneficial for the region.

CAMPO and DCHC MPO presented the idea to develop a joint metropolitan transportation plan to their local policy boards. Upon receiving approval, they kicked off an extensive, coordinated effort to produce the 2035 LRTP in 2009. Collaboration on the 2035 LRTP was considered to be a success, which led to the development of the 2040 MTP, which was adopted in April of 2013.

Collaboration Structure

Collaboration at all levels was essential to the success of both the 2035 LRTP and the 2040 MTP—the MPOs' leadership and staff consistently worked together through both formalized agreements and informal communications where information, processes, and data were shared.

Through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), the MPOs established an advisory committee called the Triangle Metropolitan Planning Organizations Coordinating Council (TMPOCC) that included representatives from each MPO's Transportation Advisory Committee. The MOA established a framework for the two MPOs to work together on regional transportation planning, which included the 2040 MTP in addition to other transportation planning activities for the region.

Different aspects of the plan lent themselves to various types of coordination. At the staff-level, many informal discussions took place throughout the process in order to advance the technical portions of various modeling, GIS, and planning projects. Staff from each MPO also met on Friday morning meetings hosted by [Triangle J](#), the region's council of governments (COG), to discuss mutual interests and issues. Fortuitously, Triangle J initiated



interagency coordination for air quality conformity in the region years ago, so CAMPO and DCHC MPO trusted the COG to facilitate discussions for the 2035 LRTP and 2040 MTP as well.

Though they worked together to develop the joint 2040 MTP, each MPO retained a measure of flexibility with regard to developing certain performance measures. Even within the boundaries of such coordination, each MPO preserves its individuality and autonomy by having the authority to propose amendments to the 2040 MTP.

Collaboration Accomplishments

The agencies saved resources by sharing staff and funding to achieve their goals. Between the two organizations, there are about four staff members working on the 2040 MTP initiatives. CAMPO and DCHC MPO estimate that if each MPO were to work separately, each agency would require three to five staff members to complete the work.

The 2040 MTP planning process also introduced the MPOs to innovative technology that supports collaboration. For instance, CAMPO and DCHC MPO are now using CommunityViz, the GIS-based scenario development and analysis software that they first used in the 2040 MTP, for a new project. Learning the capabilities of CommunityViz during the 2040 MTP process enabled the MPOs to begin analyzing future growth scenarios and helping their over 30 cities and towns with local land use control to develop consistent and transparent forecasts, which improves the region's transportation modelling and planning.

Most importantly, the region's residents experience the greatest benefits from cooperation between CAMPO and DCHC MPO. Many residents travel from their homes in one jurisdiction to work in the other, so they rely on coordinated services to improve their commutes and overall quality of life. Improved demographic and socioeconomic forecasts, as well as travel behavior models, help the MPOs to plan and coordinate better services for residents. Raleigh and Durham also work together on efforts to attract mutual investments in economic development, rather than competing for projects that could go to other cities instead of one of them.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Staff and leadership from CAMPO and DCHC MPO have long recognized the importance of working together when they can, but as separate entities they also have competing interests. To address this issue, the MPOs work with Triangle J to facilitate discussions between them. Triangle J acts as a neutral party that has no vested interest in the conclusions that the MPOs reach. This provides CAMPO and DCHC MPO with a forum that is not biased towards one MPO or the other, improving cooperation between them.

While Raleigh and Durham have a number of common transportation goals, the cities and their corresponding MPOs have different cultures, political leanings, and demographics. In spite of that, they have realized over time that cooperating on planning efforts saves time and money, and improves the quality of life in both their jurisdictions. As a result of their expanding portfolio of collaborative work over the past few years, CAMPO and DCHC MPO anticipate that they will continue to develop joint transportation planning products for years to come.

