

MPO Self Assessment for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough



A Blueprint Preparing the Borough for a Metropolitan Planning Organization

December 2015

Table of Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Transportation Framework	8
3. MPOs: A Peer Review	12
4. Mat-Su MPO: What would it look like?	17
5. What's next?	20
Appendix	26

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Chapter 1: Purpose & Executive Summary

This Metropolitan Planning Organization Self-Assessment is an effort to explore the potential of core area of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough of Alaska reaching federal status that requires establishment of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (or MPO) after the 2020 Census.

Growth in the MSB has continued since the 2010 Census. According to estimates, the population of the Borough has grown from 88,995 to 97,882 in 2014 estimates. This is a growth rate of 10% while, by comparison, the state of Alaska's population has grown by 3% during that same time period. The Mat-Su Borough's growth in these four years comprises 33% of the state's overall growth. These estimates indicate the City of Wasilla has grown 13.0% since 2010 and Palmer has grown 9.7% (see Exhibit 1-1). Estimates for growth in the Knik-Fairview and Lakes Census Designated Places (CDP) are not available for 2014.

In the 2010 Census, the core area of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB or Borough) was defined as an "urban cluster" with a population of more than 44,000 people. This urban cluster comprised the cities of Wasilla and Palmer as well as the Lakes area and Knik-Fairview (Exhibit 1-2, next page).

Federal legislation passed in the early 1970s requires that any Urbanized Area (UZA) with a population greater than 50,000 have a Metropolitan Planning Organization. The definition of "urban" is defined by development density within or outside of municipal limits, meaning that unincorporated areas surrounding municipalities are also defined as part of an urbanized area, just as areas outside the cities of Wasilla and Palmer as shown in Exhibit 1-2 are part of the urban cluster. Anchorage and Fairbanks each have MPOs because they meet the 50,000 population threshold.

Urban Clusters, like the one designated in the MSB are defined as Urbanized Areas once this population threshold of 50,000 is met. Given the growth since 2010 and continued prospects for growth in the core area of the MSB, it is highly likely that the 2020 Census will result in the existing urban cluster becoming an urbanized area, thus requiring an MPO.

The Borough's interest in conducting this self-assessment is to help identify the context in which an MPO would operate, the requirements of an MPO if one is established, the financial ramifications on existing staff and project resources, and the pros/cons of having an MPO.

Discussions have occurred between Borough staff and Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF, or DOT) on how an MPO would be established. In January 2015 the Borough's Transportation Advisory Board

What is an MPO?

A Metropolitan Planning Organization is a transportation decision-making and planning body with representatives of local, state & federal government and transportation authorities. It is mandated by the federal government for urban areas with a population greater than 50,000.

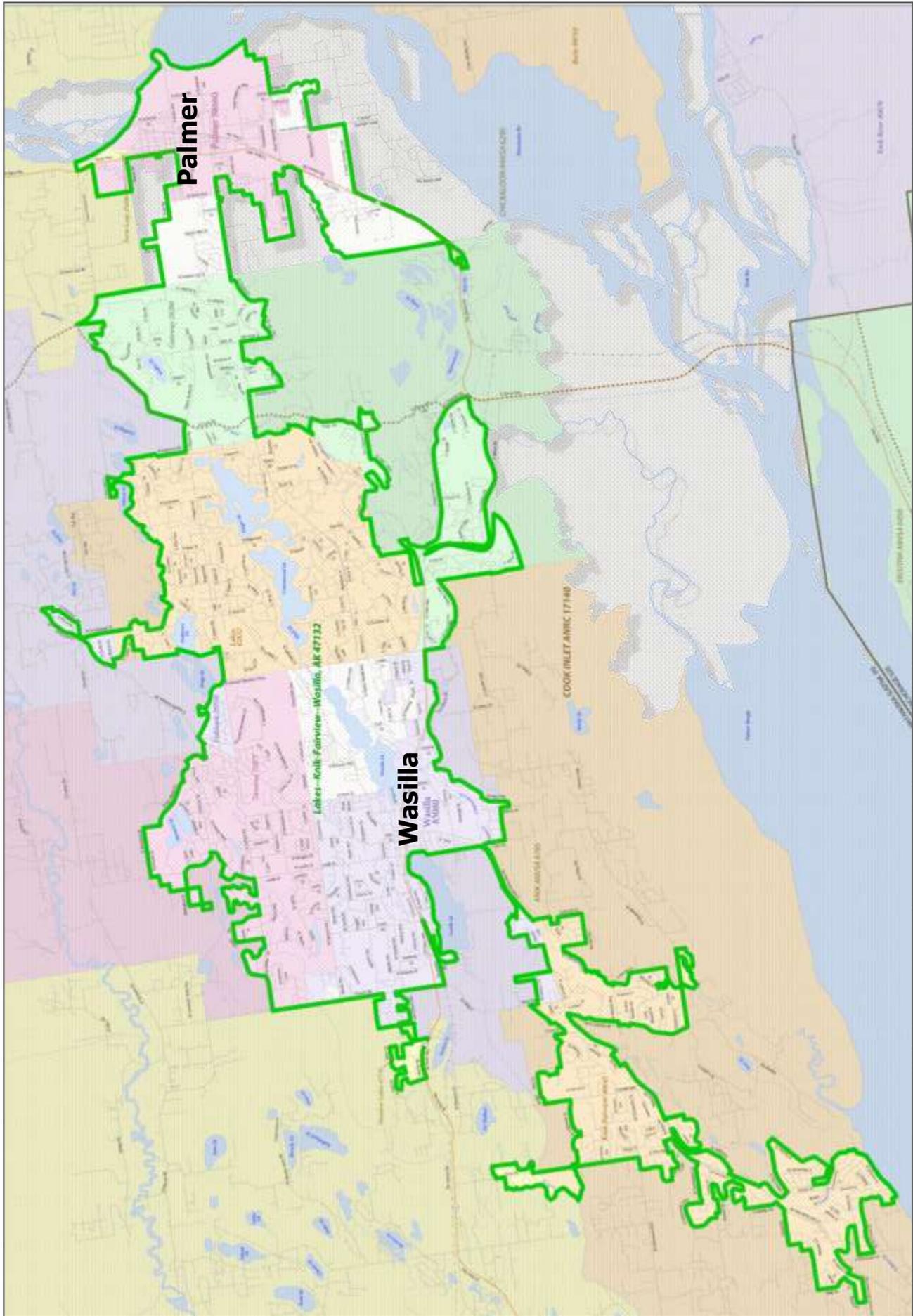
Finding:

⇒ The Mat-Su Borough Urban Cluster is likely to exceed 50,000 in population following the 2020 Census, requiring formation of an MPO.

Exhibit 1-1: Population Growth—2010 Census vs. 2014 Estimates

Area	2010 Census	2014 Estimate	Increase	% Increase
State of Alaska	710,249	736,732	26,483	3.7%
Mat-Su Borough	88,995	97,882	8,887	10.0%
MSB Urban Cluster	44,236	n/a		
Palmer	5,937	6,515	578	9.7%
Wasilla	7,831	8,849	1,018	13.0%
Knik-Fairview CDP	14,923	N/A		
Lakes CDP	8,364	N/A		

Exhibit 1 -2: Matanuska-Susitna Borough Urban Cluster, 2010 Census



http://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10map/UAUC_RefMap/uc/uc47132_lakes--knik-fairview--wasilla_ak/DC10UC47132.pdf

passed a resolution advising the Borough to fund and form a Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO).

Based on the results of this self-assessment, it is not advisable to proceed with forming an RTPO within the Borough as many of the duties carried out by an RTPO are already in place or in progress. There are no existing RTPOs or law related to forming an RTPO in the State of Alaska. DOT could still designate an RTPO without legislation. Without this, it appears that an RTPO would add more complexity and cost than currently necessary to continue with existing best practices employed by the Borough. Given there is no formal structure for an RTPO within state law or DOT policies, nothing ensures that an RTPO's status as a regional planning entity is on par with other MPOs or would have a greater positive impact on planning at this time.

It is advised that the Borough continue current planning practices and methodically prepare for MPO status. Several recommendations contained in the TAB's resolution are good starting points to begin thinking about how an MPO would operate and who would be involved. The TAB is serving in a role similar to what a Citizens Advisory Committee would serve within an MPO or RTPO. It would not be dissolved or re-purposed under an MPO since MPO committees focus on initiatives within the MPO boundary. This advisory board should be maintained if an MPO is designated to continue to provide a Borough-wide perspective even as MPO committees will focus on initiatives within the MPO boundaries.

Method

The consultant retained by the Borough for this self-assessment organized the following efforts to help the MSB address these interests. This report is a compilation of the results of that effort, which included:

- **Defining the MPO framework**, via research and documentation of existing laws and MPO practices in the United States;
- **Assessing current MSB practices related to transportation services, projects and planning**, including review of existing plans, programs and committees, as well as interviews with MSB staff, elected officials, committee members and local transit services.



This assessment includes

- **Defining the MPO framework in the US,**
- **Assessing current MSB practices and plans,**
- **Peer review of 7 MPOs in Western US,**
- **Discussions with Anchorage & Fairbanks MPOs,**
- **Suggestions for preparing for MPO status,**
- **Defining roles and responsibilities, and**
- **Identifying next steps.**

- **Conducting a peer region review of 7 MPOs in the western United States**, based on population and governance models as similar to the MSB as possible;
- **Summarizing MPOs in the Alaska context**, via interviews with the Anchorage (AMATS) and Fairbanks (FMATS) MPOs as well as discussion with Alaska DOT representatives;
- **Preparing for MPO status**, with recommended steps MSB can take between now and the 2020 Census to continue best practices in transportation planning that align with MPO duties;
- **Defining roles and responsibilities**, including hypothetical committee structures and who major partners and committee members might be; and
- **Recommending next steps**, which allow the MSB continue on a pathway that continues positioning the agency for likely MPO status and integrating best practices into existing and planned efforts, such corridor plans, long-range transportation plans and capital improvement plans.

The effort included two visits to the MSB to meet with key stakeholders and present preliminary report findings. It also included phone interviews with eight different MPO officials in Idaho, Montana, Washington, Wyoming, Utah and Arizona in addition to in-person meetings with the Alaska DOT staff, Anchorage MPO (AMATS), and the Fairbanks MPO (FMATS).

The project consultant was Vitruvian Planning, whose staff has worked with more than a dozen MPOs across the United States on a variety of plans and projects.

Current Transportation Framework in the MSB

The growing pains being experienced by the Mat-Su Borough, its officials, staff and citizens, are not uncommon to many growing areas of the United States. Formerly rural areas that are rapidly transitioning to urban or suburban development patterns are stressed in terms of providing adequate transportation facilities and other public facilities. There is always a constant tension between how to address capacity needs, manage existing system needs and address growing maintenance backlogs.

The self-assessment process revealed the Borough is undertaking a lot of best practices to better manage expectations that come with rapid growth. Growth is never without some level of controversy and need for regional discussion to attempt to best distribute resources and not alienate rural populations in favor of urban population needs.

The Capital Improvement Program for the Borough as well as the effort to update the Long Range Transportation Plan are impressive for an agency of its size. The vision to organize a Corridor Planning Partnership in the wake of lessons learned on the Knik-Goose Bay Road project is admirable to help stakeholders better convene in a regional forum to turn these lessons learned into constructive actions on future projects. The recent hiring of a transportation planner only strengthens these practices and creates a foundation for continued advancement in this realm.

Exhibit 1-3 is a summary of existing practices undertaken by the Borough as they relate to required duties or common practices of MPOs across the United States. Some are very similar and will change little if an MPO is designated

MPO Terminology

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP): A Long-Range Transportation Plan for within the MPO boundary.

⇒20 to 25 years horizon, updated at least once every 4 years.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): A Capital Improvement Plan and Transit funding program for transportation investments within the MPO boundary.

⇒4 to 5 years time horizon, updated every 2 years.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP): An task-based budget for the MPO, which serves as a management tool that identifies the nature, timeline, staffing needs, cost, and funding sources of all planning and programming activities.

⇒Updated annually.

Public Participation Plan (PPP): A plan for robust public participation and education on how the MPO will engage citizens and stakeholders to develop the MTP, TIP, UPWP and other tasks.

⇒Updated annually.

Policy Committee (the MPO Board): A group of elected officials or their designee from the Borough and municipalities from within the MPO boundary. May include other state agencies. Responsible for approving MTP, TIP, UPWP and other MPO actions.

⇒Membership defined by MPO bylaws.

Technical Committee: Advisory to the Policy Committee; comprised of staff of the Borough and municipalities from within the MPO boundary, as well as state agencies, transit services, and others as selected by the MPO.

⇒ Membership defined by MPO bylaws

Exhibit 1-3: Current Mat-Su Borough Transportation Planning vs. Common MPO Practice

Role/Duty	Current Practice	MPO Practice
Long-Range Transportation Plan (Update)	Long Range Transportation Plan Update is under development, to be completed in early 2016. The Plan will have similar characteristics to an MPO's long-range transportation plan (i.e., Metropolitan Transportation Plan).	The federally-mandated Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) would focus on the geographic area designated as the MPO. Projects, policies and fiscal constraints are based on what is planned to occur within those boundaries over a 20-year period of time. Non-MPO areas of the MSB would still need a separate long-range plan to continue the MSB's existing practice, but the two efforts can (and should) be coordinated.
Capital Improvement Program	MSB Capital Improvement Program (2017-2022) includes projects related to transportation, emergency services, public facilities, parks and recreation, the port, water resources and school district. Includes some projects planned by Alaska DOT.	The federally-mandated Transportation Improvement Program will include all transportation projects (e.g. highways, bridges, ports, railroads, sidewalks) funded through federal sources, including any Alaska DOT projects within the MPO boundary. Other projects defined as "regionally significant" will also be included.
Transportation Advisory Board	The appointed Advisory Board serves as a sounding board for a variety of Borough-wide transportation policies. It reports to the Planning Commission and makes recommendations on the annual transportation program, methods of funding transportation, the location and development of transportation systems and other policy issues.	Many MPOs have Citizens Advisory Committees (CAC) to provide an advisory role to the Technical Committee or MPO Board. The existing TAB would represent Borough-wide interests and areas outside the MPO while a CAC would represent interests inside the MPO boundaries.
Transportation Planner	The Borough is funding a new transportation planner to better coordinate transportation interests and guide future plans and projects.	An MPO Director, and at least one staff person, would comprise the future MPO staff with funding distributed to the MPO via the federal government/DOT to manage the MPO. It is possible that duties for transportation planning outside the MPO boundaries can be combined with the MPO duties since the outreach and planning efforts are similar. However, MPO funds may not be used for non-MPO functions, meaning funding would have to come from local sources.
Corridor Planning Framework	The Borough is developing a corridor planning framework to better define roles, responsibilities and expectations for a specific corridor plan in concert with DOT.	The framework could serve as a model for how the Borough and DOT will align interests and coordinate long-range planning if an MPO is formed. Other stakeholders such as Tribal Corporations, the Alaska Railroad and Road Service Areas within the MPO boundaries.
Public Transit	Existing public transit services are self-managed and provide for different geographic or trip functions.	Under an MPO, some additional transit funding for urbanized areas will be made available and must be reflected on the TIP and planned for, in a general sense, in the MTP.
Regional Coordination	Discussions with the Anchorage MPO (AMATS) and other Anchorage areas interests are limited to specific projects or initiatives. Little coordination occurs on long-range planning and project coordination.	It is advisable that a future MPO for the Borough would conduct more focused regional planning discussions with AMATS on corridor planning and other regional planning needs, perhaps through a subcommittee of the technical committee or board.

for the Borough; others will require more thought to determine how to best balance input and interests of areas within the MPO boundary and areas outside that boundary.

Key Assessment Findings

Below is a summary of key findings from this self-assessment. They reflect the big picture practices and possible strategies to better prepare the MSB for MPO designation following the 2020 Census. They are intended to help MSB align existing transportation efforts with future MPO duties while being mindful of available resources of both staff and financing. They will also help reduce the long-range burden place on the MSB by the MPO and make it run more smoothly. More details on these findings are contained in Chapter 5.

- **Continue Existing Practices:** The Long-Range Transportation Plan slated to be complete in 2016 will resemble a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) like those developed by established MPOs. The 2020 update should be conducted under the established rules for developing a long range transportation plan for an MPO. While not as well-aligned with Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) required of MPOs, the Borough's Capital Improvement Plan establishes a foundation for development of a TIP within the MSB.
- **RTPO designation is duplicative:** Currently, there is no evident benefit to the Borough pursuing RTPO status since the Borough is already invested in its planning staff, a transportation planner, long- and mid-range transportation planning efforts and a Transportation Advisory Board. The TAB is already acting as a regional advisory board on transportation issues. As noted above, the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) functions very much like a Citizens Advisory Committee of an MPO.
- **Evaluate MPO Committee Structures:** MPOs have a Board or Policy Committee comprised of elected officials or their designees, and a Technical Committee comprised of staff from member agencies and other related agencies, such as tribal corporations, who have an interest in MPO duties. MSB can use its Corridor Planning Partnership as an early test of likely committee structure. This report recommends that partnership include a committee consisting of elected officials that provide big picture direction

MPOs address transportation planning beyond roadways, including...

- ⇒ **Public transit, aviation, bicycling, walking, freight and ports, and coordination with other regions and transportation agencies.**



along with a technical committee of Borough, municipal and agency staff to provide more detailed direction.

- **Establish priorities and parameters with Alaska DOT&PF pre-MPO:** A key finding from the peer MPO outreach component of this self-assessment is a recommendation that the MSB establish a set of priorities and MPO set-up parameters with Alaska DOT prior to official formation of the MPO. If the recommendations listed above are successful, MSB and Alaska DOT will both be in a good position to formalize these arrangements.
- **Track reauthorization status:** The Borough staff should continue to track what is occurring at the federal level regarding transportation policies as they relate to both funding and rules regarding MPOs. Under normal circumstances there would be two more major federal reauthorization bills passed before 2022.
- **What else?** Change is occurring rapidly in the Mat-Su Borough. That was clearly evident during development of this self-assessment. These steps will help the Borough continue to grow its capacity for transportation planning.
 - ◇ Participate in the Association of MPOs Annual Conference, webinars and other information exchange efforts.
 - ◇ Develop an “MPO 101” presentation stemming from this report. There are several available online to use as examples in addition to presentations generated for this Self Assessment.
 - ◇ Organize a Transit Coordinating Committee as 4 transit services operated in the MSB with varying missions and they are in need of a coordinating effort to assist in communication and funding pursuits. This committee could help with Coordinated Transit Planning efforts that help the area access federal transit funds.
 - ◇ Work with Alaska DOT to identify pre-MPO study needs as DOTs have access to funding to help with MPO establishment efforts. MSB can begin working with Alaska DOT to determine how and when to make this request.
 - ◇ Continue to improve transportation planning and decision-making. Efforts related to land use planning, freight, tourism development, community or small area planning, food systems planning and disaster preparedness should have an integrated transportation component.
 - ◇ Establish a regional coordination framework for transportation and planning with AMATS & Anchorage since MSB and Anchorage area have a regional reliance upon one another and should engage in more frequent staff-level regional planning discussions with a goal of more discussion among elected officials.

MPO Prep: Helpful Hints

- **Start small and get it right from the start:** Focus first on the basic MPO requirements—MTP, TIP, UPWP and PPD—before branching out or leading complex studies.
- **Be specific in the formation of bylaw and committees:** This helps establish a proper role for all those involved and makes the MPO more efficient.
- **Use the MPO as a forum for regional projects & coordination:** Cities and the Borough have a formal seat at the table with DOT on project selection once an MPO is established. Use this opportunity to optimize coordination roles and define common expectations.
- **Be a sounding board for DOT:** DOTs can help promote better public and stakeholder involvement, thus reducing project delays and controversy, when engaging the MPO and its member agencies.

Chapter 2: Transportation Framework

The existing transportation framework in the Borough is comprised of projects led by the Borough's Capital Projects division and planning directed by the agency's Planning Department. This is pretty typical for such agencies. The Borough's second class borough status complicates efforts given the Borough does not have road powers. The existing road service areas provide a source of revenue for transportation facility expansion and maintenance. The Mat-Su Borough remains a strategically critical area for Alaska DOT&PF as two of the state's major highways—the Glenn Highway and Parks Highway—bisect the Borough. The Glenn Highway provides the only linkage to the interior of Alaska from Anchorage and the Borough is one of the only areas of the state that is growing at a rapid pace.

Emerging Themes in the Mat-Su Borough

As noted previously, the Borough is already undertaking a series of steps to better organize transportation planning and coordinate project development in a more collaborative way among diverse stakeholders. Growth pressures combined with sound planning and financial practices have led to a great degree of worthwhile planning for the area. The Borough is in the process of updating its long-range transportation plan, which is very similar in context and content to what is required of an MPO.

The 2017-2022 Capital Improvement Program stems from Borough code and provides a list of projects for transportation, schools, the port, trails, parks and recreation and others. A variety of funding mechanisms are utilized to fund projects within the program. These include federal funds, state grants, general obligation bonds, and local funds. There are 10 priority projects identified along roadways on the National Highway System. Transit, community transportation and other maintenance projects are identified in the CIP. Not all projects are fully-funded and others are listed in anticipation of future funding pursuits.

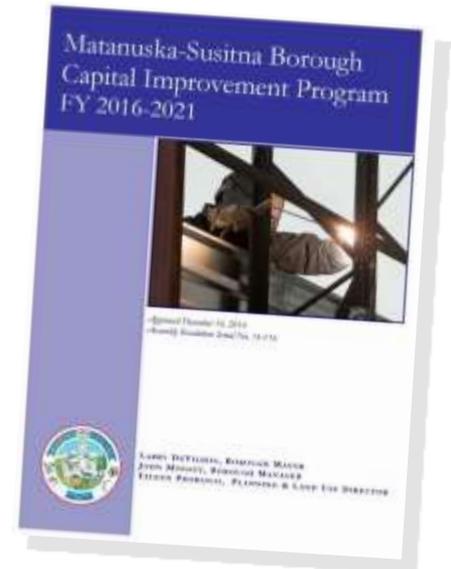
Beyond the universal issues of funding shortfalls for infrastructure, a major emerging issue for transportation in the Borough is in the realm of public transit, particularly for Valley Mover and MASCOT. The financial challenges of operating these services combined with the complexity in accessing federal transit funds, has stressed these systems and third party discussions are underway on how to potentially merge those service agencies.

All of these emerging topics necessitating the hiring of a transportation planner to help coordinate these and other efforts and serve as a technical resource for the Borough Assembly, Planning Board and Transportation Advisory Board.

MPO 101

An MPO has authority and responsibility for transportation policy-making in metropolitan planning areas. MPO boundaries are defined by the urbanized area determined by the Census plus any area that is expected to become urbanized over the next 20 years. MPOs ensure that existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs are based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning process. This is known as the 3-C process. MPOs also cooperate with State and public transportation operators to set spending levels for Federal funds that are meant for transportation projects.

Note that some MPOs are found within agencies such as Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs), Councils of Governments (COGs), and others. The Anchorage MPO, AMATS, is housed within the Municipality while the Fairbanks MPO, FMATS, is housed within the City of Fairbanks and includes geographic



The Capital Improvement Program is one of many ways the Borough is addressing transportation needs. The CIP has many similarities to the Transportation Improvement Program the MPO would develop.

This chapter contains excerpts from the Federal Highway Administration's *The Transportation Planning Process Briefing Book (2015 update)*.
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/publications/briefing_book/index.cfm

areas of the Cities of North Pole, Fairbanks, and urbanized portions of the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

MPOs serve an overall coordination and consensus-building role in planning and programming funds for projects and operations. Because MPOs typically neither own nor operate the transportation systems they serve, most MPOs will not be involved in implementing the transportation project priorities they establish. That role remains with the state DOT or other implementing agencies, such as a county or city road/streets department. The MPO must involve local transportation providers in the planning process by including transit agencies, State and local highway departments, airport authorities, maritime operators, rail-freight operators, port operators, private providers of public transportation, tribes, and others within the MPO region.

MPOs have to...

By law (23 CFR 450), an MPO is defined as a policy board comprised of local elected officials. Representatives from local governments and transportation agencies serve on MPOs and perform the six core functions that follow:

1. **Establish a setting for effective decision making:** Establish and manage a fair and impartial setting for effective regional decision making in the metropolitan area.
2. **Identify and evaluate transportation improvement options:** Develop transportation improvement options and use data and planning methods to evaluate whether those options support criteria and system performance targets. Planning studies and evaluations are included in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).
3. **Prepare and maintain a Metropolitan Transportation Plan:** Develop and update an LRTP for the metropolitan area covering a planning horizon of at least 20 years. MPOs prepare LRTPs using performance measures and targets. These are the planning factors that MPOs and departments of transportation consider to guide their planning processes:
 - Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
 - Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
 - Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
 - Increase accessibility and mobility for people and freight.
 - Protect and enhance the environment.
 - Promote energy conservation.
 - Improve quality of life for the community.
 - Promote consistency between transportation improvements and planned State and local growth and economic development patterns.
 - Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system for all modes.
 - Promote efficient system management and operation.
 - Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

MPO 101

A Metropolitan Planning Organization is a transportation decision-making and planning body¹ with representatives of local, state & federal government and transportation authorities. It is mandated by the federal government for urban areas with a population greater than 50,000.

- **Federal law requires** MPOs in Census -designated **Urbanized Areas² of 50,000+ population.** Mat-Su Core Area was 44,236 in 2010.
- Ensures federal spending on transportation occurs through a **comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing process** through requirements for a Metropolitan Transportation Plan & Transportation Improvement Program.
- MPO functions within its defined boundaries & **actions of the MPO are governed by a decision-making body different from the Borough Assembly.**
- There is a guaranteed allocation of federal planning funds for MPO-related duties.

(1) Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (amp.org)

(2) U.S. Census Definition of Urbanized Areas = Population of 50,000 + Population Density of 500 persons per square mile.

4. **Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):** Develop a short-range, four-year program of priority transportation improvements drawn from the long-range transportation plan. The MPO creates the TIP with spending, regulating, operating, management, and financial tools. The TIP represents immediate priority actions to achieve the area's goals and associated system performance targets.
5. **Identify performance measure targets and monitor whether implemented projects are achieving targets:** MPOs coordinate with State and public transportation operators to establish performance targets that address performance measures, as set forth in Federal law, related to surface transportation and public transportation. MPOs prepare plans that include performance targets addressing performance measures and standards. When updating the plan, MPOs also prepare a System Performance Report that tracks progress in meeting performance targets. In addition to federally required performance measures, MPOs may identify additional, locally significant performance indicators that support decision making.

Typical MPO Structure



<http://www.flagstaff.az.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/6470>

6. **Involve the public:** Involve the general public and other affected constituencies related to the essential decision making elements listed above.

In accordance with Federal requirements, MPOs must cooperate with the State and providers of public transportation to create metropolitan transportation plans. The MPO approves the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), while the governor and the MPO approve the TIP.

Committees

Every MPO has a Policy Committee (or Board) comprised largely of elected officials or appointees of elected officials in the case of agencies such as DOT. The Policy Committee is tasked with the authority to approve the Metropolitan Transportation, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program (budget) and other required MPO duties. They are, by law, an independent decision-making body that is not subject to oversight by other elected bodies or boards. This does not mean they are a threat to elected bodies such as a city council or Borough assembly. They are simply tasked with the authority to manage the MPO's interests. It is common for an MPO to have a Technical Advisory Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee, and to have subcommittees on specific issues such as system performance, environmental justice, bicycle issues, and travel demand modeling.

There is no required structure for the advisory bodies and staff that provide planning and analysis to MPOs. Technical and Citizens Advisory Committees and a staff of planners led by a director also support the metropolitan transportation planning process. The MPO's Technical Committee is typically comprised of local agency planning and transportation staff as well as representatives of ports, railroads, DOT, tribes, and others.

The metropolitan transportation planning process must engage the public and stakeholders on an ongoing basis in all facets of planning, to spur dialogue on critical issues facing regions and provide opportunities for the public to contribute ideas. This is especially important in the early and middle stages of the process, when the plan and the TIP are developed. Special attention should be paid to groups that are underrepresented in the transportation planning decision making process or

have been underserved in terms of the expenditure of transportation dollars. A Citizens Advisory Committee may be appointed to serve the Policy Committee and Technical Committees and provide strategic direction on how to involve the public in MPO efforts.

A technical advisory committee may then recommend specific strategies or projects to the MPO policy board. An advisory committee may also provide technical analysis, specialized knowledge, and citizen input on specific issues.

MPO staff assists the Policy Committee and other committees by preparing documents, fostering interagency coordination, facilitating public input and feedback, and managing the planning process. MPO staff may also provide committees with technical assessments and evaluations of proposed transportation initiatives, and the MPO staff may engage consultants to produce data.

MPO & RTPO: What’s the difference?

An MPO is a federally-designated entity tasked with carrying out specific duties for transportation planning in urbanized areas (population greater than 50,000). They have federally-stipulated duties and their decisions are enforceable as it relates to transportation project identification and funding. Since MPO duties are granted by the federal government, they have special authority over transportation project identification and funding.

A Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) is a voluntary group of non-metropolitan area local officials and transportation system operators that States may assemble to assist in the Statewide and nonmetropolitan transportation planning process. RTPOs emphasize nonmetropolitan areas of the State. An RTPO may have additional representatives from the State, private businesses, transportation service providers, economic development practitioners, and the public. The authorities of an RTPO are granted solely by the state and have no official federal standing. See Exhibit 2-1.

Exhibit 2-1: Comparing Duties and Authorities of RTPOs and MPOs

Topic	RTPO	MPO
Statutory Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No official federal government authority, but referenced in MAP-21. Voluntary, as designated or assigned by a state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandated by federal government once urbanized area population is 50,000 Specific planning and program duties assigned by federal government Other authorities as designated or requested by a state
Geographic Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-urbanized areas May exist in same county/jurisdiction as MPO to serve areas outside the MPO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urbanized areas with population greater than 50,000, as defined by federal government, plus a self-determined 20-year planning area
Required Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only as defined by a state Generally similar to LRTP and TIP in states with RTPOs, but plans have no recognized authority in federal law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metropolitan Transp Plan (or LRTP; fiscally-constrained) Transportation Improvement program (TIP) Unified Planning Work Program (task-based budget) Public Participation Plan (PPP) Others, as determined by state or member agencies

Chapter 3: MPOs: A Peer Review

A key element of this self-assessment is a review of similar MPOs in the western United States that have population, geographic and political frameworks that represent common themes in the Mat-Su Borough. The purpose of this outreach to similar MPOs was to define common themes, interests and concerns for establishing an MPO in the Mat-Su Borough.

Small MPOs do not receive much attention or study across the country as the research emphasis tends to be focused on major metropolitan areas. Therefore, there is no definitive guidebook on small or new MPOs.

Through work with Borough staff, the consultant identified characteristics for outreach to MPOs. These general characteristics were:

- Urbanized area population between 50,000 and 100,000;
- Western United States context, primarily the area known as the Intermountain West consisting of Montana, Wyoming, Idaho and Utah;
- MPOs that formed within these areas in the past decade; and
- Diverse organizational frameworks (e.g. county-led vs. central city-led MPOs).

The goal of this study was to reach out to eight such MPOs with hopes of interviewing at least five of them. The MPOs were very responsive which resulted in interviews with seven MPOs. They are shown in Exhibit 3-1 below.



Exhibit 3-1: Peer MPOs Interviewed for the Self Assessment



They are:

- **Bannock Transportation Planning Organization** – Pocatello, Idaho (pop. 73,000)
- **Casper Area MPO** – Casper, Wyoming (pop. 71,000)
- **Cheyenne MPO** – Cheyenne, Wyoming (pop. 81,000)
- **Dixie MPO** – St. George, Utah (pop. 105,000)
- **Great Falls MPO** – Great Falls, Montana (pop. 69,000)
- **Skagit MPO** – Skagit County, Washington (pop. 117,000)
- **Sun Corridor MPO** – Casa Grande, Arizona (pop. 108,000)

Additionally, the Anchorage and Fairbanks MPO were interviewed or re-researched as part of this effort to gain a better understanding of how MPOs function in the Alaska context and how they are similar and different from other MPOs interviewed for this study.

MPOs in the Western United States

The unique part of the outreach to other MPOs is that it allowed the directors of those MPOs to consider how they would do things if they had a chance to re-start or re-form the organization. While MPOs are a federally-designated entity, they have evolved in different ways and are subject to unique policy and agency structures within their state. The approaches employed by state DOTs to support and provide oversight, in some instances, for MPOs also varies greatly. This section contains a summary of key issues identified through this outreach. Detailed reports for each MPO interviewed for this self-assessment are contained in the Appendix.

Some keys findings of the MPO outreach are:

- Small MPOs have a small staff and this makes it a challenge to focus on priorities beyond the MPO-required duties.
- Be very specific in MPO bylaws regarding committee structure, roles, responsibilities and processes. Establish bylaws and don't rely strictly on the operating agreement.
- Take advantage of the additional financial resources the MPO provides for planning, but don't do planning for the sake of planning. Focus on what needs to be done.
- Use the MPO as a forum for regional projects and agency coordination.
- Relationships with the state DOT should be strong. The lack of a strong relationship with the DOT can be the missing link between planning and project implementation. This requires DOTs communicating regularly with the MPO and the MPO should have an understanding of DOT project development.
- If MPO is housed within a larger agency or city, establish the MPO as its own division or department so it can focus on transportation planning work and build its own identity.

Exhibit 3-2 summarizes characteristics of these MPOs and individual advice from their directors.

MPO & DOT Coordination

Relationships with the state DOT should be strong. The lack of a strong relationship with the DOT can be the missing link between planning and project implementation. This requires DOTs communicating regularly with the MPO and the MPO should have an understanding of DOT project development.

Exhibit 3-2: Peer MPO Summary Findings

MPO	MPO Area Population	Annual Budget	Special Committees	Advice
Bannock TPO, Pocatello, ID Independent MPO	73,000	\$485,000 (\$90,000 local)	Signal Coordination; Inter-agency Consultation; Human Services.	Don't start by doing too much. Start with a small area, work together and avoid standalone relationships.
Casper Area MPO, Casper, WY City is host agency	71,000	\$830,000 (\$80,000 local)	Citizens Committee with 15 from geographic areas and 5 from specialty areas (transit, freight, aviation, etc)	Be a standalone MPO as much as possible to conduct MPO business, not city or county business. Create clear separation of powers. Be extremely aggressive in creating your initial bylaws.
Cheyenne MPO, Cheyenne, WY Independent MPO	81,000	\$809,000 (\$77,000 local)	Safety Committee being organized; works with city's Greenway and School Traffic Safety committees	Hire staff who can talk, who can convince, and get stakeholders actively involved.
Dixie MPO, St. George, UT Association of Governments is host agency	105,000	\$468,000 (\$40,000 local)	Active Transportation; Transit; Air Quality; Freight.	Facilitating discussions in the best way requires state and local input and you need a planning organization structure to accomplish that.
Great Falls MPO, Great Falls, MT City is host agency	69,000	\$875,000 (\$315,000 local)	Evaluating Non-Motorized Transportation Committee	As MPO, establish your value to the local governments from the beginning.
Skagit MPO, Mt. Vernon, WA Council of Governments is host agency	117,000	\$700,000 (\$60,000 local)	Active Transportation, Citizens Advisory (have tribal representative on technical committee)	Members need to see the benefit of collaborate and have workable agreement on structure of the MPO.
Sun Corridor MPO, Casa Grande, AZ Independent MPO	108,000	\$250,000 (\$130,000 local)	New MPO, forming Economic, Land Use and Development Committee	You have to be clear when explaining the benefits of an MPO and make politicians aware of why this is happening.

MPOs in the Alaska Context

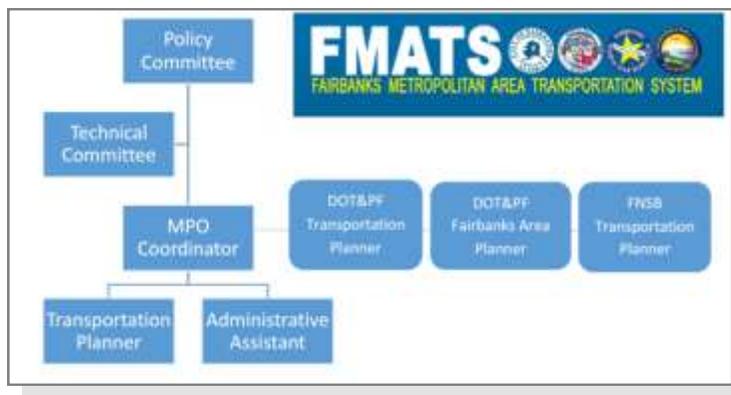
The two MPOs in Alaska are very different in terms of administrative arrangement and duties given their population and context. Both can serve as an example of best practices for a future Mat-Su Borough MPO and a peer within the state that can provide a forum for information exchange.

FMATS was established more recently than AMATS, with its designation occurring in 2003 following the 2000 Census. AMATS was established in 1968. FMATS has more recent institutional arrangements that are a model for the Borough. Alaska DOT&PF assigns an Area Planner to the MPO as do the Mat-Su Borough. FMATS has a staff of three—a coordinator, a transportation planner and a half-time assistant.

FMATS Organizational Structure

Some other organizational characteristics are:

- Both AMATS and FMATS have an DOT&PF Area Planner assigned to the MPO area. Those planners are housed at Central and Northern Region, respectively. They do not work for the MPO; they work for and are funded by DOT&PF. Some MPO planning funds (called PL) are used to assist in funding a position at DOT&PF.
- FMATS employs a director, 1 planner and a 1/2 time administrative assistant. FMATS is housed at the City of Fairbanks (a local municipality within the Fairbanks North Star Borough).
- Fairbanks North Star Borough receives funding to employ a full-time transportation planner from the MPO's federal PL funds, but this staff person has duties for all Borough transportation issues. FMATS also funds a portion of a transportation planner position at the FNSB.
- AMATS has a director and 4 planners on staff and is housed at the Municipality of Anchorage (a unified Borough).



FMATS. The Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System (FMATS) is more likely than Anchorage to be a peer model for the Mat-Su Borough due to population and governance arrangement. The Fairbanks North Star Borough, like the Mat-Su, is a second class borough (without road powers, which creates some complexities with the matching of federal funds). The cities of Fairbanks and North Pole are member agencies of the MPO. The Borough, cities, DOT and DEC are the members of the Policy Board. Other local organizations such

Exhibit 3-3: FMATS and AMATA Summary

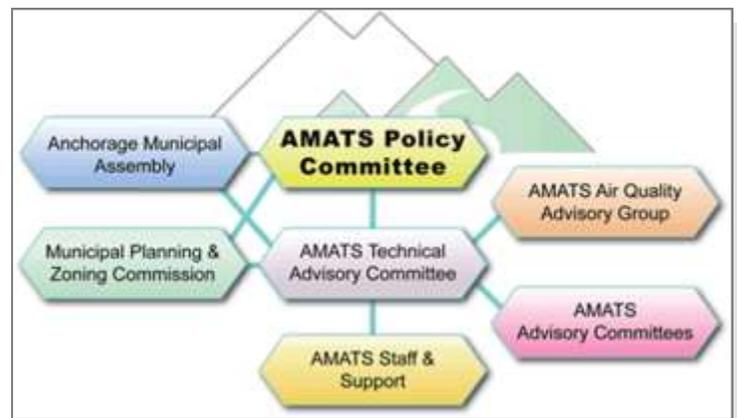
MPO	MPO Area Population	Annual Budget (PL funds)	Notable Features	Special Committees
FMATS, Fairbanks, AK	67,000	\$368,000	Technical committee members include 2 Cities, Borough, DOT&PF, DEC Air Quality, Fort Wainright, University, Railroad and Tanana Chiefs Conference	Seasonal Mobility Task Force; new Freight Advisory Committee (2016).
AMATS, Anchorage, AK	289,000	\$1.262 million	Policy Board/Committee is comprised of only 5 voting members (Mayor, 2 Assembly Members, DOT, Air Quality)	Air Quality; Freight; Bicycle/Pedestrian;

as the airport, a tribal corporation, the trucking industry and Alaska Railroad serve on the technical committee.

In 2007 FMATS completed an Organizational Study to determine how the agency should be organized and managed. Like this self-assessment, the Organizational Study reached out to eight MPOs to get a sense of how they are staffed and how they function.

- Public Participation.** One of the strengths of FMATS that sets it apart from other MPOs interviewed is the extensive lengths staff goes to involve the general public in the planning process. Where other MPOs have not updated their Public Participation Plans in several years, FMATS continually reviews and updates their based on feedback, technology and participation trends. Beyond getting word out and soliciting opinions, the MPO has several opportunities for the public to participate including committees and open meetings such as ongoing corridor studies and the continual Seasonal Mobility Task Force.
- Multifaceted Efforts.** FMATS is engaged in a variety of planning efforts beyond their required duties. FMATS adopted a Complete Streets Policy in 2015 (and cities passed resolutions supporting it). They have conducted corridor plans and bicycle and pedestrian plans, funded multiuse facilities for non-motorized users, and have been a key participant in transit projects throughout the region. The MPO led a committee to determine enhancements to a downtown green space area along with a corresponding inclusion of public art and historical signage.
- DOT Relationship.** One of the most striking issues unearthed with the interview is the sometimes fractured and contentious nature of the relationship with Alaska DOT&PF. In recent years there has been continued disagreement over process, involvement, and even oversight. The challenges seem to come down to a loss of historical knowledge in working with MPOs. The key to this for future consideration of MPO status in Alaska is to get off to a clear and agreeable foundation.

AMATS Organizational Structure



AMATS. Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) is housed within the Municipality of Anchorage. The boundaries of the MPO are wholly contained within the Municipality of Anchorage, which means there are no other cities or boroughs with elected officials operating within the MPO other than Anchorage. With a population of 289,000, AMATS has additional requirements for an MPO as a Transportation Management Area (or TMA). This also gives AMATS more access and more direct control of federal funding in order to manage transportation congestion more systematically. The population base, governance structure, applicability of Alaska laws to AMATS and status as a TMA make it very different from how a Mat-Su Borough MPO would be organized. Additionally, AMATS does not develop its own TIP; DOT&PF does it for them.

What is applicable is how AMATS functions and how it performs its required duties. Based on a review of its products and knowledge of its staff, it is a very well-managed MPO and delivers a lot of the MPO-required elements via in-house staff management. It should be a model for the Mat-Su in terms of its products and initiatives, recognizing that the resources available in the Mat-Su will be less than what AMATS has to work with.

Chapter 4: Mat-Su MPO: What would it look like?

The Mat-Su Borough would be a unique MPO within the United States if designated after the 2020 Census. Most MPOs have a central city that constitutes the majority of the population base of the MPO. Fairbanks, for example, has an MPO population of 67,000 with the City of Fairbanks population at 32,000 (roughly 48% of the total MPO population). The Mat-Su MPO would likely have the majority of its population living in unincorporated areas surrounding Wasilla and Palmer, as is the case with the current Urbanized Cluster in the Core Area.

Given this likely scenario, along with the Mat-Su Borough government model being more conducive to managing the MPO's functions, it is advised that the Borough be the host agency for the MPO rather than one of the cities. Based on current Urban Cluster boundaries, the cities of Wasilla and Palmer would be member agencies with seats on the MPO Policy Committee. MPOs are asked to consider a 20-year planning horizon when defining the boundaries of the MPO, which could bring Houston into the boundaries (but this is not assured and those boundaries can be smoothed based on a variety of factors).

Operating Agreement

An operating agreement is signed at the onset of establishing an MPO. The governor of Alaska must designate the MPO and agencies such as the Mat-Su Borough, municipalities and Alaska DOT&PF are parties to the agreement. The agreement outlines the duties of the MPO pertaining to LRTP, TIP and UPWP, as well as any other requirements. It also sets forth parameters for amendments to these planning efforts and reporting requirement to the state and federal government.

The operating agreement sets forth the roles and responsibilities of the MPO as they pertain to federal law. The agreement also establishes the membership of the policy committee (or Board). The membership on the technical committee is not as prescriptive as the sections of the agreement related to the policy committee, thus allowing the technical committee to evolve and add members as necessary.

The peer MPO revealed that many MPO directors felt the bylaws stemming from the operating agreement, as well as mutually-agreed upon roles and responsibilities for DOT and the MPO, were critical to get right before the MPO is designated. As noted previously, the ongoing actions by the Borough on various transportation planning efforts sets a great example for how this may proceed if an MPO is designated.

Staffing & Organization

Based on feedback from other MPOs, it is advised that the Mat-Su Borough, at minimum, make the MPO its own department within the Borough framework and consider the prospects of making it an independent agency.

While many said an independent MPO is likely to be more successful, that does not appear to be as feasible in the short-term. Currently, there are few special purpose or independent public agencies in Alaska, which makes the prospects for a fully independent MPO more difficult to consider and hard for elected officials and the public to understand. An independent MPO should remain an option to consider as MPO designation nears and more is known about staff arrangements, committee structure and MPO funding. Based on growth pressures and emerging challenges for transit services, there appears to be the need for the Borough to evaluate a more comprehensive transportation governance structure to address a variety of transportation challenges.

An important element to consider is that the MPO Director answers to the Policy Committee of the MPO, not necessarily the Borough Assembly, which can make the arrangement as a Borough department potentially confusing to those involved. Outlining the roles and responsibilities of the MPO director early in the process can help



Given existing governance arrangements, the Borough is the logical host agency for a future MPO. The operating agreement and bylaws should be coordinated by Borough staff with coordination from DOT and cooperation from municipalities.

address these likely conflicts. This is key to preventing issues with who the MPO reports to. Borough functions such as platting and local planning approval are not federal functions required by an MPO.

Based on funding formulas, the MPO should have resources available to hire at least one additional staff member to help the MPO perform its functions and serve the committees. In an organizational arrangement where the MPO is its own department, a staff person could be tasked with dual roles of serving the existing Borough-wide advisory committees, such as the TAB. This should not be construed as using MPO funds to do non-MPO planning outside the MPO boundaries; rather it's a statement of likelihood that employment duties may overlap in terms of technical expertise of MPO staff.

Committees

Based on existing arrangements with policy and technical committees in Fairbanks and Anchorage, Exhibit 4-1 outlines what a Mat-Su Borough MPO committee structure could be given the current boundaries of the Urban Cluster and existing government agencies and stakeholders.

AMATS created Exhibit 4-2 to show how the MPO committee structure fits with-

Exhibit 4-1: Potential Committee Structure for a future Mat-Su Borough MPO *

Committee	FMATS	AMATS	MSB Equivalent
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor • Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly Member • City of Fairbanks Council Member • City of Fairbanks Mayor • City of North Pole Mayor • ADOT&PF Northern Region Director • DEC – Division of Air Quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality of Anchorage Mayor • Municipal Assembly Member • Municipal Assembly Member • ADOT&PF Commissioner (or designee) • DEC Commissioner (or designee) • Non-Voting Member: • Municipal Assembly Member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mat-Su Borough Mayor • Mat-Su Borough Assembly Member (x2) • City of Palmer Mayor • City of Wasilla Mayor • ADOT&PF Central Region Director (or designee)
Technical	<p>Local Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Fairbanks Engineer • City of Fairbanks PW Director • City of North Pole PW Director • Borough Planning Director • Borough Transit Director • Borough Planning Commission • Fort Wainwright • UAF • Fairbanks Airport • Freight Carriers • Tanana Chiefs Conference <p>State Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaska Railroad • DOT&PF Planning Manager • DEC Air Quality 	<p>Local Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Human Services • Public Transportation • Community Development • Project Management & Engineering • Traffic Division • Port of Anchorage • Air Quality Advisory Committee <p>State Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADOT&PF Central Region Planning • ADOT&PF Regional Pre-Construction • DEC • Alaska Railroad 	<p>Local Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mat-Su Borough Chief of Planning • Mat-Su Borough Capital Projects Director • Palmer City Planner • Wasilla City Planner • MASCOT Director • Valley Mover Director • Port Mackenzie Director <p>State Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADOT&PF Central Region Planning • ADOT&PF Regional Pre-Construction • DEC • Alaska Railroad

* This table is for comparison purposes only and does not represent a recommendations on committee structure for a MSB MPO. It is intended show the equivalent committee members from FMATS and AMATS; MSB MPO committees are determined by future bylaws.

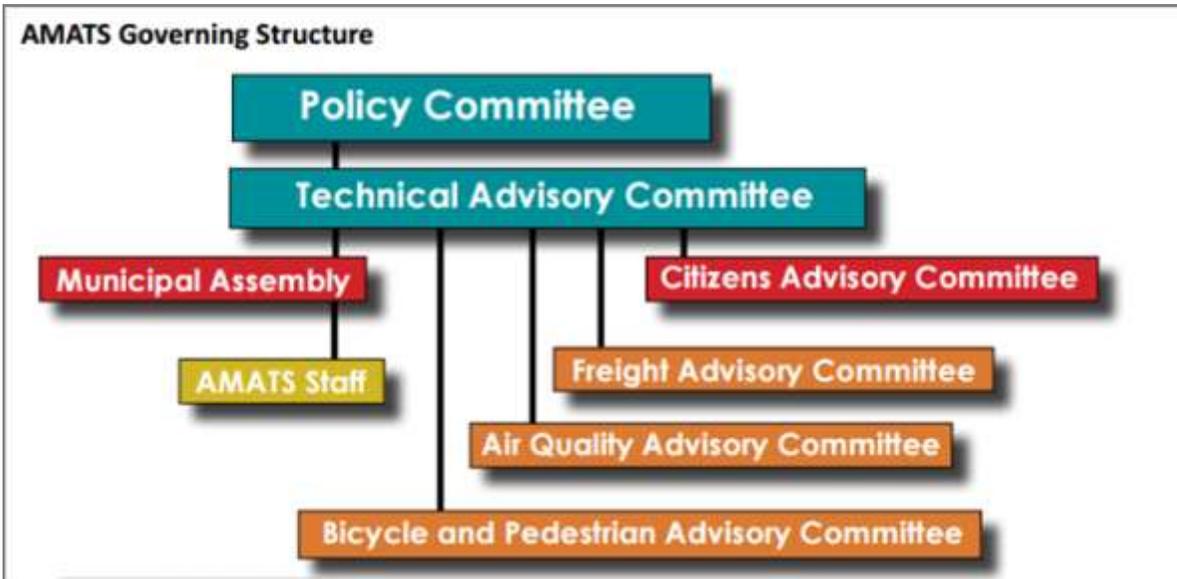
in the Borough Assembly structure given the Assembly does not have direct authority over the actions of the MPO. AMATS asks the Borough Assembly to adopt the Metropolitan Transportation and TIP via ordinance as the official transportation plan for the Borough. This would differ in the Mat-Su Borough given the long-range plan and capital improvement plan identify projects for the entire Borough. An easy solution would be to combine the Borough-wide plans with MPO plans to comprise a comprehensive sets of plans for the entire Borough.

Any special committees in the Mat-Su MPO should be coordinated with existing advisory committees for Borough-wide interests in the interest of minimizing the amount of resources needed to support these committees. Likely special committees for a Mat-Su Borough MPO would be:

- Citizens Advisory Committee (coordinated with existing TAB);
- Active Transportation and Trails Advisory Committee (coordinated with Borough-wide committee); and
- Freight Advisory Committee (coordinated with any port committees).

It is advisable to have an odd number of members on committees.

Exhibit 4-2: AMATS Illustrations Show How the Assembly Fits in the MPO Structure



Municipal Assembly	
Purpose	Responsibilities
<p>The Municipal Assembly provides local government review and recommendations on the AMATS plans and programs to the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee and subsequently to the AMATS Policy Committee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt by ordinance the MTP as the transportation plan element of the comprehensive plan • Adopt by ordinance the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) • Adopt an official streets and highways plan • Adopt the local area component of the State Implementation Plan for air quality • Assist in securing adequate funding to implement the transportation program • Designate two assembly members to serve as two of the three local government representatives on the AMATS Policy Committee

Chapter 5: What's next?

The Introduction & Executive Summary included a synthesis of the major recommendations to the Mat-Su Borough to continue to build its transportation planning and governance capacity leading up to the eventual designation of an MPO. This chapter includes more details on those recommendations, including possible timelines and stakeholders who are critical to the success of each recommendation.

These are not intended to be prescriptive recommendations as policies, funding and other circumstances will change between 2015 and 2022. The Borough can continue to work toward these goals and adjust them as necessary.

This chapter concludes with a Give-Gain Grid to identify partnership roles in achieving these recommendations based on what each partner stands to give and gain.

Build Upon Existing Planning Practices

The Long-Range Transportation Plan slated to be complete in 2016 will resemble a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) like those developed by existing MPOs. The Long-Range Transportation Plan will be slated for an update around 2020, roughly two years before MPO designation could occur. The 2020 update should be organized under the established rules for developing a Metropolitan Transportation Plan for an MPO. It should identify which projects are planned within the Urban Cluster boundary and those that are outside this boundary as a way to begin illustrating how planning occurs in those two geographic areas. It should also include transit agencies.

MTP development is a very time-consuming process for an MPO. Aligning the next long range plan update approach with MPO requirements provides MSB with a compliant long range plan at the time of MPO designation, which allows the newly-formed MPO to focus its time and efforts on other required MPO duties. Alaska DOT&PF should be a part of this process to prepare the agency for future coordination with the MPO. The MSB Capital Improvement Plan is similar in nature to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) requirements of an MPO, which is to develop a short-term four-year program of priority transportation improvements. While not as well-aligned with Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) required of MPOs, the CIP does establish a foundation for development of a TIP within the MSB. A formal TIP will have to be coordinated with Alaska DOT as their projects are required to be included.

The Long-Range Plan

MTP development is a very time-consuming process for an MPO. Aligning the next long range plan update approach with MPO requirements provides MSB with a compliant long range plan at the time of MPO designation, which allows the newly-formed MPO to focus its time and efforts on other required MPO duties.



Pursuing RTPO designation is duplicative

Currently, there is no evident benefit to the Borough pursuing RPO status at this time since the Borough is already invested in its planning staff, a transportation planner, current planning efforts and a Transportation Advisory Board. The TAB already serves as a representative body of the Borough for transportation planning. The TAB is already acting as a regional advisory board on transportation issues. As noted above, the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) functions very much like a Citizens Advisory Committee of an MPO. In fact, it probably provides a greater, more formalized voice than similar committees.

Some states, such as Washington and North Carolina, have established RTPOS as a way to align rural and small non-MPO urban areas planning efforts

with the methods employed by MPOs. In those states the goal is to put these non-MPO areas on a more level playing field. MAP-21—the latest transportation reauthorization bill of record—includes language about RTPOs as a best practice, but they are not required and have no official federal status that would be beneficial to the Mat-Su Borough. RTPOs remain voluntary organizations and some states have formalized their roles to keep the organizations consistent across the state.

Further, Alaska has no statute that addresses RTPOs, their makeup and the role they would play within the DOT's programming and planning efforts. The DOT has the right to designate RTPOs but has not taken that step. Without that, any attempt to organize an RTPO would add an additional layer of effort or even bureaucracy to what is already an effective set of planning practices in the Borough. The Borough is encouraged to continue to collaborate with DOT and improve methods for corridor planning and project development. The long-term goal should remain preparing for MPO status.



Evaluate MPO Committee Structures

The committee structure of an MPO is important to properly consider so committees reflect the needs of the municipalities and other transportation services/organizations within the MPO's boundaries. This should be the primary purpose of the Committees since their input and feedback into the MPO's practices, as well as DOT efforts that must be collaboratively merged into the MPO's plans and programs, is critical to representing the diverse transportation interests in the region.

All MPOs have a Board or Policy Committee comprised of elected officials or their designees, and a Technical Committee comprised of staff from member agencies and other related agencies, such as tribal corporations, who have an interest in MPO duties. MSB can use its Corridor Planning Partnership as an early test of likely committee structure and this report recommends that partnership include a committee consisting of elected officials that provide big picture direction along with a technical committee of Borough, municipal and agency staff to provide more detailed direction. Any lessons learned through this effort will assist in formation of MPO committees.

The current MSB Assembly is comprised of elected officials that lead the Borough. The Transportation Advisory Board is comprised of Borough-wide representatives. Under an MPO framework, the Policy Board will, at minimum, likely include the Borough Mayor, a Borough Assembly Member, the Mayors of cities within the MPO boundaries, and a representative of the state DOT.

The Technical Committee would include planning staff of the Borough and cities, as well as representatives from transit services operating within the MPO boundaries, a Port representatives, tribal corporations within the MPO boundaries, the Alaska Railroad, Alaska DOT and other state agencies, as necessary.

The MPO equivalent to the current MSB Transportation Advisory Board would be a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) comprised of various representatives from communities and non-governmental organizations within the MPO boundary. Under an MPO, the TAB would still exist to represent non-MPO areas of

Committee Structure

Under an MPO framework, the Policy Committee will, at minimum, likely include the Borough Mayor, a Borough Assembly Member, the Mayors of cities within the MPO boundaries, and a representative of the state DOT. The Technical Committee would include planning staff of the Borough and cities, as well as representatives from transit services operating within the MPO boundaries, a Port representatives, tribal corporations within the MPO boundaries, the Alaska Railroad, Alaska DOT and other state agencies, as necessary.

the Borough and could serve a dual role to represent MPO areas or have designated member(s) from within the MPO boundary. As the Borough pursues this in greater detail, it may need to make adjustments made to the TAB to align with these boundaries.

Establish the bylaws at the start, as FMATS as done, and do not rely on the operational agreement as the bylaws. AMATS also recommended establishing the CAC at start of MPO duties to better allocated staff resources, as they are tasked with supporting the various committees and adding it later can upset existing work tasks.



Establish priorities and parameters with DOT pre-MPO

A key finding from the peer MPO outreach component of this self-assessment is a recommendation that the MSB establish a set of priorities and MPO set-up parameters with Alaska DOT prior to official formation of the MPO.

If the recommendations listed above are successful, MSB and Alaska DOT will both be in a good position to formalize these arrangements and have more collaborative planning outcomes. There is not a consistent setup for MPOs in Alaska at present given the stark differences in the governance framework of FMATS and AMATS. The MSB will present the state with another unique framework given that the Borough will likely be the lead planning agency.

The most important outcome in establishing priorities and parameters with the DOT pre-MPO is to minimize the effort and burden placed upon MSB in establishing and managing the MPO. It is best that the MPO is allowed to proceed with its required MPO duties to develop approaches that are mutually-agreed to by the Borough and DOT. This includes establishing parameters by which projects are identified in the MTP and how they are then programmed into the TIP. Identification of projects for the TIP within the MPO boundary should be a collaborative process and not a top-down identification of projects based solely on DOT identification methods. MSB should have just as strong a role in determination of these parameters as DOT in order to avoid future conflicts while ensuring that the MPO's first duty is to serve the Borough and member agencies within its boundaries. Since MSB does not have road powers, the issues of match should also be considered before designation.

Working with DOT

The most important outcome in establishing priorities and parameters with the DOT pre-MPO is to minimize the effort and burden placed upon MSB in establishing and managing the MPO. It is best that the MPO is allowed to proceed with its required MPO duties to develop approaches that are mutually-agreed to by the Borough and DOT.



Track reauthorization status

The Borough staff should continue to track what is occurring at the federal level regarding transportation policies as they relate to both funding and rules regarding MPOs. Under normal circumstances there would be two more major federal reauthorization bills passed before 2022. However, nothing has been normal in recent years when it comes to transportation policy.

The federal transportation bill is always a hotly debated topic in the world of transportation planning. The primary outcome of the bill is a set of funding programs that determines how federal gas tax revenues are distributed. The bill also establishes new policies and programs that impact MPOs. The current bill has undergone a series of continuing resolutions and few mainstream governance changes have occurred in recent bills as they related to MPOs.

The primary duties of MPOs (MTP and TIP) are well-established and likely to remain in place with minor adjustments as federal laws change and new planning requirements emerge. There is always talk of major changes to MPOs, but so far



Congress has been unwilling to tackle these issues as the stability of the highway trust fund remains the top priority in political circles. By tracking reauthorization and communicating with other MPOs in the state and elsewhere, MSB can continue to evolve its approach to transportation planning and preparation for MPO designation. Communication and coordination with FMATS and AMATS on this topic will be beneficial to the Borough as they are regularly in receipt of the latest information on federal transportation legislation.

What else?

Change is occurring rapidly in the Mat-Su Borough. That was clearly evident during development of this self-assessment. Growth places pressure upon public services and the transportation system. Currently the Borough has no formal transportation governance structure to manage roads and transit systems due to its status as a Second Class Borough. The recent hire of a transportation planner within the Borough's Planning Department is a commendable and timely act to help better coordinate several transportation efforts and align somewhat disparate transportation interests that are in place today.

Some items to consider in the coming years for the MSB related to transportation policy, governance and information dissemination that will serve the Borough well as it moves toward MPO designation include:

- **Participate in the Association of MPOs Annual Conference, webinars and other information exchange efforts:** The national association representing MPOs tracks the latest in federal policy changes and coordinates the annual conference. Sending a representative to this conference every two years or so will help keep MSB in communication with others who are addressing the same challenges. AMPO also has forums for elected officials and it may benefit the Borough Manager, the Borough Mayor, Assembly member and municipal elected officials to participate in webinars for elected officials. AMATS pays for a statewide MPO membership, which means the Borough can coordinate with them on AMPO events and dissemination of MPO-related information.
- **Organize a Transit Coordinating Committee:** Four different transit services operated in the MSB with varying missions. From commuter services to rural transit to demand response, these services could benefit from regular discussions amongst one another with the MSB organizing the effort. It

Engaging Transit Agencies

Organizing a Transit Coordinating Committee with existing MSB resources will allow the discussions on regional transit services to have a hub for dialogue. An MPO will bring additional opportunities for urbanized area transit funding and help build the regional dialogue about transit needs.

is a common practice in the United States that county-wide or county-like agencies coordinate these efforts; some providing more robust funding and management support.

- **Work with Alaska DOT to identify pre-MPO study needs:** Per FHWA, DOTs have access to funding to help with MPO establishment efforts. MSB can begin working with Alaska DOT to determine how and when to make this request. One potential early-stage effort would be a legal review of applicable state and federal statutes related to MPOs, Borough duties and other planning and transportation functions. This legal review would establish some sideboards for MPO organizational features and policies.
- **Continue to improve transportation planning and decision-making:** Transportation systems and services touch on all aspects of economic and community development in the Borough. Any efforts related to land use planning, freight, tourism development, community or small area planning, food systems planning and disaster preparedness should have an integrated transportation component. The results of these efforts can easily be merged into the future MTP for the Borough.
- **Establish a regional coordination framework for transportation and planning with AMATS & Anchorage:** The MSB and Anchorage area have reliance upon one another and should engage in more frequent staff-level regional planning discussions. Until an MPO is established, this could be a semi-annual meeting among key planning and municipal staff to discuss emerging issues and topics relevant to both regions. It could also lay the groundwork for a more formal series of discussions among policymakers. In the future, if each has an MPO, a more established method of coordination could be formed via subcommittees of each MPO's policy and technical committees that is tasked with discussing mutual interests.

Give-Gain Grid

The Give-Gain Grid identifies partnership roles and responsibilities. The basic premise of a partnership is realizing that true partnerships rely on a complex set of influences that each party involved both contributes to ("gives") and receives benefits ("gains") from that partnership. The Mat-Su Borough may use this as it moves forward with various transportation planning efforts as the roles are not exclusive to preparing for MPO designation.

Some "gives" are tangible and come in the form of financial support, staff support, dedication of land, or dedication of products and services. Some are simply writing letters of support or promoting an action item. The "gains" can also be tangible in the form of more stable business climate, a better community image, visitor attraction, and a safer community.

The partners listed in Exhibit 5-1 represent the "here and now" in terms of who would most likely to be involved in organizing and contributing to an MPO.

Exhibit 5-1: Give-Gain Grid for MPO Stakeholders & Partners

Partner	Gives	Gains
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership & support • Update plans and related policies with an eye toward future MPO requirements • Secure Funding and seek grants • Work with DOT and other public agencies to collaborate on planning and projects • Staff time to work with other agencies and businesses to continue to gather support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation governance and planning capacity with financial support from FHWA • Predictability in transportation decision-making • Improve conditions for residents and businesses • Improved quality of life • Safer and coordinated transportation systems • Improved economic development • Transportation funding goes farther and impacts more of the region
Municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership & support of Borough's goals and efforts • Assist in seeking funding and policy changes, where applicable • Public support for MPO-related planning efforts • Staff time to work with the Borough and others on committees and plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predictability in transportation decision-making • Alignment of transportation planning with land use policies • Improve conditions for residents and businesses • Improved quality of life • Safer and coordinated transportation systems • Improved economic development • Increased funding for regionally beneficial transportation infrastructure
Alaska DOT&PF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership & support of Borough's goals and efforts • Help pursue/obtain seed money for MPO preparation • Technical assistance when requested • Conduit for communication with FHWA • Be a partner in planning • Work to incorporate design and project recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predictability in transportation decision-making • Alignment of state transportation planning with local transportation planning • Accomplish mission to "keep Alaska moving through service and infrastructure." • More efficient utilization of resources
Transit Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Borough initiatives • Attend coordination meetings and participate on committees • Be involved in all transportation planning effort to promote transit needs • Organize and mobilize riders to provide public input on transportation planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater stability in service and financial resources • A coordinated voice for transportation and transit needs • Improved customer service • Opportunities for growth
Transportation Advisory Board, Planning Commission & Aviation Advisory Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input to various Borough planning efforts • Continue to serve as the citizens' voice in transportation and as borough representative to the public • Participate in special committees and public meetings • Help gather and promote public input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved advisory capacity • Predictability in transportation systems • Improved communities

Appendix

A. Outreach & Involvement	27
B. References	28
C. Personnel	29
D. MPO Peer Region Profiles/Summaries	30
Bannock Transportation Planning Organization, Pocatello, Idaho	30
Casper MPO, Casper, Wyoming	32
Dixie MPO, St. George, Utah	34
Skagit MPO/COG, Mt. Vernon, Washington	36
Sun Corridor MPO, Casa Grande, Arizona	38
Great Falls MPO, Great Falls, Montana	40
Cheyenne MPO, Cheyenne, Wyoming	42
E. October 2015 Self Assessment Presentation	44

Appendix A: Outreach & Involvement

The following organizations and individuals were interviewed as part of the MPO Self Assessment.

- MSB Assistant Borough Manager,
- MSB Planning Staff,
- MSB Capital Projects Staff,
- MASCOT,
- Valley Mover,
- MSB Assembly Members Colligan and Doty,
- Chickaloon Transit,
- Sunshine Transit
- AMATS staff
- FMATS staff
- ADOT&PF Planning staff, including Mat-Su Area Planners

The following organizations were presented the draft findings of the MPO Self Assessment:

- MSB Mayor and Assembly Members,
- MSB Planning Board,
- MSB Transportation Advisory Board,
- Houston, Palmer and Wasilla Mayor and Council Members via an October 2015 joint meeting.

Appendix B: References

- **FHWA Transportation Planning Process Briefing Book:**
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/publications/briefing_book/fhwahep15048.pdf
- **23 CFR 450 Federal Highway Administration—Planning and Research (MPO law)**
http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title23/23cfr450_main_02.tpl
- **MPO 101: Introduction to the Purpose & Function of a Metropolitan Planning Organization:**
<http://www.flagstaff.az.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/6470>
- **Hillsborough (FL) The Joy of Looking Ahead to 2025, Recipes for Transportation Planning Success:**
<http://www.planhillsborough.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Joy-of-Looking-Ahead-to-2035-Citizens-Guide-to-Transportation-Plan.pdf>
- **FMATS Public Participation Plan (2013)**
<http://fmats.us/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Public-Participation-Plan-Final-10.16.13.pdf>
- **Alaska Stat. § 35.30.010 Review and Approval by Local Planning Authorities**
<http://codes.lp.findlaw.com/akstatutes/35/35.30./35.30.010>

Appendix B: Personnel

The following individuals were responsible for leading the MPO Self Assessment, including researching state and federal laws, compiling the report, and reaching out to stakeholders, agencies and other MPOs.

Don Kostelec, AICP—Vitruvian Planning, Asheville, NC

Vitruvian Planning is an urban planning and policy consulting firm that specializes in transportation planning and healthy community planning. Kostelec's clients include Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), state DOTs, regional/rural planning organizations (RPOs/RTPOs), county and municipal governments, advocacy groups, health agencies, federal government agencies and non-profits.

Don Kostelec is a veteran of more than 13 years of working directly with MPOs and RTPOs. During his private sector career (2008 to 2015), Don has led or supported projects with 12 MPOs in Washington, Idaho, Tennessee, New Jersey and North Carolina.

Prior to his consulting work, Don served for six years on the Boise area MPO's (COMPASS) Technical Advisory Committee and was chair of that committee for two years. He also served on Idaho's statewide MPO balancing committee, which was a consortium of the MPOs and state DOT to ensure full obligation of federal Surface Transportation Funds allocated to urban and urbanized areas of the state.

Chris Danley—Vitruvian Planning, Boise, ID

Mr. Danley is principal of Vitruvian Planning in Boise, Idaho. He has 10 years of transportation planning experience with an emphasis on active transportation, project development and impact assessment. His projects have focused on transportation efforts in many facets: Bicycle and pedestrian plans; transit plans; financial performance analyses; technology integration projects; and land use integration.

He has worked with state DOTs, MPOs and municipalities on several local and regional efforts. Projects have included Safe Routes to School efforts, Health Impact Assessments associated with bicycle, pedestrian and greenway plans, and Complete Street policy assessments. Achievements include: Certified Safe Routes to School instructor; League of American Bicyclists Certified Instructor; NACCHO Certification in Health Impact Assessments; and launching a new course, "Community Health and the Built Environment," through Boise State University.

Jessica Smith—Mat-Su Borough Transportation Planner, Palmer, AK

Jessica is a transportation planner merging planning, design, public policy and communication. With an education firmly rooted in transportation systems and more than 7 years of A/E/C industry experience, Jessica combines the roles of technical expert with public policy awareness in a niche skill set at the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. At the Borough she works in tandem with the long-range planning, capital projects, and public works departments to coordinate transportation planning efforts for the Mat-Su Borough.

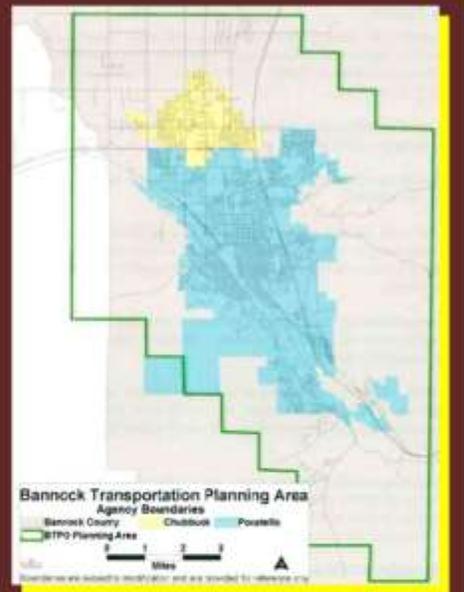
Prior to joining the Borough in 2015, Jessica was a communications and public involvement coordinator for CRW Engineering Group in Anchorage. She also worked in Fairbanks for the Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System (FMATS) where she assisted with day-to-day operations of the Coordinator's Office. Projects included facilitation of citizen's advisory groups, project-specific committees, and both the FMATS Technical and Policy Committees. Other duties included project management of planning efforts such as the College Road Corridor Study, Historical Plaques Placement Project, and the Downtown Greenspace Public Art project. Ms. Smith spearheaded FMATS public involvement efforts to better inform the Fairbanks area community such as the development of the new FMATS website, participation in the ADOT&PF Super Open House 2013, and the City of Fairbanks Open House in Spring 2013.



Appendix D: MPO Peer Region Profiles/Summaries

Quick Facts

- **Founded in 1982**
- **Area population: 73,190**
- **FTE's: 1.65, Director and Admin**
- **Governing Structure: Independent organization**
- **Member Agencies:**
 - City of Pocatello*
 - City of Chubbuck*
 - Bannock County*
 - Pocatello Regional Transit*



Annual Budget

- Federal funding in 2016 totaled \$485,000
- Local funds including match totaled \$90,000
- 3 Sources:
 - ⇒ Local match
 - ⇒ City/ITD agreement for signal system
 - ⇒ STP dollars for corridor studies and plans
- Budget process start in February
 1. Develop list of projects and activities;
 2. Request local match for more funds for one time things like plans;
 3. Determine deliverables;
 4. Create the actual budget; and
 5. Present to the Board for approval.

L RTP Process

- Most recent plan June 5, 2015
- Update process includes several steps
 1. 4 year approach;
 2. Update the model, including scenarios;
 3. Review and update modal splits;
 4. Create and update the long range plan; and
 5. Conduct public outreach.
- The final plan was not dependent on model outputs but did use outputs influence final decisions and a preferred scenario determined.
- Bicycle, pedestrian and transit were included in the final plan but not too much in aviation or freight, enough to comply with federal requirements.
- Household survey looked at bike/ped/transit. They created districts within the model using the info gathered from the survey which in turn allowed them to adjust modal splits.

Unique Committees/Members

- Existing board membership was determined at MPO formation.
- Policy and Technical Advisory Boards are split by jurisdiction: Two cities and County, Transit Director
- Other Committees include:
 - * Signal Coordination Committee,
 - * Interagency Consultation
 - * Human Services Committee
- If on going, additional committees are formed for bike/ped plans, corridor plans, or unique efforts.

WHY AN MPO???

You have an opportunity to work as a group and leverage greater funds to get more projects done like, Federal Aid. MPO's are seen as a bigger group and that helps get things Done. Working together is beneficial and there are rewards for working together.

Public Involvement Process

- Updated every four years in conjunction with the L RTP
- The plan uses a scheduled approach to inform planning efforts or annual administrative processes
- Plan includes a section titled "Strategies for Outreach to Minority/Low Income, Disabled or Limited English Proficient (LEP) Populations"

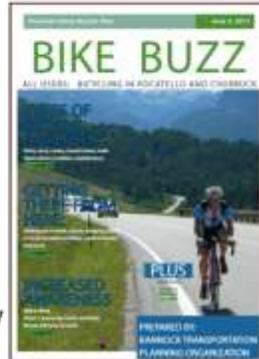
Bannock Transportation Planning Organization, Pocatello, Idaho

BTPO Works to Ensure That the Identification and Implementation of Transportation Projects are Identified and Coordinated by Local, State, and Federal Agencies, and the General Public.



Active Transportation Planning

- Bicycle and pedestrians are modeled in the LRTP using household survey's and modal splits.
- MPO has conducted a Bicycle Plan, a Pedestrian Plan as well as an extensive Greenway Plan and Maintenance Plan.
- Have been a conduit for SRTS projects including funding body and technical expertise.



Land Use Interaction

- Land use interaction does occur. The MPO reviews large development applications (anything over 100 vehicles in the peak hour) as well as requests for Right of Way vacations
- One element of land use planning has been in the energy sector. Idaho Power has had continual corridor planning projects and involved the MPO. These efforts required some modifications to ROW, site selection for sub stations, access routes, and approaches to numerous regional roadways, thus the request for BMPO to be involved.

DOT Relationships

- The relationship they have with the District offices are generally strong. District involvement includes project discussions including selection, consideration, and scoping elements. Most interaction occurs at the outset of a project. However, as projects unfold, the communication usually drops off.
- At the state level, the relationships are not as coordinated and it that lack of communication sometimes shows up in the STIP.

“Don’t start by doing too much. Start with a small area, work together, and avoid standalone relationships.”

- Mori Byington, Director

Performance Measures

- Performance measures are included within the Long Range Transportation Plan, though they are “not well flushed out..”
- Transit routes for example are based on strict population figures.
- In areas such as safety and bicycle and pedestrian planning considerations collected data was used to improve

Advice and Sales Pitch

- As a more regional player, the MPO is involved in many on-going activities. Such involvement has included in things such as Comprehensive Plans. Other attributes of MPO involvement has been as a neutral observer to ensure a voice and interest for the communities.
- Having a limited staff is a difficult challenge. It can be tough to follow through with priorities, and easy to lose focus as you can lose your ability to oversee, especially with funding.
- Take advantage of the additional resources for planning, work with locals to leverage, not just planning for planning sakes, figure out what that true need is, and Don't start by doing too much. Small area, avoid any of the standalone relationships, work together...they have been asked to continue doing things they don't always do, over extended. Avoid the over busy thing, with too few resources.

Additional Information

- The MPO has developed access management plans to be included in development code. They have also conducted numerous special projects and regularly conduct corridor plans.

Mori Byington, Director

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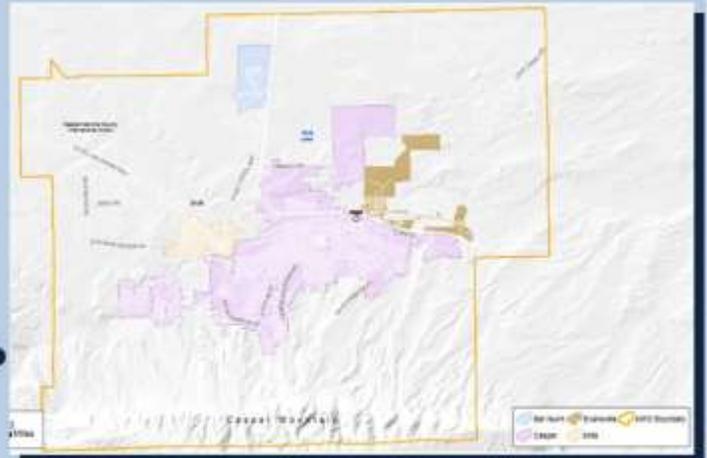
Website: <http://bannockplanning.org/>



Casper MPO, Casper, Wyoming

Quick Facts

- **Founded in 1982**
- **Planning population: 71,077**
- **FTE's: 3.0, Director, GIS, Admin**
- **Governing Structure:**
Housed w/in City of Casper
- **Member Agencies:**
City of Casper
City of Bar Nunn
City of Evansville
City of Mills
Natrona County

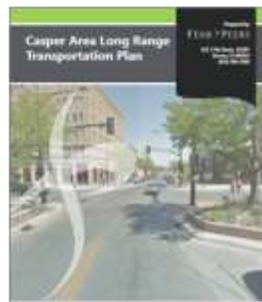


Annual Budget

- Current funding for the MPO including Federal planning funds and local match totals \$830K in FY 15'.
- In terms of the local match member agencies have contributed a total of \$80K. The agency also has a transit grant that is run through the City of Casper in the amount of \$1M. This grant is overseen by the MPO but administered by a transit planner who is housed within the City.
- Process includes several steps:
 1. Call for projects from the towns.
 2. Consideration of the LRTP
 3. Concurrence from the Technical Committee
 4. Forward to the Policy committee for approval.

LRTP Process

- Last updated in 2013.
- The LRTP process is a multiple step one that includes the following actions:
 1. Data collection such as traffic counts and land use updates using annual growth forecasts of .5%, 1.9%, and 1.5%;
 2. Preliminary model analysis;
 3. Conducting of a community listening tour to gather feedback (booth outside Walmart, Senior center, City Hall, etc.);
 4. Refine the travel demand model;
 5. Make fiscally constrained project list;
 6. Refined the model once more showing system changes; and
 7. Adopt by the MPO board, NOT by the member agencies.).
- Bicycle and pedestrians plans were in existence and referenced in the LRTP along with listed out projects. Aviation, freight and rail got a cursory review. Transit was also cited by reference to existing plans.



Unique Committees/Members

- A master agreement crafted at the onset of MPO creation determined who would sit on the Board, this includes four cities, County, WYDOT. FHWA reviews this every five years.
- Policy Board includes municipal membership but also transit and airport representatives.
- Technical advisory committee is a mirror image of policy committee except instead of elected officials It is staff such as Public Works Director, Engineering, and Economic Development. Currently they seek health representatives.
- Citizens committee includes 15 people from Casper, County, and each suburb and 5 special seats (transit, active transportation, freight, rail, and aviation.)

WHY AN MPO???

There is an opportunity to build intergovernmental relationships and to build a stronger transportation network. We have an ability to use professionals for steering multiple agencies. MPO's can help achieve common goals by working together and pooling resources.

Public Involvement Process

- The public involvement plan of action is updated every 4 years. The MPO generally pushes significant public involvement on a project by project basis but otherwise efforts are all contracted out to consultants and negotiated into a scope of work.
- Additional efforts include continual press releases, media interviews and social networks. Because the MPO is housed in the City, they try to keep a separate image altogether as much as possible. Part of long term plan is to market the MPO for as a local and knowledgeable resource for all kinds of additional services.

Casper MPO, Casper, Wyoming

Active Transportation Planning

- Bicycle and pedestrians plans were in existence and referenced in the LRTP along with listed out projects. Aviation, freight and rail got a cursory review. Transit was also cited by reference to existing plans.
- A 2007 plan was achieved with the City of Casper which the MPO participated with but otherwise no additional bicycle or pedestrian specific planning work is conducted within the MPO structure.

DOT Relationships

- The MPO and DOT have a good relationship overall. However, not nearly to the degree it could or should be. The two entities have a “very far separation. Engineering really does their own thing.”
- It was pointed out that this relationship is precisely the missing link between good planning and project implementation.
- Another aspect that needs help is defined roles. The DOT relationship was described as “confusing as to the MPO role overall. As long as the MPO doesn’t step on the DOT’s toes, they are good...otherwise its tough.”
- Coordination between the MPO and the DOT doesn’t exist. Mostly they just don’t work with the DOT all that much on planning issues. If there is funding, the MPO will get pulled in to the DOT process but otherwise they are not.

“Don’t be within a City, be a standalone MPO. Create that separation of powers. Be extremely aggressing in creating your initial bylaws”

-Andrew Nelson, Director

Land Use Interaction

- The MPO does review land use applications occurring in Casper, including everything from minor boundary adjustments to regionally significant proposals.

Performance Measures

- No performance measures are in place as of now.

Additional Information

- The MPO is currently actively seeking to separate the existing transit functions housed within the City to a standalone Transit Authority to allow more autonomy into the future.
- The MPO has an agreement with the Cheyenne MPO to house and maintain the travel forecast model for the Casper region.

Advice and Sales Pitch

- The MPO is housed within the City of Casper. Though at times this presents some efficiencies, most others it can be a challenge and even a barrier.
- The City has a strong Manager type of structure. This means the MPO is expected to conduct City business more than regional business. Staff time is otherwise dedicated to City led issues and less truly regional efforts.
- City Manager sits on the Policy committee as per the initial governing structure. The MPO reports to the City Manager rather than an organization that represents all the region. This can be extremely taxing on resources.
- Define and delineate the MPO’s authority and role in the region as clearly as possible. Make sure everyone understand what, why, and how things will be carried out by the MPO.

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 Phone (307) 235-8255
 Website: [Casper MPO](#)



Dixie MPO, St. George, Utah

Quick Facts

- **Founded in 2001**
- **Planning Population: 105,336**
- **FTE's: 2.5, Director (Full), Senior Transportation Manager, Transportation Planner, AOG Director, Admin (All partial)**
- **Governing Structure: Association of Governments**

Member Agencies:

City of St. George
City of Ivins
City of Washington
City of Santa Clara
Washington County



Annual Budget

- Total budget is \$468K
- Federal amount is \$428K with balance from local match. Policy board vote share determines the amount charged. Example, St. George has three Board votes. At \$5,000 per vote, St. George pays \$15K per year.
- Communities as members with under 2000 population pay \$1600 per year, or 1/3 of a vote share.
- Budget process includes the following steps:
 1. A review of prior year accomplishments;
 2. Anticipate needs for coming year;
 3. Rewrite current document, update as needed;
 4. Advisory committee recommends approval to executive committee where it is passed.

L RTP Process

- Last update was in June, 2015
- L RTP Process includes the following steps:
 1. Review L RTP Federal Guidelines;
 2. Designated chapter heading for each regulations;
 3. Assigned chapters out to the 4 staff members;
 4. Worked with the appropriate staff members from the cities to update the chapters;
 5. Forecast population and job growth; (No scenarios were used. Instead they used full growth within existing boundaries which meant they had to maximize existing permitted densities for the horizon years. Governing bodies were adamant that they didn't want MPO oversight on land use, instead allowing land owners to develop how they want.)
 6. Develop project list
 7. Seek board approval
- Separate bicycle and pedestrian element was also included in the L RTP. Transit was considered by examining ridership, forecasting future development, and how the system would logically expand. They also anticipated what ridership numbers would be and adjusted model mode split accordingly.

Unique Committees/Members

- Executive board consists of 8 members, all elected officials
- Technical advisory committee is same 8 members but made up of public works directors
- They have also housed an Active Transportation Committee, Transit Committee, an Air Quality task force, and freight planning groups

WHY AN MPO???

An example: In 2009, they funded an EA for two corridors. They received and spent \$2M for each. By working with the cities and the DOT, they built key projects but also identified other smaller projects that benefited the community. Those projects were not anticipated and ended up in the L RTP.

Public Involvement Process

- One of the more unique public involvement processes unearthed during the interviews, the Dixie MPO, in conjunction with cities and UDOT get together each February and put out a transportation expo event. The intent of the event is to invite and solicit comment and feedback from the public regarding the numerous transportation projects that will be occurring in the coming year, or are planned in documents like the TIP, STIP and L RTP.
- Additional programs with the public include a Zero fatality campaign, bike alliance groups, environmental groups, conservation area.
- Participants have numbered from 450-900 over the one day

Dixie MPO, St. George, Utah

Active Transportation Planning

- The MPO does coordinate both rideshare and SRTS
- The MPO has led a bicycle and pedestrian plan which included the creation of a Bike/Ped advisory board for the duration of the planning process. The plan was created, then adopted into the LRTP along with associated projects.

DOT Relationships

- The MPO and the UDOT agencies, both the HQ and the District offices work well together.
- They are invited to project selection, scoping, and to an extent, design phases along with the MPO.
- The area continues to work on a Level of Service threshold of "D" or better with the plan horizon year of 2040.
- The relationship with the DOT was described as being "hand in glove"

Advice and Sales Pitch

- Providing transport facilities and services for tax payers needs to be coordinated among cities counties and states.
- An example of how this happens, "there is a city in the MPO area that has a Main St that used to be a highway. The city wants it to remain a 2 lane road with bike/ped/parking etc. but to maintain functionality, the MPO and other officials are calling for it to be widened. They need to find transportation alternatives because that decision is pushing traffic onto other roads in neighboring cities and those cities need to agree to allow that to happen."
- Be careful to make sure that elected officials and public works departments are in agreement,
- Agree on the finer points on voting and funding so that everyone is on the same page,
- This truly needs to be documented in the MPO bylaws so that everyone is in agreement.
- One key point that was noted and not by others interviewed, *document how inconsistencies are handled.*
- Specifically with the Association of Government structure, a key challenge is with the governing body. In this case the MPO has to go through AOG administrative issues. When discussions are had with AOG members about urban issues and when those discussions determine how dollars are used, often the rural nature of other AOG members prevents a true understanding of urban issues.

"To facilitate discussion in best way really needs local and state input and you need a planning organization structure to accomplish that planning end."

-Myron Lee, Director

Land Use Interaction

- The MPO doesn't get into land use planning at all nor at any level including regional planning, subdivision review, or large impactful development proposals.
- There is a real attitude among the locals that the MPO stay out of land use issues all together and simply address the transportation system.

Performance Measures

- Though MAP-21 requires them of TMA's, they have not reached that status yet. However, they are in fact working on some performance measures in the near term. They do anticipate using performance measure and that they will be required, so they are working with the other MPO's the figure out what applies and how to proceed.

Additional Information

- Utah does permit RTPO's and nearby Iron County is an established RTPO
- They are the only MPO in Utah that conducts the Transportation Expo
- As part of the last household travel survey, they combined their resources with Wasatch Front RPO to conduct survey's in Washington County. This was a cost saver for them and one that helped gather more specific regional data.

Myron Lee, Director

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Website: [DixieMPO](#)



Skagit MPO/COG, Mt. Vernon, Washington

Quick Facts

- **Founded in 2000**
- **Planning area population: 116,901**
- **FTE's: 2.5, Director, Senior Planner, Admin**
- **Governing Structure: Council of Governments**
- **Member Agencies:**
 - City of Mount Vernon*
 - City of Burlington*
 - City of Anacortes*
 - City of Sedro-Wooley*
 - Town of La Conner*
 - Town of Concrete*
 - Town of Hamilton*
 - Town of Lyman*
 - Skagit County*



Annual Budget

- Total budget is \$700K
 - Of the \$700K, \$640,000 is from Federal sources
 - Local match contributed another \$60,000
- They have a grant from Congress, lead and coordinate the grant, \$25K left, 5 county grant. STP funds, set aside 10% of those funds for planning, traffic counts. \$150K per year. Local dues \$125K

LRTP Process

- Last long range plan was conducted in 2011, though they are in the update cycle now.
- Under Washington Growth Management Act, all cities need a comprehensive plan with a transportation element. With respect to the LRTP, they combined the DOT planning process, countywide planning policies and the requirements of MAP-21 to formulate their own.
- LRTP Process includes the following steps:
 1. Conduct an area needs assessment;
 2. Forecast of population for plan horizon year;
 3. Developed a catch all for projects;
 4. Didn't use financial constraints;
 5. Conduct an environmental review of plan;
 6. Conducted a public comment process; and
 7. Presented final plan to Board.
- The LRTP did not include any real scenario plans and used only limited sensitivity testing
- The LRTP inputs are required to be consistent with adopted land use plans as per GMA
- The final product was not dependent on the travel model
- Airports, transit, freight, bike/ped all required under state law. Inventory of system components and needs assessment was gathered from existing plans and inserted into the LRTP.

Unique Committees/Members

- Several policy board members which include 4 cities, 4 towns, Skagit County, the regional transit agency, two ports, Skagit PUD and two tribes
- They also have a Technical Advisory Committee, however it isn't in their bylaws. To this, each city and town has a rep.
- One official additional committee which is their active transportation group. This is an all citizens group and is an advisory committee for things like SRTS, master bike/walk maps, regional trail map, and TAP selection criteria.
- They have received pressure to form a Citizen Advisory Committee, but this has been a thinly veiled attempt to disrupt the process by anti-government types.

WHY AN MPO???

Once organizational streamline steps were taken, the MPO planning process strengthened regional efforts. This was done because they can fully integrate planning, growth management, economic development and transportation.

Public Involvement Process

- The public involvement process was recently updated last fall. Major projects are introduced to the public by the staff developing a unique plan so that they are customized and fit with the necessary context. The plan describes where and how the public can participate for all MPO led efforts. In some cases the MPO has developed an ad hoc committee such as a Public Human Services, when a project requires such a step.
- Link to the newly created [Public Involvement Plan](#)

Skagit MPO/COG, Mt. Vernon, Washington

Active Transportation Planning

- MPO has conducted a bicycle and pedestrian plan, continues to house a bike/ped committee.
- In previous years they have administered SRTS funds.

DOT Relationships

- The relationship with the DOT is strained. The field office relationship is okay overall, but with head quarters it is totally different.
- Common efforts like planning are great when it comes to the DOT field staff. However, the relationship with the DOT staff out of Olympia not so much.
- Much of this was rooted in an attempt to overstep the oversight role of the State into the MPO's mission...as per the MPO. The fight that ensued between the MPO and the DOT was recently resolved after a laborious process.
- There were several identified benefits of the relationship, namely system planning issues, setting of common priorities, and they are often partners on deciding what WASH-DOT projects look like, as well as how they are financed.

Advice and Sales Pitch

- Seek to continue to be the leader of conversations. Provide the forum to communicate on regional projects, agency coordination.
- Ensure that the conversations are consistent with one view of where the growth would go.
- One piece of advice was to take advantage of the working political relationships. Ensure that straight away the MPO has an agreement on Board structure and process.
- Make certain that all included in the region see the benefit of collaborating together. If such a case cannot be made and instead just get together without focus, the MPO will end up with unworkable agreement or structure. They have to believe in that, otherwise avoid the MPO.

Land Use Interaction

- The MPO does not review any kinds of land use applications
- In terms of involvement with other plans such as land use
- Plans and corridor plans, the MPO is involved if the planning geography includes areas within the areas of growth allocation, as per the GMA requirements.
- If there are corridor plans the COG takes the lead

Performance Measures

- The MPO doesn't have many performance measures.
- Those that they do employ would be things like LOS standards.
- There are some standards that come from the State but not necessarily organic to the MPO. Those are efforts such as Target Zero.

Additional Information

- One unique area worth noting occurs in regional collaboration. The MPO coordinates a Growth Management Area steering committee. The Director sites and chairs the oversight of the areas that are required. Those three things include:
 1. *Establishing urban growth areas,*
 2. *Defining countywide planning policies (guidance on all growth decisions (Housing, parks, transportation, etc.)),*
 3. *Allocation of future growth (population, employment) (This is done with State growth forecasts.)*

Members need to see the benefit of collaborating together. If they don't and just do it to have to, end up with unworkable agreement or structure.

-Kevin Murphy, Director

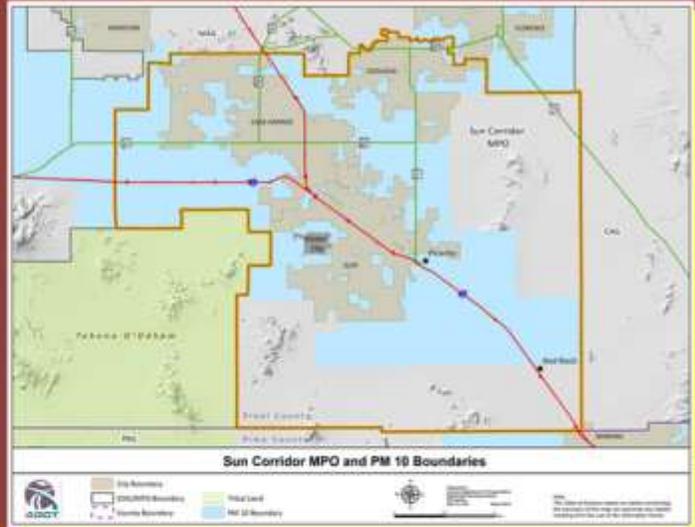
Kevin Murphy, Director
 Email: kevinm@scog.net
 Phone 360-416-7871
 Website: <http://scog.net/>



Sun Corridor MPO, Casa Grande, Arizona

Quick Facts

- **Founded in 2014**
- **Planning area population: 108,061**
- **FTE's: 2.0 Director, Planner**
- **Governing Structure: Independent MPO**
- **Member Agencies:**
 - City of Casa Grande*
 - City of Coolidge*
 - City of Eloy*
 - Pinal County*



Annual Budget

- Annual budget is \$250,000
- The Federal funding \$120,000
- Every Arizona COG gets \$125,000 STR (SPR) funds
- With transit funds they receive, the budget swells to \$350,000.
- This MPO does NOT charge members any fees as the already are paying for Council of Governments membership
- State of AZ has rural COG's, with 50,000 population, moves from COG to MPO
- UPWP Process includes the following steps:
 1. *The director compiles a budget in January;*
 2. *Fed Hwy then gives input;*
 3. *MPO works with City of Casa Grande to make sure budget complies with fiduciary agent (Casa Grande);*
 4. *UPWP the goes to the TAC for approval;*
 5. *This if followed by the Exec Board, ADOT, then to Federal Highways.*

LRTP Process

- The MPO is beginning their first LRTP as we speak.
- The MPO felt it necessary to put together a TIP right off the bat and complete a LRTP once they got up and running
- The LRTP process will be very heavy on the use of scenario testing and was described as "very important to the process and outcomes"
- The MPO seeks to determine through the plan what the economic development forecast truly looks like so that, with it in hand, they can go to the developers and get them to pay for identified improvements and infrastructure needs.
- The additional LRTP elements such as bicycle, pedestrian, transit, freight, and aviation will all be "huge components to the LRTP"

Unique Committees/Members

- Executive Board is comprised of Mayors and County Supervisors, as well as an ADOT member.
- The technical committee is determined by the membership...and is comprised of city transportation planners from Coolidge, Pinal County, Eloy, Casa Grande.
- At this point in their young history, the MPO doesn't have any additional boards or subcommittees.
- They have meetings with their Technical advisory committee as needed and will have frequent discussions with the current LRTP and Transit planning works efforts.
- They will be seeking to put together an economic development, land use and some type of development committee.

WHY AN MPO???

MPOs are well positioned to make sure the framework is right as an area grows. Challenges can be communicating to member entities and the community at large as to what an MPO does and why. If an MPO can get past "being another layer of government" success can be achieved.

Public Involvement Process

- They have had public involvement plans in place since March 2014 and did so as to comply with Federal requirements.
- In terms of rigorous public outreach it isn't a focus just yet, as they are waiting a bit for the LRTP to unfold. The MPO does put out press releases and informational articles to local outlets on occasion.
- Additionally, they are a member of three Chambers of Commerce and attend community meetings regularly.

The Public Involvement Plan can be viewed here:

[Public Involvement Plan](#)

Sun Corridor MPO, Casa Grande, Arizona

Active Transportation Planning

- With the area limited on sidewalks, trails, and on street bike facilities, the bicycle and pedestrian element of the LRTP is setting the stage for significant upgrades in this realm. They seek to identify projects, implement infrastructure through development and determine funding options.
- No dedicated funding for bike/ped projects.

DOT Relationships

- Of all the MPOs interviewed, the Sun Corridor MPO seemingly has the strongest relationship with their state DOT. The MPO is involved with AZDOT at all levels, this goes all the way down to consultant correspondence on planning projects, design.
- Being involved with the DOT is critical according to the MPO director. The relationship is important if for no other reason that to get identified projects through. This point was emphasized repeatedly.

Advice and Sales Pitch

- An MPO needs to explain what an MPO is all about as most politicians do not want the MPO in the first place. Critical to explain to them the importance, the need and the federal requirements.
- You have to be clear, clear, clear, when explaining the benefits and make politicians aware of why this is happening.
- Work hard to gain support from the public elected officials.

Land Use Interaction

- In terms of the interaction with cities around land use and general planning, the MPO is very involved with Comprehensive or General Plans, specifically around the transportation and land use elements
- MPO gives official review to general plans
- When the LRTP is completed, it will be a requirement of development applications to be reviewed by the MPO

Performance Measures

- Initial performance measures are being developed with the first LRTP. They do have some in place with the work plan with AZDOT.

Additional Information

- The MPO does not currently coordinate transit services or rideshare but will soon offer mobility management overseeing coordination of 5310 funds and program.
- The state does have RTPO's and they were one prior to the designation of the MPO. In the last 3 years they have accepted rural members. The regional partners in the rural areas get together every other month with FHwy, locals, and more
- Communication with nearby MPOs happens often, specifically Tucson and Phoenix. Maricopa County in fact does the air quality modeling for Sun Corridor. One point to note is money swapping. Recently they received \$500K in STP funds from other MPOs, but they can also give dollars to other MPOs, specifically STP funds and Safety funds. They do this through the balancing process and a loan document in between the parties.

“You have to be clear, clear, clear, when explaining the benefits and make politicians aware of why this is happening.”

-Sharon Mitchell, Director

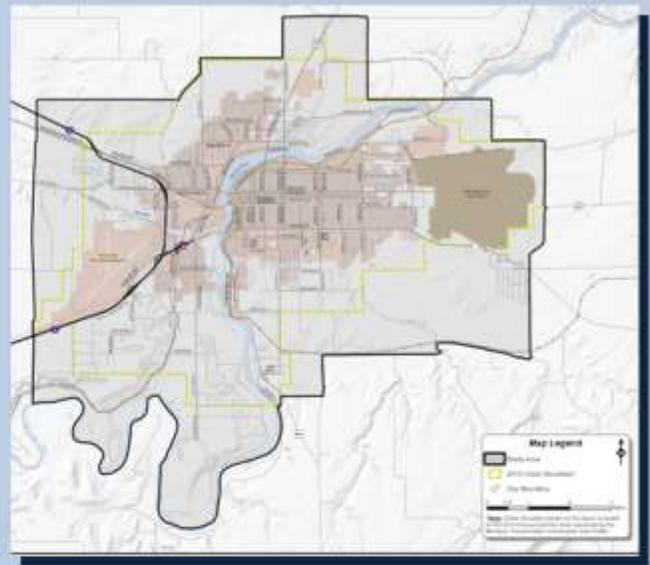
Sharon Mitchell, Director
 Email: smitchell@scmpo.org
 Phone: 520-705-5153
 Website: <http://scmpo.org/>



Great Falls MPO, Great Falls, Montana

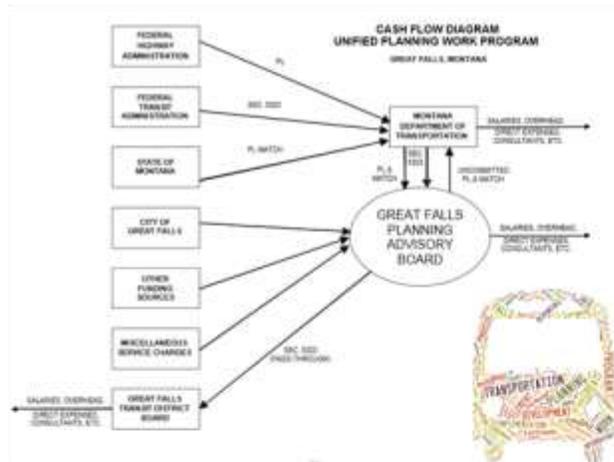
Quick Facts

- Founded in 1960
- Planning area population: 68,620
- FTE's: 1.0, Director
- Governing Structure: City of Great Falls
- Member Agencies:
 - City of Great Falls*
 - Cascade County*
 - Local Transit Authority*



Annual Budget

- Federal funds equal \$560K.
- City of Great Falls pays for non-federal work done. Local amount is \$315K,
- Local amounts also includes transit contributions which is an 20/80 to match FTA funds (2.5K).



L RTP Process

- Adopted in April of 2014.
- In previous years they have conducted the update in house. This was not met with strong favor from the FHWA offices and "the Fed's don't like to see it. They wanted to see more attention and more significant effort."
- Process includes the following steps:
 1. Solicit multiple land use updates for the model
 2. Modeled different growth scenarios, and additions to the network.
 3. Outcomes on Travel Model are used extensively to drive the final result and projects for the plan. This is their preferred method.
 4. Plan goes before Technical and Executive Committees for approval and adoption.
- Aviation, Freight, Bicycle and Pedestrian, Transit...had sig-

nificant component and robust pieces. Bike facilities particularly had a large chapter devoted to them.

- Freight was not delved into, as they do not encounter many freight issues.
- Transit authority has conducted their own plan which is integrated into the LRTP. They did require a bus stop design portion into the LRTP however.

Unique Committees/Members

- There is a Policy and technical committee that reflects their membership roster but has 20+ members.
- They do have special representatives on the committees that include Air Force base personnel and local health organization for air quality purposes.
- They are currently evaluating a non-motorized committee. The City has a trails advisory committee, but it is not directly a part of the MPO.

WHY AN MPO???

MPOs have the ability to leverage fed dollars with local and vice versa. An MPO has the role of integrating transportation and land use planning as well as establishing a framework for regional cooperation, for a commodity across lines and jurisdictions. The framework provides sounding board for interagency discussion.

Public Involvement Process

- Their public process is really only carried out through the UPWP and is very limited otherwise.
- They do not have any public relations directly. The direction position answers all public questions and is the face of the MPO for media interaction. He arranges press releases, media requests.

The Public Involvement Plan can be viewed here:

[Public Involvement Plan](#)

Great Falls MPO, Great Falls, Montana

Active Transportation Planning

- The MPO oversees the area transportation enhancement program. They managed the program, apply for TAP funds, administer the grants and host it for local agencies.
- Additionally, they were the host for the Safe Routes to School program.
- Active transportation continues to be a growing facet for them via the LRTP, planning committees, and administration programs like TAP.



Land Use Interaction

- Since the MPO is housed in the city, as a city staff member, they MPO folks do land use review as well. The director in particular works on things like airport planning, and Comprehensive Planning.
- The land use aspect of the MPO is not exercised often. Staff is involved with planning as the relationship between City and MPO gets murky. They do land use review applications and compare how they do/don't work with the LRTP on occasion.
- They recently partnered with the City to do a sub area plan.

Performance Measures

- Currently, they do not have performance measures in place.

DOT Relationships

- The DOT relationship is a good one and very close. This took over 22 years, its been a long established relationship. The MPO is often called first by the DOT and allowed to give local input on DOT projects.
- Once a project is ready to go, the MPO is "at the table for design and has extensive involvement."
- The DOT also has a major role with the happenings of the MPO. They go to meetings with the DOT, the DOT comment on Bike/Ped issues and help move projects forward. They are real advocates for projects in the LRTP and the TIP.

"As staff/MPO, establish your value to the local governments from the beginning." -

Andrew Finch,

Senior Transportation Planner

Advice and Sales Pitch

- Make certain there is careful attention to organizational structure of the technical and policy committees. As staff and as the MPO, establish your value to the local governments from the beginning of the MPOs existence.
- Build the relationship with the DOT. Avoid the politics of planning. Have an open and mutual understanding of MPO function from the get go. Know what the MPO can and cannot do.
- With regard to housing the program within a city, transportation planning often takes a back seat to more critical city activities. Short term planning (development applications) can end up dominating activities.
- Recommend that if an MPO is housed within a city, set up a separate division for the transportation planning work.

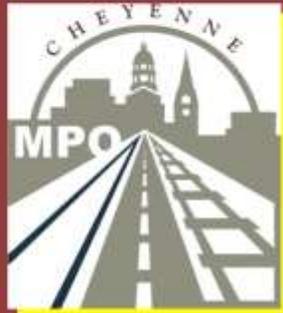
Andrew Finch, Senior Transportation Planner
 Email: afinch@greatfallsmt.net
 Phone (406) 455-8434
 Website: Great Falls MPO



Cheyenne MPO, Cheyenne, Wyoming

Quick Facts

- **Founded in 1981**
- **Planning area population: 80,713**
- **FTE's: 5.5, Director, Senior Planner, Transportation Planner, GIS, Admin**
- **Governing Structure: Independent MPO**
- **Member Agencies:**
City of Cheyenne
Laramie County



Annual Budget

- Total budget is \$809,000
- Between Federal planning dollars and 5303 funds, they receive \$732K per year.
- Local match is \$77K
- Wyoming is a minimum proportion state and there are only two MPOs in Wyoming. WYDOT can help determine the division of funds, and they determined the allocation is divided into 1/3's. (DOT, Casper, and Cheyenne) Their portion is \$507,000.
- Additional funding in previous years have come from the state Safety funds. They have applied for numerous grants from the WYDOT programs. When they receive them, they administer the grant, bill WYDOT and are reimbursed.

LRTP Process

- Latest update was done in 2014, but this was an abbreviated one at best due to local politics and claims of governmental overreach.
- In 2009 PlanCheyenne was drafted. This LRTP was truly comprehensive as it included Parks and Recreation, Land Use, Transportation, Design, and Streetscape. The effort resulted in two documents: one a City Version and an MPO version.
- The effort did include several scenarios given the robust nature of the process.
- The reliance on the forecast model was also significant. The model "played a heavy role", and was a "significant piece" to the final document.
- The MPO takes the plan to the City Planning Commissions, County Commissioners, City Council, then back to the MPO Policy Committee for final approval.
- Worth noting, WYDOT was doing modeling for the 2009 effort but decided to stop during the process. (Not determined why). This meant the MPO had to stop the process, purchase and build their own model before continuing.

Unique Committees/Members

- PO has a Policy and Technical committee. Within the Technical committee, additional representatives from the nearby Air Force Base, the local school district, and the developer association all get one vote, where agency members get three votes.
- MPO has a citizens committee of 7-9 lay people. The group is used as a sounding board for the public and votes to move issues forward to the Policy committee. They participate in corridor studies, sub areas, and other efforts before plans are taken to County Commissioners or MPO city.
- Currently developing a safety committee. City has a greenway technical advisory committee and a school traffic safety committee that the MPO works with.

WHY AN MPO???

Provide the framework for the 3C planning process, Coordinate, Communicate, and Collaborate. Truly helps the region and not force everyone to fight as individuals. Helps determine regional priorities, combine forces, based on priorities. Because of Federal funds they get to do more planning than would otherwise.

Public Involvement Process

- The current Public Involvement Plan is out of date.
- Other unique ways they collect public comments are through newspaper advertisements, Mind Mixer, My Sidewalk, Facebook, email lists, and through distributed postcards
- The MPO has actually found that using electronic message boards works very well

Cheyenne MPO, Cheyenne, Wyoming

Active Transportation Planning

- The MPO conducts and leads corridor plans, school crossing plans, safe routes to school plans, oversees Transportation Alternative Program funds for local partners.
- The MPO also oversees a van pooling program that regularly treks back and forth from Cheyenne to Fort Collins, CO.
- Planning work for bicycle and pedestrians include a Greenway Plan and update, on-street bike plans, pedestrian plans, Safe Route to School projects and plans. Each one of those became an amendment to the Plan Cheyenne.

DOT Relationships

- The relationship between the MPO and the DOT was described as being average but not particularly strong. Specifically, the strength is “not as much as they would like.”
- WYDOT apparently tends to shy away from the potential relationship and “tends to do its own thing, not with the MPO”.
- The MPO is actually part of the DOT planning process but not during the design phase. One area that was described as being problematic was that of projects that have to do with impact on State highways. When this occurs, the DOT has a negative reaction and expresses their lack of support.

Advice and Sales Pitch

- Try not to get off to a slow start but rather a good start. If the MPO doesn't hit the ground running, it may never be able to recover.
- Work heavily with public involvement early on and the politicians will see if you are just giving lip services to the people or can be instrumental at improving the process and conditions.
- In the case of Cheyenne, the City considers the MPO to be the planning department. Specifically because of the Federal funds, they get to do more planning and projects than they would otherwise get to do.
- Without proper transportation planning, “they (street projects) would be left up to you engineers to design however they want.”
- “Try and make your own identity as much as possible. Be in a different building and stand on your own.”

Need to hire someone who can talk, who can convince, get them actively involved...need support from the get go.

-Tom Mason, Director

Land Use Interaction

- The Cheyenne MPO has always done the land use plan for the City of Cheyenne. Though they are independent, it has been done this way historically.
- MPO does reviews of all development actions, annexation, site plans, for City and County. Ultimately they are the reviewing agency.
- They also review projects and plans to determine access control effort and compare the land use proposals to the LRTP.

Performance Measures

- PlanCheyanne has a list of the performance measures which means they have been using measures since at least 2009.
- WYDOT has been coordinating on implementing the Performance Measures through their processes and procedures which helps the overall regional vision.
- There are additional performance measures included in their recent update of their Safety Plan.

- The Safety Plan is a unique document that Cheyenne was one of the first MPOs to compile. The document is one that should be read and considered and can be viewed at the following link:

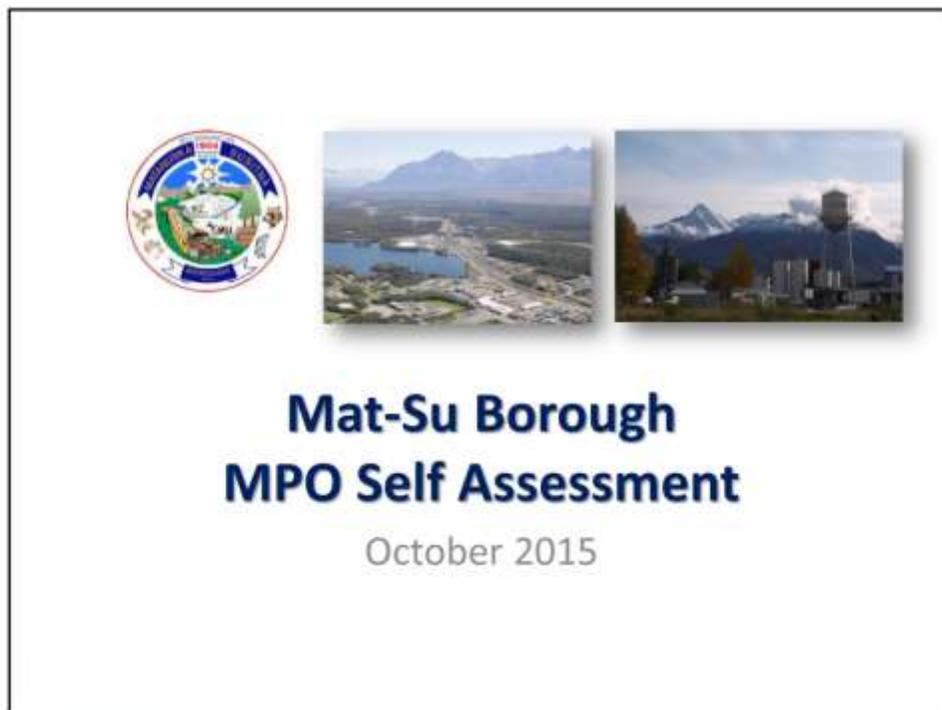
[Cheyenne Safety Plan](#)

Tom Mason, Director
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email tmason@cheyennempo.org
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Appendix E. October 2015 Self Assessment Presentation

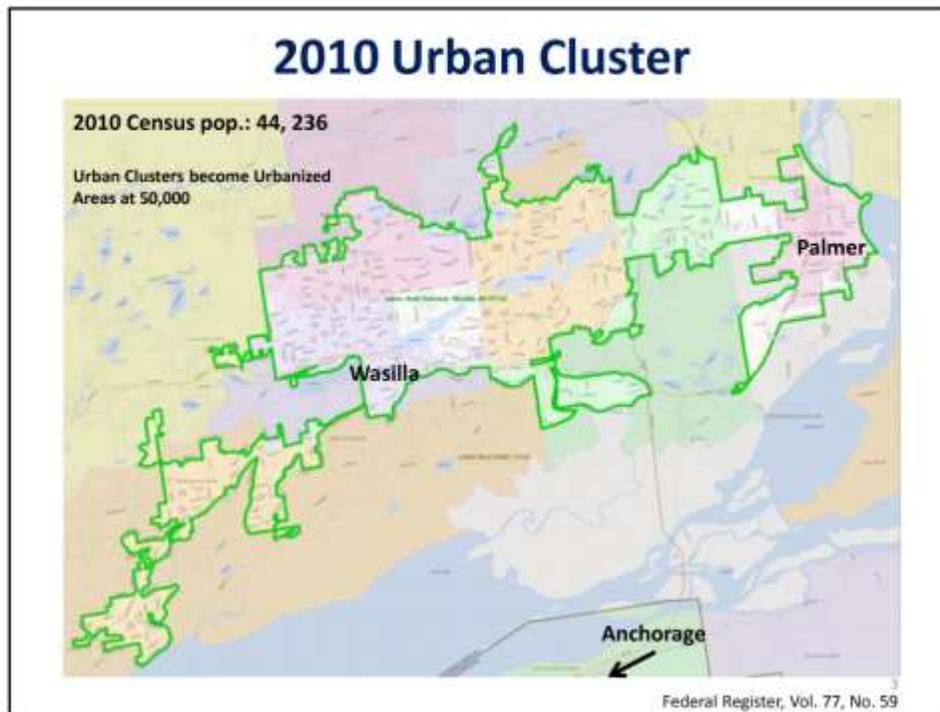
October 2015 Presentation to MSB Assembly, Planning Board, TAB and MSB/Houston/Palmer/Wasilla Joint Meeting



Purpose

- Evaluate likelihood of MPO
- Learn best practices from similar MPOs
- Understand MPOs in Alaska context
- Define likely roles and responsibilities
- Better understand whether or not RTPO is advisable
- Recommend next steps for planning and MPO

Area	2010 Census	2014 Estimate	Increase	% Increase
State of Alaska	710,249	736,732	26,483	3.7%
Mat-Su Borough	88,995	97,882	8,887	10.0%
MSB Urban Cluster	44,236	N/A		
Palmer	5,937	6,515	578	9.7%
Wasilla	7,831	8,849	1,018	13.0%
Knik-Fairview CDP	14,923	N/A		
Lakes CDP	8,364	N/A		



What is an MPO?

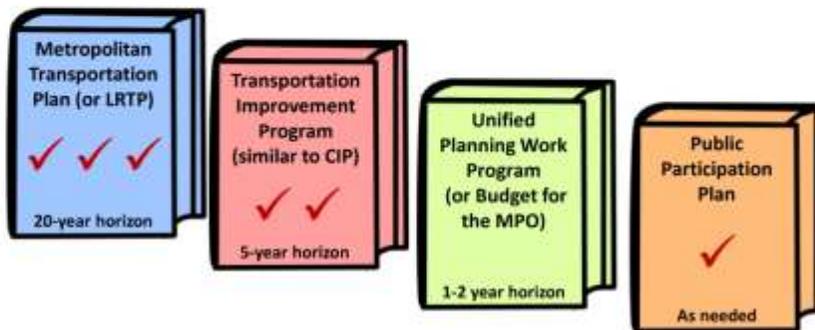
- Metropolitan Planning Organization is a **transportation decision-making and planning body**¹
 - With representatives of local, state & federal government and transportation authorities.
- **Federal law requires MPOs in Census-designated Urbanized Areas² of 50,000+ population.**
 - Mat-Su Core Area was 44,000 in 2010.
- MPO functions within its defined boundaries & **actions of the MPO are governed by a decision-making body different from Borough Assembly.**
- **Guaranteed allocation of federal planning funds** for MPO-related duties.

(1) Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (amapo.org)

(2) U.S. Census Definition of Urbanized Areas = Population of 50,000 + Population Density of 500 persons per square mile.

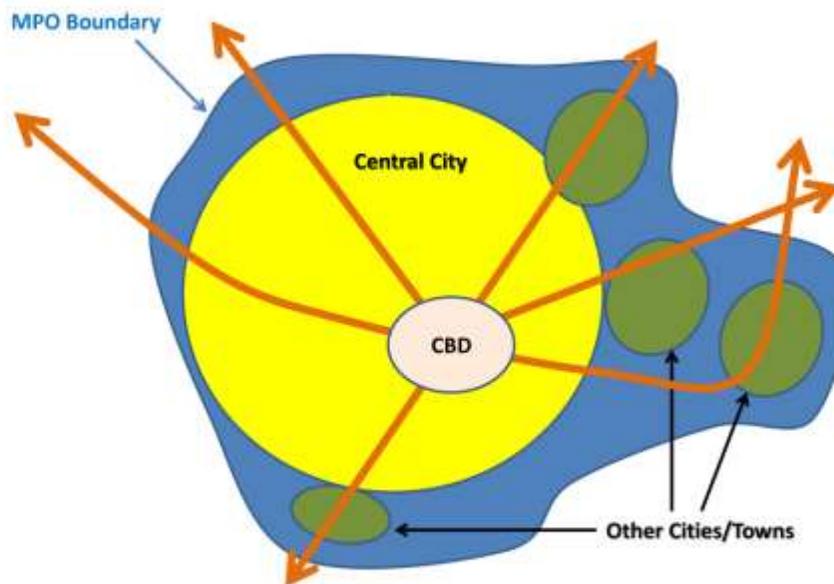
MPOs are required to...

- Ensure federal spending on transportation occurs through a **comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing process** through requirements for a Metropolitan Transportation Plan & Transportation Improvement Program.

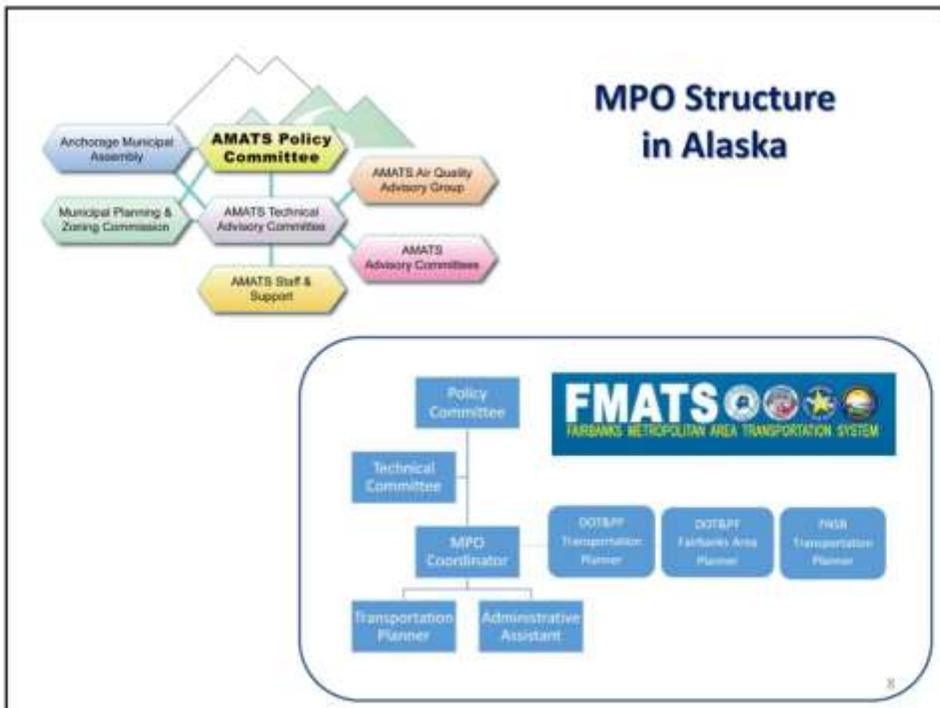
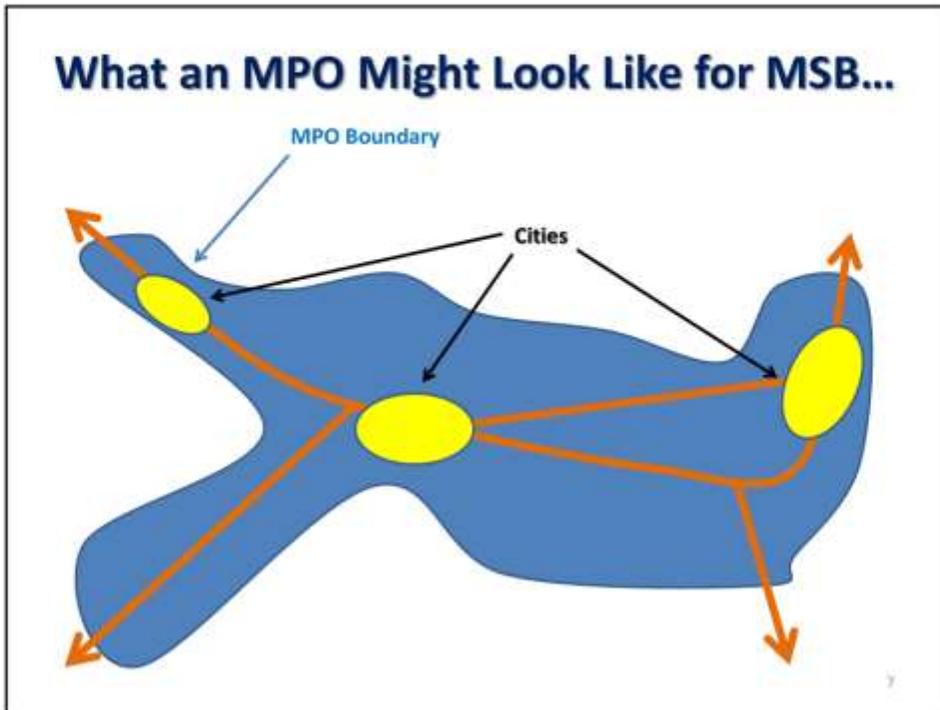


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Typical MPO boundary



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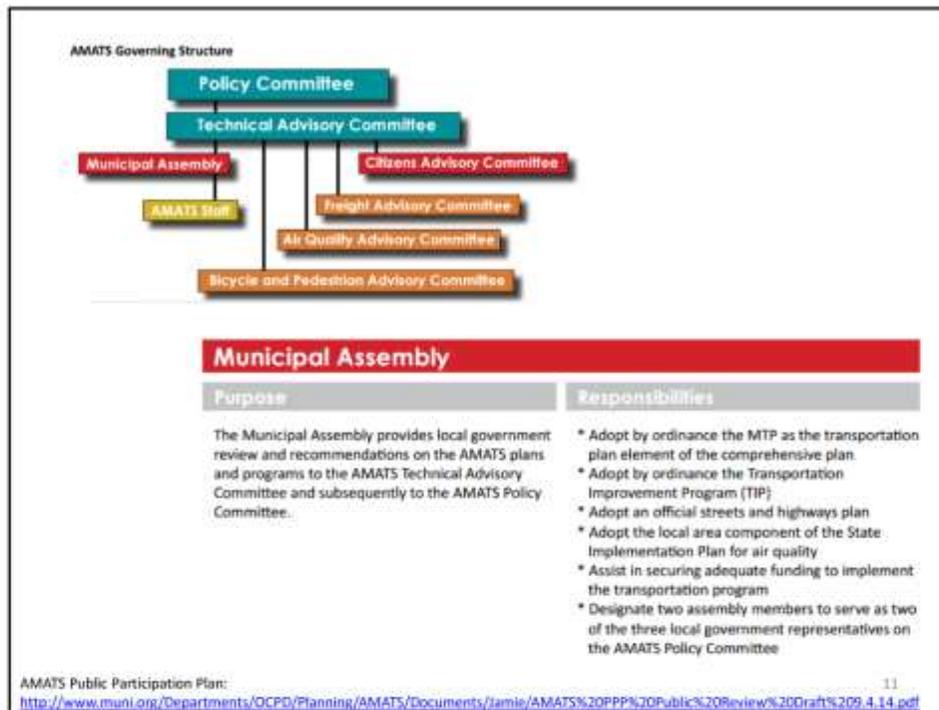


MPO Peer Review: What we learned

- Be specific in formation of bylaws & committees
- Lack of strong relationship with DOT hinders MPO efforts
- Use the MPO as a forum for regional projects & coordination
- Make MPO as independent as possible



"Don't start by doing too much. Start with a small area, work together, and avoid standalone relationships."
 - Mori Byington, BPO Director



Committee	FMATS	AMATS	MSB Equivalent
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly Member City of Fairbanks Council Member City of Fairbanks Mayor City of North Pole Mayor ADOT&PF Northern Region Director DEC – Division of Air Quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipality of Anchorage Mayor Municipal Assembly Member Municipal Assembly Member ADOT&PF Commissioner (or designee) DEC Commissioner (or designee) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mat-Su Borough Mayor Mat-Su Borough Assembly Member (x2) City of Palmer Mayor City of Wasilla Mayor ADOT&PF Central Region Director (or designee)
Technical	<p><u>Local Members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Fairbanks Engineer City of Fairbanks PW Director City of North Pole PW Director Borough Planning Director Borough Transit Director Borough Planning Commission Fort Wainwright UAF Fairbanks Airport Freight Carriers Tanana Chiefs Conference <p><u>State Members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaska Railroad DOT&PF Planning Manager DEC Air Quality 	<p><u>Local Members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health & Human Services Public Transportation Community Development Project Management & Engineering Traffic Division Port of Anchorage Air Quality Advisory Committee <p><u>State Members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADOT&PF Central Region Planning ADOT&PF Regional Pre-Construction DEC Alaska Railroad 	<p><u>Local Members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mat-Su Borough Chief of Planning Mat-Su Borough Capital Projects Director Palmer City Planner Wasilla City Planner MASCOT Director Valley Mover Director Port Mackenzie Director <p><u>State Members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADOT&PF Central Region Planning ADOT&PF Regional Pre-Construction DEC Alaska Railroad

12



Recommendations

1. Continue with existing transportation planning practices
 2. Evaluate MPO Committee Structure
 3. Establish structure/roles with DOT before MPO designation
- Other recommendations
 - Track federal legislation
 - Continue engaging Anchorage & Fairbanks MPOs
 - Identify other pre-MPO needs with DOT
 - Keep planning for transportation needs as they emerge
 - Continue to engage locals stakeholders & build relationships

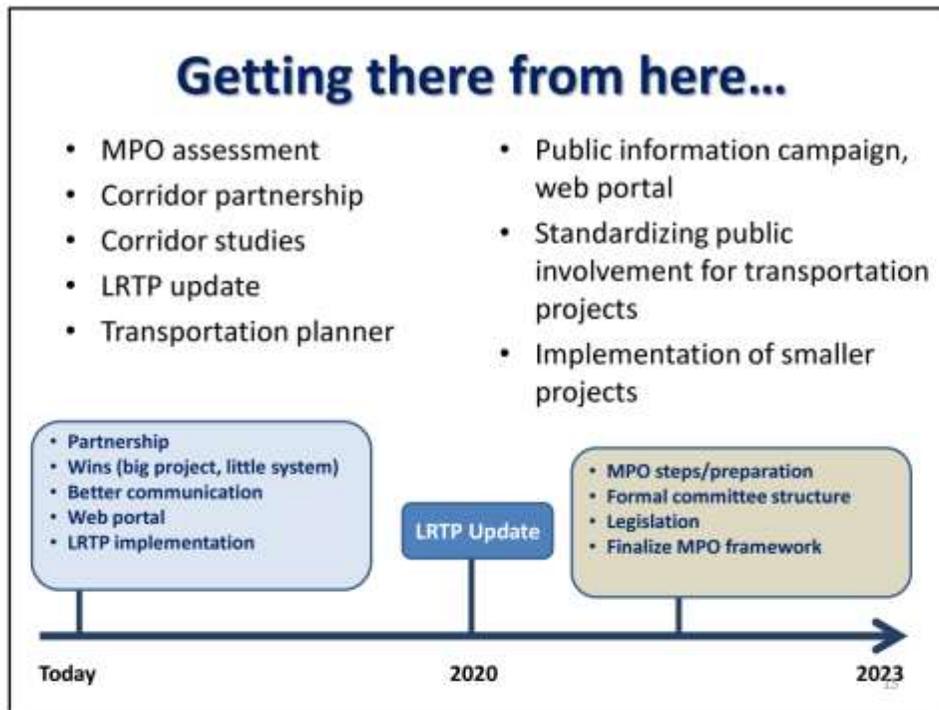
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What's Next?

- Additional meetings this week, including TAB.
- Finalize Self Assessment based on results of this week's discussions.
- Deliver final report.
- Implement recommendations.



14



RTPO vs. MPO

RTPO	MPO
<p style="text-align: center;">Statutory Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No official federal government authority • Voluntary, as designated or assigned by a state 	<p style="text-align: center;">Statutory Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandated by federal government once urbanized area population is 50,000 • Specifics planning and program duties assigned by federal government • Other authorities as designated or requested by a state
<p style="text-align: center;">Geographic Coverage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-urbanized areas • May exist in same county/jurisdiction as MPO to serve areas outside the MPO 	<p style="text-align: center;">Geographic Coverage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urbanized areas, as defined by federal government + 20-year planning area
<p style="text-align: center;">Required Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only as defined by a state; • Generally similar to LRTP and TIP in states with RTPOs, but plans have no recognized authority in federal law 	<p style="text-align: center;">Required Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metropolitan Transp Plan (or LRTP; fiscally-constrained) • Transportation Improvement program (TIP) • Unified Planning Work Program (task-based budget) • Public Participation Plan (PPP) • Others, as determined by state or member agencies