MPO Regional Coordination Structure Research & Best Practices for the Tampa Bay Region
This document came out of a long process that lasted well over a year. It took close coordination, open communication, and collaboration between all of the governing organizations and municipalities involved. The individuals listed here each played a major role in the success of this study. Without their efforts, none of this would have been possible.

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Tampa Bay Region
Final Report
MPO Regional Coordination Structure Research & Best Practices for the Tampa Bay Region

Right: Tampa Bay, seen from the Dali Museum, Pinellas County
Below: The “Core” (red tint) and “Shell” (green) counties/MPOs

Core (red) and Shell (green) Counties
# Tampa Bay Region MPO

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Chapter 1
Purpose and Organization of Study

This first section of the report simply reviews the key study points and findings, and describes how and why the project was conducted.
Region at Night (2016). The Tampa Bay Region's coastal communities and major highways join with each other and Orlando via strands of light in this satellite photograph.
The overarching goal of the project is to explore options and outline the preferred framework for improving regional coordination in the Tampa Bay region such that there are effective mechanisms for planning, prioritizing, and developing transportation plans and projects.

The project (a) defines successful coordination, (b) outlines barriers to achieving that success, and (c) develops implementable scenarios to achieving success, based in part on a thorough review of the region and its context as well as peer regions around the state and country. The report focuses on regionalism concepts, data that speaks to regional ties, political / MPO policies, and discussions with MPO representatives at listening sessions.

The first phase of the study concluded with directions for studying peer organizations in the form of ten topics of discussion. As the study progressed, the focus of the report turned first to a series of nine peer studies that identified how other MPOs had dealt with similar topics before making organizational recommendations.

Stakeholder engagement, although not a primary focus of this technical study, was conducted through a total of three public workshops and the Study Management Team (SMT) that steered the project through 11 meetings.

### 1.1 | Distribution Maps

**Travel Model Data.** Travel demand models use this kind of data to forecast traffic volumes and inform important transportation decisions. The Core counties show interesting variations.

*Top: Total Trips, 2015*

*Middle: Population Density, 2015*

*Bottom: Employment Density, 2015*
Fort Hamer Park (2018). This small, local park on Manatee River provides access to a public boat ramp in Manatee County, Florida.
Key Notes

The following is a brief overview of the key takeaways from the project.

Regionalism: In General and Specific Terms

- The first section of this report conveys a brief understanding of the purpose and impact of regional structures as practiced in the United States.
- Following this general overview, specifics of the Tampa Bay Region are characterized for the three “Core” and three “Shell” MPOs, highlighting similarities and differences to each other and the rest of the State.
- Ten topics (or issues) were defined based on the first workshop (May 2017) and the data collected for the region, guided by the SMT’s input.

Peer MPOs and Lessons Learned

- MPOs that were chosen for peer study, as well as those considered but not chosen, are depicted in a two-part table characterizing the MPO fundamentals, and highlighting some of the important points of the project team’s conversations with them. The report outlines the study methodology, particularly the scripted “prompts” used to initiate discussions of each of the topic areas. This approach is used to present information about each peer.
- The report extracts information from the peer MPO interviews relevant to the 10 topic areas identified by the Study Management Team and other inputs at the end of Phase I.
- Each topic contains the original questions that refine the topic, as well as key points and a summary of relevant information gleaned primarily from the peer MPO interviews. Although the summaries by topic should be reviewed carefully, some of the findings deal with board structure, the relationship of MPO size and extent to level of engagement, revenue generation and management, and MPO roles in project development.

The Next Steps

- The final section of this report contains recommendations, timing and supporting actions for implementation, and responses to comments received during presentations to the MPOs. The next two pages summarize high-level recommendations.

“I’m a very strong believer in listening and learning from others.”

- Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States since 1993
During the study, the project team (consultants and Study Management Team) has had significant interaction with various actors in the region and has gleaned a sense of what are perceived to be some of the critical issues and aspirations that have collectively contributed to the decisions to explore restructuring MPO governance to reflect a greater focus on regional-scale projects and interests. While many of these observations are recognizable as thoughts shared by various individuals during the past several months, it’s important to reemphasize them.

Governance structure is just one consideration that will influence the success of this region in addressing transportation challenges. As with any institution, governance is just one aspect that contributes to success. The human resources: intellectual capacity, passion, and leadership are at least as critical. Changing structures will not resolve problems if the leadership does not engage and collaborate. Simply moving conflict points from between several agencies to within a single agency will not necessarily resolve disputes. Institutional change can reengage energies and creative productivity, but it can also be disruptive, leading to polarization and infighting.

Irrespective of institutional structure, the broader communities need to identify areas where collaboration is in the mutual best interest and put in place the mechanisms to enable that collaboration. Those mechanisms can range from informal enhanced interrelationships between transportation leaders in the community to profound changes in institutional structure and governance. Neither one is assured of producing the desired results.

The governance structure will not necessarily create more resources for the region, but additional regional objectives will require additional resources to implement. To the extent that it can coalesce a shared set of priorities in instances where that is a prerequisite to the ability to leverage state or federal funds, a more centralized government structure may be helpful. However, that consensus on priorities can occur without such a structure and that structure will not insure a consensus. The power of that structure to secure additional resources is highly dependent upon state and federal programs that are responsive to political leverage and not to formulaic or technical criteria for project support. In general, transportation planning has been moving toward performance-based evaluation strategies for project selection and prioritization and is increasingly dependent on shared investment. While political consensus can matter, performance/cost effectiveness and local matching resources matter, too, and are often a prerequisite to being eligible to compete for resources.

Political influence ebbs and flows and, over time, resources tend to be distributed equitably with respect to the regions’ needs and revenue contributions. Ensuring a fair share return on state and federal revenues should be an easy regional consensus independent of governance structure. An occasional absence of a compelling regional priority in favor of multiple county level needs should not undermine this region getting its fair share of resources from a state or federal perspective.

The geographic scope of transportation planning is best shaped by focusing on the travel patterns of people and freight. Travel that is regional in nature should be addressed at the regional scale, irrespective of the governance structure of the region. In this region, that has resulted in the FDOT taking the lead in addressing many regional needs and other entities expanding their geography of study as dictated by the
markets for the respective facilities. Most critical from a planning perspective is ensuring that project planning appropriately considers the geography of influence. As planning is carried out with regional implications, it needs appropriate participation, whether through collaboration or consolidation.

**Highlights: How the Recommendations were Derived**

The recommendations contained herein were developed by the consulting team after collaborating for over a year with study participants in a variety of settings.

- Three workshops (about 160 participants)
- Interviews with both Core and Shell MPOs (6)
- Interviews with nine peer regions / MPOs
- Study Management Team meetings (steering committee)
- Research by consultant project team, especially focusing on ten topics identified through the first and second phases of the project

Study participants generally wanted a greater degree of regional collaboration, trust, and pace of project delivery than currently is seen in the Tampa Bay Region. The report strives to create challenging, but achievable, actions that will promote those objectives. The recommendations begin with short-term actions that would be accomplished by 2023 and longer-term actions that culminate in a single MPO policy board by 2033.

These recommendations were presented to the three MPOs in a series of workshops or presentations at board meetings in January 2019. A summary of general comments received during those meetings and the project team’s responses to them is presented in the final section of this report.

Going forward, the three MPOs can choose to implement some, all, or none of the recommendations based on the inputs derived from the study process. The path forward will not be quick or easy, and will require ongoing efforts to focus on regional objectives that are of importance to local communities. Sustaining the motivation to move ahead with a plan for change, even if that plan is detailed and tweaked over time in response to lessons learned, is most likely if there is a broad base of support for specific, clearly articulated actions.

Pinellas Trail, which receives nearly 1,000,000 visitors a year.
Chapter 2
Regionalism, in Context

Regionalism, in Context and By the Numbers:
The consulting team researched regionalism in general before a deeper dive into a number of data sources, with the results distilled from thousands of data points.

Mapping data shows relationships that are diverse such as commuting patterns, Economic Development Opportunity regions, and natural threats from storm surge. Other data structures, like jurisdictional boundaries and economic drivers, separate Core, Core+Shell and other counties in Florida.

Policy & Regulatory Framework:
The following presents a high-level overview (refer to the technical appendix for more details and substance) of the policy context of the three Core MPOs.

The discussion elaborates some of the extensive influence of Florida statutory language, and presents a straightforward representation of the Core MPOs and their boards and funding priorities.

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Regional alliances of governments form and work together to address specific issues that transcend individual governmental boundaries and areas of influence.

While the examples of formal, comprehensive regional governments are relatively rare, there are numerous examples of “functional regionalism,” wherein a group of jurisdictions work together in a mutually acceptable framework to protect a common resource or solve a community need.

Examples of functional regionalism include 911 call centers and systems; conservation partnerships, regional rail or greenway projects, and utility districts. Natural features and events don’t usually respect geopolitical boundaries, so resiliency, emergency response, and watershed protection efforts are frequently multi-jurisdictional.

One of the major historical barriers to regional cooperation has only recently been (largely) overcome. The ability to gather, process, and analyze large amounts of data on individual actions and movements has been made considerably easier with the advent of smartphone and global positioning system (GPS) technology. While there is still room to grow and improve, big data is playing an increasing role in many regional and super-regional activities, from connecting organ donors and recipients to assessing regional travel patterns.
The prevalence of regional forms of governance have varied over the course of U.S. history. Early founders recognized the importance of regional-scale decision-making, in part because local governments were relatively small and resource-constrained (Foster, 2011). The effectiveness of regional governance depends on self-reinforcing policies and funding programs that work collectively - and cumulatively - to accomplish regional objectives. Since resource limitations on discretionary monetary incentives exist for most MPOs, supporting policies have to be put into place that accomplish the MPO’s objectives like economic reinvestment, transit-oriented development, or land use policies that strengthen the relationship between development and multimodal transportation efficiencies. Demonstration projects, best practices, education, technical assistance, and project priority or performance measures compliment targeted investment strategies that support transit, biking, and walking activity centers. The SANDAG (San Diego) Smart Growth Incentive Program and venerable ARC (Atlanta) Livable Centers Initiative are examples of metropolitan planning organizations putting into practice complimentary funding and policy/program actions. (Margerum, et al, 2013) Some of these areas are hard to compare to the MPOs in the Tampa Bay area, since Florida MPOs tend to be built around the individual county as the “building block” for MPO boundaries.

"I was born in a great city, but I don’t want to die in a mediocre one.”

- Myron Orfield, Mayor of Minneapolis, ca. 2001 (Drier, et al, 2014, p. 258)

Other initiatives aiming at regional cooperation have been less successful. The St. Louis Region, while creating a single-county/city agency responsible for junior colleges, zoos, a medical center and a two-state/seven-county transportation agency (Metro), experienced failures attempting to build regional structures in 1926, 1955, 1959, and (for economic development) in 1992. Regional cooperation in established, major metropolitan areas like New York City and Los Angeles have typically been constrained to a narrow mission (e.g., parks) or dictated by federal law (e.g., air quality and emissions). One of the premier barriers facing these and other metropolitan areas is the internal competition that inevitably arises between cities, counties, and other entities in the same region. This competition (typically for new businesses, but sometimes for other resources such as water) puts each government – which have separate budgets, staffing, and appointed / elected bodies that view success on the basis of the government’s individual performance – into potential conflict. (Drier, et al, 2014)

It’s worth noting that these regions have done well for themselves and remain popular in spite of their balkanized governmental structures. Metropolitan areas in the U.S. have achieved dominance in the gross domestic product, wage, and other economic measures. The Los Angeles Region would have the 23rd largest GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of any country in the world, if it were a country; LA County alone has 88 municipalities (not to mention 68 ghost towns).

More broadly mandated (than typical MPOs) regional governance initiatives in the U.S. are rare, but they do exist. The two regions most frequently pointed out as examples of broad-based regional governance are the Twin Cities (Minnesota) and Portland (Oregon) regions. The Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities was created in the 1967 Minnesota state legislature to oversee sewage treatment, land use, housing, transit, and other urban issues in a seven-county area. Notably, the Twin Cities Region implemented a tax-sharing system in 1971, with 40% of growth in tax base being pooled and redistributing the proceeds on the bases of population and taxation capacity. This measure dampened some of the internal competition between municipalities, and favored different municipalities as the fortunes of suburbs, hinterlands, fringe areas, and downtowns changed over time. (Calthorpe/Fulton, 2001; Drier, et al, 2014)

The Portland regional governance experience officially began in its state legislature in the late 1970’s, culminating in an Urban Growth Boundary in 1979. However, it wasn’t until the landmark battles waged by the 1000 Friends of Oregon and Oregon DOT over the Westside Bypass Freeway in the 1980’s and 1990’s that the regional framework gained transportation notoriety (see www.friends.org/resources/reports for details). This process demonstrated now-familiar terms and practices like scenario
planning, transit-oriented development, and design/walkability factors in one transportation planning package. (Calthorpe/Fulton, 2001)

Even established regional structures sometimes see failure: the housing legislation sponsored by then-state legislator Myron Orfield (Minneapolis) that would have given the Metropolitan Council control over transportation and other resources to address affordable housing concerns was vetoed by the Governor.

Defining the characteristics of successful MPOs and other regional governance structures is not a frequent area of study. One recent report (Gerger and Gibson, 2009) found that, among 57 responding MPOs, there were strongly positive relationships between regional project implementation and staff size/capacity, external (not local) agenda control, greater numbers of hired (staff) board members relative to local elected officials, and regional wealth. Margerum, et al (2013) found that MPOs have the ability to influence land use decisions made by local government member agencies, but only when policies and financial incentives were mutually reinforcing and bundled effectively.

---

**a. Portland (Metro)**

**Population:** 1.5 m  |  **Established:** 1979

“Metro works with communities, businesses and residents in the Portland metropolitan area to chart a wise course for the future while protecting the things we love about this place.”

---

**b. Twin Cities (Metropolitan Council)**

**Population:** 3 m  |  **Established:** 1967

“The Metropolitan Council is the regional policy-making body, planning agency, and provider of essential services for the Twin Cities metropolitan region. The Council’s mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous region.”
College Grads, 2000 to 2010 (% Increase). An educated labor force provides an indication of the resiliency and adaptability to a marketplace with an increasing demand for higher education degrees, especially in competitive metropolitan environments. Pasco County/MPO leapfrogged two other counties with the number of its adults (aged 25 or older) with four-year college degrees.

Employees, 2010 to 2015 (000s). Changes in the number of employees was more dramatic for Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Sarasota-Manatee MPOs. The rate of change was the sharpest in spite of the fact that these three MPOs already had the largest number of employees in 2010.

Subsequent figures delve more deeply into the distribution and characteristics of employment and the job market.
Unlike the earlier charts that broke out sector employment figures by county, this graphic illustrates the cumulative employment for all of the study area MPOs.

Retail and Accommodation/Food Service categories are unsurprising leaders, given the reliance on tourism and related industries in some of the more populous core MPOs. However, Health Care and Social Assistance occupations are the largest employment sector in the total region, perhaps reflective of both an accessibility to the market and the demands presented by an aging population.
2.3 | A Deeper Dive into Job Characteristics

The present, past, and forecasted future composition of employment in the Core and Shell counties is shown here. MPOs have different levels of economic diversity - some, like Hernando-Citrus, are focused on a couple of key industries while others like Hillsborough and Polk, have a more diverse economy. Not all sectors are shown since some, like utilities and military, are relatively small in all counties / MPOs.

Getting the most out of these charts can be aided by reviewing the legend, above.
Demographics

2.4 | Trends in Age, Population, and Income

The median age of residents in all of the MPOs is generally increasing, although the trend is forecasted to cool after 2025. The populations are also increasing, although Hillsborough County is an outlier, even with the lower 2040 population estimate used in place of the Woods & Poole forecasts. Pinellas, more "built out" than other places, will see a more modest increase in population. Median incomes have been rising, although (as pointed out in the Tampa Bay Partnership’s 2018 Regional Competitiveness Report), Tampa Bay and other Florida regions tend to have incomes lagging other metro areas around the country.

Wealth

2.5 | Household Wealth (national base=100)

The Wealth Index allows a comparison of the typical household financial worth, compared to a nationwide base value of 100. Note the changes created by recessions and recovery periods.
One of the most direct measures of transportation interconnectivity is the patterns people make getting to work (and home again). Between 2002 and 2015, all three core counties have witnessed a drop in “home county” commutes, where workers live and work in the same county. Pasco has the greatest diversity in destinations, while two-thirds or more of workers living in Pinellas or Hillsborough work in their home county. The commute flows (2015, below) show the relationships between and within all Core+Shell counties.

2.7 | Day & Night Populations

Hillsborough and Pinellas have slightly greater daytime populations as more workers come into these counties than leave each day.
Development patterns and characteristics interplay with transportation systems in complex ways. The choice of transportation mode influences emissions, and is influenced by density and type of development.

Note how Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from all sources change if the unit is households or acres.

While the Tampa Bay Region’s counties are similar to the rest of Florida in some ways, they are more like each other in terms of the employment access and measures of walkability (e.g., compactness, access to employment).
Change of Pace

2.10 | Modeled Changes, 2010 to 2040

Two regional computer models produced these charts. Above, the difference between vehicle miles of travel and one result - slower travel - are compared with relatively few miles of new road capacity.

Interpretation: The chart above compares the difference between road miles added in the MPO long-range transportation plans and the additional number of trips ending in each county from 2010 to 2040 in one of five area types used in the regional model (see graphic at left). “Hot” colors mean that there are more trips being added relative to the number of lane-miles being added, according to the MPO long-range transportation plans.

source: adapted from description in Tampa Bay Regional Travel Demand Model v.8.0: Technical Report No. 1, April 2015.

2.11 | Destinations by Area Type, 2010 to 2040

The travel models recognize various land use types possess different transportation characteristics. Regardless of area type, almost all counties will experience more trips without a commensurate increase in road miles added.
The Tampa Bay Partnership, in association with the United Way Suncoast and Community Foundation of Tampa Bay, conducted a peer comparison of the Tampa Bay Region (which by their definition includes the core and shell counties discussed in this report) to other regions around the country across six metrics: economic vitality, innovation, infrastructure, civic quality, talent, and outcomes. The report can be accessed at: www.tampabay.org/research/regional-competitiveness-report.

The Region fared well in some categories, such as innovation and job growth rates. However, labor force participation, educational attainment, and wage growth were areas of consistent concern. While congested driving conditions weren’t a concern, transit services and bicycle/pedestrian safety were notably lagging behind other, peer communities.
How Similar are the Core and Core+Shell Counties to their own groups (compared to all Florida counties)?

The chart on this page shows how similar the Core and Core+Shell counties of this study are compared to all 67 Florida counties. The further away from the center, the more Core and Core+Shell counties are different than the other 67 Florida counties. Put differently, the further from the center of the chart, the more unique the Core or Core+Shell counties. This “uniqueness” may provide insight on how the Core counties will react to different circumstances - the more like each other, the more these counties/ MPOs are likely to react the same to different circumstances that may arise. Four measures of variability were used to create the chart; if more of these variables were satisfied the data point moved further away from the center and towards more differentiation from all of Florida’s counties. 

**Range:** The difference between the minimum and maximum values.

**M.A.D.** : The Mean Absolution Deviation of the group’s average compared to deviation from the average of all 67 counties.

**Standard Deviation:** Another measure comparing the separation of the values compared to their group average.

**Coefficient of Variation:** The ratio of the standard deviation to the mean. Requires non-negative values, so this measure was not applied to the Health Outcomes variable.

**HOW TO INTERPRET THE RESULTS:** Both the Core and Core+Shell counties exhibit clustering on variables like minority populations and percent uninsured, the Core counties (in part because there are fewer counties in that group) also exhibit even more “uniqueness” for even more variables than the Core+Shell. Hence, the Core counties are more like each other in terms of income variables, mortality, and age variables.
The maps on the following pages illustrate some of the physical relationships that bind together or place barriers between the Core and Shell counties. Not all are directly relevant to transportation, although the commonalities and differences shown may help align or pull apart decisionmakers in the future.
The jurisdictional boundaries of an M.P.O. shall be determined by agreement between the Governor and the applicable M.P.O. The boundaries must include at least the metropolitan planning area, which is the existing urbanized area and the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within a 20-year forecast period, and may encompass the entire metropolitan statistical area or the consolidated metropolitan statistical area.

- Florida Statutes, 339.175 (2)(c)

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are formulated from a couple of common rules: an Urbanized Area of over 50,000 population, including the central city. However, these boundaries are then “smoothed”, usually to account for additional planning area that reflects a continuity of geopolitical boundaries and commuting patterns or other transportation interconnections, especially those connections likely to strengthen.
FDOT, MPO, and Urban Areas

How do the MPO boundaries relate to the Urbanized Areas (UZAs) of the U.S. Census Bureau and Florida DOT District boundaries?

The blue lines represent Florida DOT Districts. Note that District 7 encompasses Hernando-Citrus, Pasco, Forward Pinellas, and Hillsborough counties and MPOs. Polk and Sarasota/Manatee are in District 1. Urbanized Areas (dark gray areas), or UZAs, sometimes spill over both county and MPO boundaries.

“The Florida Department of Transportation is decentralized.... Each district is managed by a District Secretary. They vary in organizational structure, but in general each has major divisions for Administration, Planning, Production and Operations.”

- FDOT Agency Resources: Districts (www.fdot.gov/agency_resources/districts)

Not all FDOT districts look the same. (source: FDOT)

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<td>counties</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>sq. miles (000s)</td>
<td>7: 5</td>
<td>7: 3.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>residents</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7: 2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>miles traveled (million)</td>
<td>1: 21</td>
<td>7: 34</td>
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Census Boundaries

How is the Tampa Bay Region defined by the U.S. Census Bureau?

Census boundaries, definitions, and terminology change over time, but the current Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) are shown below in colored areas (Urbanized Areas are light gray). MSAs are frequently used for economic aggregation and other purposes. Hernando, Pasco, Pinellas, and Hillsborough counties are in one MSA.

“Metropolitan Statistical Area: A Core Based Statistical Area associated with at least one urbanized area that has a population of at least 50,000. The Metropolitan Statistical Area comprises the central county or counties containing the core, plus adjacent outlying counties having a high degree of social and economic integration with the central county or counties as measured through commuting.”

State House and Senate Representation

What does the Florida political framework look like in the Tampa Bay Region?

State Senate (heavy black lines) and House (lighter orange lines) straddle county and MPO boundaries with relative impunity. District lines have been contested in state courts with vigor, interpreting proportionality of (growing, changing) population, racial composition, and linguistic representation.

“The United States Constitution, the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Florida Constitution provide standards for redistricting. Under the United States Constitution, district populations must be as nearly equal as practicable. In addition, race may not be the predominant factor in drawing lines, unless the use of race is narrowly tailored to achieve a compelling interest.... Article III, Section 16 of the State Constitution requires the Legislature to divide the state into 30 to 40 contiguous senatorial districts and 80 to 120 contiguous house districts.”

- The Florida Senate, Redistricting (http://stantec.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=626d61683cd9494949494893ad6a5)

2.16 | Political Boundaries
Regional Planning Councils

Who coordinates the planning efforts in the Tampa Bay Region?

There are three RPCs that collectively cover the six MPOs in the primary (“core”) and secondary (“shell”) study area. Notably, dissolution of the Withlacoochee RPC occurred relatively recently (2015), with the counties being assigned to other, adjacent RPCs.

"Our council boundaries generally represent communities of interest; they are in the same media markets; or have the same community colleges. But there is no magic to the boundaries."

- Brian Teeple, Chairman of the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, speaking with Ocala StarBander on dissolution of Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council, Kristine Crane, May 12, 2015

"TBRPC’s specific duties include maintaining Future of the Region: A Strategic Regional Policy Plan for the Tampa Bay Region, environmental management, water quality and emergency preparedness planning, protection and restoration of the Tampa Bay estuary, economic analysis, coastal zone management, housing and infrastructure analysis, hurricane evacuation and recovery planning, development of regional impact review, local government comprehensive plan review, cross acceptance, dispute resolution, and review of transportation plans."

- Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (http://www.tbrpc.org/about_us/mission.shtml)
Who undertakes the economic development efforts of the Tampa Bay Region?

Economic development organizations (EDOs) are generally centered around counties in the Tampa Bay Region, but exceptions in Florida exist, with multi-county EDOs taking advantage of common interests and the desire to share costs. All of the Core and Shell counties are part of the Tampa Bay Partnership.

“The regions are primarily aligned with the geographical footprint of regional EDOs such as FGNW, JAXUSA, Beacon Council, GFLA and regional Rural Areas of Opportunity such as Opportunity Florida, North Florida EDP and Florida Heartland ERO.” There are a variety of structures used to set up and run economic development organizations (EDOs); some are run as private companies. Some cover more than one county or set of jurisdictions to reduce costs and increase collaboration.

- Beth Kirkland, email dated December 12, 2017 to Scott Lane; telephone call notes, December 12, 2017
Access to Groceries

Do people in the metropolitan areas of the Tampa Bay Region share problems with accessing food?

Parts of every county (zip code areas shown below) do have places where the supply of groceries and food outlets are outpaced by the demand. In those areas ("hotter" colors), people are expected to travel further for basic needs.

“This layer shows the market opportunity for grocery stores in the U.S. in 2015 in a multi-scale map (by state, county, ZIP Code, tract and block group). The map uses the Leakage/Surplus Factor, an indexed value that represents opportunity (leakage), saturation (surplus), or balance within a market. This map focuses on the opportunity for grocery stores (NAICS 4451).”

- 2015 USA Grocery Store Market Opportunity (http://stantec.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=626d61683cd04946bcfe93e454ad6a5)
Storm Surge Potential

How would a Category 5 storm create a potential for storm surges across the Tampa Bay Region?

The impacts are far-ranging for most of the counties and MPOs, with the exception of Polk County, the only county not bordering the Gulf (although heavy flooding would certainly occur in the low-lying and flood-prone inland areas).

“The SLOSH (Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes) model is a numerical model used by NWS to compute storm surge. Storm surge is defined as the abnormal rise of water generated by a storm, over and above the predicted astronomical tides. Flooding from storm surge depends on many factors, such as the track, intensity, size, and forward speed of the hurricane and the characteristics of the coastline where it comes ashore or passes nearby. For planning purposes, the NHC uses a representative sample of hypothetical storms to estimate the near worst-case scenario of flooding for each hurricane category.”

- US Gulf and East Coast Category 5 Storm Surge Inundation (http://stantec.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=866f8c8722e94e259465f2f7b7cf214)
Policy & Regulatory Framework

Each MPO operates inside of a unique policy environment.

Pendulum of Regionalism

Book: Regional Planning in America: Practice and Prospect

“For more than 300 years, the governance pendulum in the United States has swung back and forth between the local entities that hold the strongest legal cards to address a regional problem voluntarily or not and higher-level governments that assert their power to compel action at the regional scale.”

Often, the policy and regulatory framework for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) varies most by the home state, since MPOs are federally created organizations operating under the same rules nationwide. State departments of transportation, state statutes, history, resources, county/city organizations, and the MPO's own institutional structure have created considerable variation among the nation's 400+ MPOs, even though the core mission remains the same: collaborate, cooperate, and coordinate across governmental jurisdictional boundaries.

The following presents the policy context and environment for the three core MPOs, summarizing a more detailed technical report prepared by the Center for Urban Transportation Research.

Next Page: Power Map Interpretation

The following pages show “power maps” of the three Core MPOs. The left of the two-page spread shows the board composition and resources (inputs) and the right side shows how that MPO utilizes those resources (outputs) in terms of project prioritization, funding allocations in the transportation improvement program, and (subjectively) each MPO’s involvement in land use, economics, and public engagement.

The Hillsborough board is more complex, especially compared to Pasco, and has the representation of several regional transportation authorities. Funding variations between MPOs (and the State) are certainly present, but variations over the five-year period examined are probably greater. Project prioritization is relatively similar. Forward Pinellas integrates land use planning more thoroughly.
2.21 | Core MPO Power Maps

**BOARD COMPOSITION**
- municipality (number of representatives)
- county
- regional scope

**Advisory Committees** (6)
- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)
- Livable Roadways Committee (LRC)
- Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board (TDCB)
- Intelligent Transportation Systems Committee (ITS)
- School Transportation Working Group (STWG)

**Staffing**
- Size: 13
- Dual Purpose: Yes

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**BOARD COMPOSITION**
- municipality (number of representatives)
- county
- regional scope

**Advisory Committees** (6)
- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)
- Planners Advisory Committee (PAC)
- Pinellas Trail Security Task Force (PTSTF)
- School Transportation Safety Committee (STSC)
- Local Coordinating Board

**Staffing**
- Size: 18
- Dual Purpose: Yes

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**BOARD COMPOSITION**
- municipality
- county

**Advisory Committees** (4)
- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)
- Technical Advisory Committee/Congestion Management Process Task Force (TAC/CMP)
- Pasco County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (LCB)

**Staffing**
- Size: 6
- Dual Purpose: Yes

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The left side of this two-page spread shows the policy board composition and complexity of each Core MPO, and where the MPO staff is employed ("host"). The right side shows funding by mode compared to Florida as well as project priorities.
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE (based on UPWP expenditures, reporting)
ROLE IN LAND USE DECISION-MAKING (based on discussions)
ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (based on discussions)

Hillsborough, Florida (statewide)

PROGRAMMING BREAKDOWN
(average 2013-2017 STIP)

Pinellas, Florida (statewide)

PROGRAMMING BREAKDOWN
(average 2013-2017 STIP)

Pasco, Florida (statewide)

PROGRAMMING BREAKDOWN
(average 2013-2017 STIP)

HOW PROJECTS ARE PRIORITIZED
General: Policy Summary

MPO Boundaries. Metropolitan Planning Organizations have planning area boundaries that contain one or more US Census-designated urbanized areas (UZAs). The planning boundaries can’t overlap with another MPO’s boundary. While a single, or minimal, number of MPOs covering a cohesive region is desirable, factors such as history, geographic complexity, and physical size may introduce multiple MPOs into a single, identifiable (although identifying what constitutes a cohesive region may be challenging) region.

State Speaking to MPOs. Florida’s statutory language addressing MPOs is (1) extensive, perhaps more so than any other state, and (2) mirrors federal language (23 CFR Part 450 and 49 CFR Part 613) on matters like boundary-setting, organizational structure elements, and operational aspects. The Florida statutes go even further than their federal counterparts on MPO board membership and procedures. MPOs have a governing board comprised of elected officials representing government agencies inside the MPO planning boundary. Policy board compositions are based on population and geography, comprised of between 5 and 25 members with at least one-third of the members being county commissioners. MPOs in Florida must also form and maintain a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and Technical Advisory Committee. MPOs may also form interlocal agreements for specific purposes and durations, and are required to develop “coordination mechanisms” with other, neighboring MPOs.

Other Regional Organizations. Several transportation and planning agencies in the Tampa Bay area are identified in state statute, some having areas of responsibility that cross municipal and/or county boundaries. These include The Tampa Bay Area Transit Authority (TBARTA); the TBARTA Metropolitan Planning Organization Chairs Coordinating Committee; Regional Planning Councils (RPCs); Florida DOT (Districts 1 and 7); Florida’s Turnpike Enterprise; the Pinellas Planning Council (formally part of Forward Pinellas); and area aviation, transit, expressway, and port authorities. Other organizations have been formed locally to make transportation and planning decisions including the TMA Leadership Group and the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission.

Population Growth 2020 - 2030 | MSA

The Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is forecasted to grow by 15% between 2020 and 2030. This region and others in Florida have posted top-ten growth rates nationwide in recent years.

source: Tampa Hillsborough EDC Research Department
Federal and State laws (and rules implementing the laws) address various aspects of MPO organizational and staffing issues, and the current arrangement of multiple MPOs in the Tampa Bay area (both the broader area and the three county area covering the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater TMA) is in compliance with those laws. Almost any changes to improve inter-MPO decision-making coordination, short of merging one or more MPOs, could be accomplished with no significant actions to be taken to make them compliant with current Federal or State law save for possibly making amendments to current interlocal agreements.

One potential change of organizational structure that would face issues under current federal and state law would be the merger of one or more existing MPOs. The issues such a merger would face as it relates to federal and state law would include:

- **Capital Float** - a funding mechanism would have to be identified for the new MPO to pay for operating costs ahead of the federal and state reimbursement for eligible costs. This can be solved by agreeing to a hosting arrangement with an agency that can provide the capital float or through other mechanisms, including charging dues and arranging for lines of credit.

- **Redesignation** - Federal rules state that a redesignation is required whenever an existing MPO proposes making a substantial change in the proportion of the current voting membership or in the decision-making authority, responsibility or procedures of the MPO. Additionally, federal rules state that an MPO designation shall remain in effect until an official redesignation has been made. Therefore, the merger of one or more existing MPOs requires those MPOs to go through a redesignation process that requires the agreement of the Governor (represented by the Florida Department of Transportation under state statute) and units of general purpose local government that together represent at least 75 percent of the existing metropolitan planning area populations for each MPO.

- **Public Transportation Provider Representative(s)** - Federal rule requires that a representative from a public transit provider must serve on the MPO board with the same rights and responsibilities as any other member of the board. The mechanism for selecting the public transportation provider representative or representatives would have to be agreed upon by the members of the new MPO and spelled out in the formation documents of the MPO. Additionally, under state statute, the MPO must establish a process by which the collective interest of providers of public transportation are expressed or conveyed if they are represented by elected officials of general purpose local government.

- **MPO Staffing** - Federal rules explicitly state that MPOs can use the staff resources of other agencies, non-profit organizations, or contractors to carry out selected elements of the metropolitan planning process. State statutes expand on the federal rules by requiring each MPO to hire a director who reports directly to the MPO governing board for all matters based on population.
Regarding the administration and operation of the MPO, but may be employed either by the MPO or by another governmental entity, such as a county, city, or regional planning council, through a staff services agreement. The membership of any newly formed MPO would have to hire an MPO director and arrange for all other staff support and associated requirements that implies (office space, benefits, salary, equipment, etc.), including the issue of capital float.

**Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary**

Federal law states that each designated MPO must establish the metropolitan planning area (MPA) boundary by agreement with the Governor. The MPA may cover part of an urbanized area, the entirety of an urbanized area, or more than one urbanized area - and the area expected to become urbanized within a 20-year forecast period.

The three existing core MPOs in the Tampa Bay area cover the entirety of Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas Counties and all or part of three urbanized areas. The members of a new MPO and the Governor must identify and agree to new MPA boundaries in coordination with neighboring MPOs where urbanized areas and forecasted future urbanized areas cross county boundaries. Once determined, planning responsibilities for any urbanized areas that cross MPA boundaries must be defined in an interlocal agreement between the responsible MPOs.

**MPO Members** - Florida statutes include a variety of specific conditions on MPO board membership that may be challenging for a new MPO formed by the merger of one or more MPOs to satisfy. These include requirements for MPO board composition to be determined on an equitable geographic-population ratio basis; a limit of 25 board members; at least one-third of MPO board members be county commissioners or 20 percent for MPOs where an agency that operates or administers a major mode of transportation has been appointed to the MPO; include officials of public agencies that administer or operate major modes of transportation in the metropolitan area. Provisions allowing for “rotating” board seats and for a member to represent a group of general-purpose local governments and a member of a statutorily authorized planning board, a provision currently exercised by the Hillsborough MPO, but which may be difficult to maintain given other restrictions to MPO board membership.

**MPO Officers** - Florida statutes require MPOs to select a Chair, a Vice-Chair and an agency clerk. Any new MPO would have to designate at least these three MPO officers to comply with state law.

**Alternate Members** - Florida statutes require MPOs to devise a method for appointing alternate members to the MPO board. While this may appear a straightforward matter, it is possible that a new MPO formed from the merger of more than one previously existing MPO could devise an alternate selection method that preserves the involvement of member jurisdictions whose role was altered or diminished as part of the merger. This could also be true for local jurisdictions that are not directly involved in existing MPO processes in the Tampa Bay area.

**Nonvoting Advisors** - MPOs must attempt to appoint representatives from the Florida Department of Transportation, local military installations, and multimodal transportation providers as nonvoting advisors to the MPO board, but may appoint additional nonvoting advisors as deemed necessary.

**Forward Pinellas** - The Florida legislature, through a special act, unified the boards of the Pinellas Planning Council (PPP) and the MPO in Pinellas County. Additionally, the legislature empowered the agency to hire an executive director and staff to carry out the joint land-use and transportation planning and policy setting mission of the agency. The special act combining the PPP and the MPO would need to be amended if a new MPO in the Tampa Bay area were formed from the merger of Forward Pinellas and one or more existing MPO.

State regulations in Florida have a long reach into the organization and function of metropolitan planning organizations, and have to be considered in concert with the recommendations - or changed.
Chapter 3
What We Heard

MPO Listening Sessions & Engagement:
This chapter briefly states discussions with MPO staff/officials, a major prior workshop (May 2017), and surveys.

Financing regional initiatives is generally believed to be the reason for this study. Any collaboration will need to contemplate everything from the impact that the size of the Region has on meeting attendance to the role of state leadership. The Region can point to some successes already in regional coordination.

Workshop Summaries:
The second and third workshops are summarized (Workshop #1 occurred before this study commenced) focusing on the responses of attendees to questions posed in small group settings as well as anonymous “polling” exercises.
The workshop conducted on May 12, 2017 provided the foundation for the work program of the current study, as well as potential benefits of and principles for creating a regional planning structure.

Benefits
- Economic Development & Job Creation
- Stronger Regional and Local Voices
- Market-Driven Projects
- Better Communication
- Tie Transit to Land Use Decisions
- Achieve Regional Projects
- Greater Public Engagement & Education
- Advocate for Stronger Regional Voice
- Clarify Roles & Decision Making
- Integrate Central Office with Local Decision Making

Principles (Developing Regional Structure)
- Consider economic development
- Link transportation projects to land use
- Think regionally to benefit locally
- Incorporate multi-modal travel
- Focus on long-term objectives
- Ensure Equity and Fairness

The Core MPOs (Pasco, Pinellas, and Hillsborough) conducted an internal survey in late 2017, to identify the level of initial support for and the characteristics of a regional transportation planning structure serving the Tampa Bay region. Questions were provided in live polling at the September 29, 2017 Tampa Bay TMA Leadership Group meeting as well as in hard copy to Hillsborough MPO board members.

Benefits
- Speak with one voice
- Shape economic growth by aligning development with transportation
- Potential for increased funding
- Negotiating multi-county partnerships

Risks
- Reduced influence of neighborhoods and smaller municipalities
- Worse development decisions as local decision making is separated from transportation decisions
- Coordination becomes more difficult

A Regional Agency Should...
- Link transportation and development
- Actively monitor and prioritize transportation and development decisions that support a regional vision
Engagement Approach

The approach worked with MPO Leadership, drawing on past work across a range of stakeholders.

The Study Management Team helped provide input on draft products, and is comprised of representatives of TBARTA, the Tampa Bay Partnership, and staff of six MPOs. It meets periodically to discuss progress and provide insights that helped direct the project, although the Consultant team of Stantec and Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) are solely responsible for content. TBARTA attended and facilitated these meetings, and managed the consultant contract. Additional inputs were developed from surveys and workshops (2) conducted to present and refine the recommendations stemming from the technical work.

An initial internal survey and workshop (see text boxes at left) were supplemented with six MPO Listening Sessions described on the following pages.

Engage

Rick

Position: Employee, San Antonio Cyclery

I used to ride all over the place; there isn’t a good way to get to the water [from San Antonio/Pasco] any longer. It became too dangerous to ride on the roads – I’m a single dad with a daughter that I have to think about.

- paraphrased personal conversation, with permission, 11.16.2017
Listening Sessions

Listening Sessions were conducted with the staff, and in some cases the board members, of the six core/shell metropolitan planning organizations. The stated purpose of the listening sessions was to help get MPO-specific input, with general discussion items and specific questions stemming from comments obtained at a stakeholder workshop conducted in May 2017 and augmenting an internal survey of MPO staff. The following are the discussion topics and questions posed to each participant prior to and during the Listening Sessions. Results are presented to the right of each response.

**General Discussion Topics**

- What are the driving forces behind improving regional coordination now, and how important are they to your MPO boards and constituents?
- How well is your MPO achieving its objectives now, and describe interactions with neighboring MPOs. What are the recent actions taken to improve cooperation and coordination among MPOs in the Tampa Bay Region, and how successful have they been?
- Describe the role(s) that your MPO plays in any or all of the following, and how increased consolidation of planning may influence each:
  - Cross-jurisdictional project planning
  - Transportation project design / engineering
  - Transportation project implementation
  - Influencing land use / development decisions
- Tell us about any other advantages, concerns, or concepts you have about increasing coordination and cooperation among the MPOs in the Tampa Bay Region.

**Specific Questions**

**Rank the following in order of most important (1) to least important (5) in terms of potential benefits of stronger regional collaboration.**

- Better allocation of existing revenues to transportation projects  
- Better chance to increase transportation revenue allotments to our Region  
- Opportunity to improve land use planning and transportation demand  
- Improve project prioritization for regional-scale projects  
- Speed delivery of regional roadway, transit, and bicycle-pedestrian projects  

**Similarly, rank the following in order of most important (1) to least important (5) in terms of your concerns about stronger regional collaboration**

- Potential loss of project or planning revenues to my MPO area  
- Potential loss of self-determination for my MPO and its member agencies  
- Longer project delivery time frames  
- Less revenues for smaller, local, or non-regional projects in my MPO area  
- Greater distance between the public’s priorities and project priorities

If the study recommends a specific, future structure that fosters increased cooperation or even full consolidation of today’s MPOs in the Region, **how easy or hard will it be to overcome the following potential barriers** to implementing recommendations?

- Getting agreement internally on organizational structures  
- Changing state statutes, if necessary  
- Modifying state policies, if necessary  
- Effectively engaging the public and partners  
- Meeting current state and federal planning requirements
The following are unprioritized highlights of the most common-place observations over six meetings with Tampa Region MPO staff and board representatives. The complete summary notes for each meeting are contained in the digital appendix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Listening Sessions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Growth Motivation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important growth in population, traffic, and the economy generally were cited as major factors contributing to the need for this study now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Money Matters</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants noted that if funding for major projects - especially transit projects - were available, then this study wouldn’t be happening. Regional consensus is an important ingredient to acquiring more revenues - and more revenues targeted to regional-scale projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Concerns</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most participants stated some variation of the local-regional tension problem of hearing local concerns while still effectively prioritizing and implementing regional-scale projects. Some noted that a more regional approach would bring in more rural populations and greater dissent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distance Decay</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People attend meetings if they are closer to them - there should be a mechanism for remote conferences. This note coincides with the observation that meetings need to be focused and effective: if it’s a multi-MPO meeting, then regional matters are discussed exclusively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consistency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While there are good, project-driven examples of regional collaboration (e.g., TRIP, SUN Trail), consistency has been an issue as priorities at the state level have shifted over time. Coordination with Orlando (MetroPlan) is easier because of the consistent structure of decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Leadership</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several participants / groups noted that the State and FDOT’s role has changed over time, introducing additional challenges to collaboration. Several people noted that a strong, collaborative relationship with the State is a precursor to making regional projects happen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workshop No. 2

Group Collaboration

- An overview of the structure and objectives of the second workshop
- A summary of the responses and input received

The second workshop, like the May 2017 workshop, was conducted at the Collaborative Labs facility in Pinellas County. The Collaborative Labs engagement model was followed more closely than in the earlier workshop, encouraging small groups to convene and collaborate on several prepared questions before reconvening to discuss the results as a large group. The questions posed to the working groups fell generally into one of three categories, although overlap between them was evident.

**Great MPOs** - What operational characteristics or abilities define a high-functioning metropolitan planning organization?

**Great Partnerships** - Recognizing that MPOs are really collaborative organizations, what are some of the best practices used by MPOs here and how can we build on them?

**Great Projects** - Ultimately, it is the delivery of projects in a timely fashion that meet the needs of diverse constituencies that create a legacy of excellence at metropolitan scales - so what defines a great, regional project?

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3.1 | 10 Posters like those shown at right were used to describe the topics and peer studies to participants in the second and third workshops.
Great MPOs

Having conversations and recognizing similarities and common goals (many voices, same message). We all are speaking with one voice and one message.

Projects that connect the region move past the planning phase. They are realized and constructed. We can leverage federal, state, and local funding to move projects forward.

Successful regional coordination means that decisions actually get made and progress actually happens; there is a legitimate process and community buy-in.

Great Partnerships

Opportunity for other agencies to think in more regional ways by creating and reinforcing a regional land-use/development framework for decision-making. Benefit of a regional approach to planning is that several transportation agencies currently don’t have a voice on local boards outside their jurisdiction. I.e., Tampa Aviation Authority has an impact beyond Hillsborough County.

The relationship with the local FDOT representative is a key component. Better working relationship between MPO, local transportation providers, land-use planners, and their local FDOT district office, in a way that respects local plans. E.g., FDOT D5 uses MPO priorities for district dedicated revenues, managed to agree to fund transit operations among other things.

Partnerships important in taking into account all perspectives and representing all communities - including partnerships with the business community and MPOs, which could lead to more jobs, higher wages, and make the region more competitive as a whole.

Great Projects

Provide a framework that all of the partners are represented in the regional plan. Priorities are clearly communicated to local, state and federal funding partners. A regional MPO would provide stronger consensus for state and federal legislators/officials.

Defining and coordinating how we align local funds with federal funding for regional projects, and communicating the value of projects with early, often, and authentic public engagement.

Great projects maximize public and private investment by magnifying existing dollars to have an exponential economic impact; i.e., increases and captures value for a community. For example, tax increment financing specifically for transportation within a designated area. Pooling funds allows for stronger matching funds.

Our region is starved for implementation (i.e., compete successfully for state and federal grant monies) but we must change our behavior - and create more trust - in order to get something built.

Regional Transportation Leadership Workshop

Regional coordination is a key element for delivery of projects. Better working relationship between MPO, local transportation providers, land-use planners, and their local FDOT district office, in a way that respects local plans. E.g., FDOT D5 uses MPO priorities for district dedicated revenues, managed to agree to fund transit operations among other things.

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Workshop No. 3

Into the details

- An overview of the structure and objectives of the third and final workshop
- A summary of the responses and input received

The third and final workshop was conducted at the State Port Authority in Tampa on October 29th. The location was important, being the only workshop not conducted in the Collaborative Labs facility in Pinellas County, offering an easier venue to access from the east side of the Tampa Bay Region.

The specific objectives of the third Regional Transportation Leadership Workshop were the following.

- Present an overview of the MPO Regional Coordination and Best Practices Study to-date
- Explore, and provide input to the study team, regarding the advantages and disadvantages of three possible pathways to greater coordination among MPOs in the Tampa Bay Region
- Begin a regional dialogue about the most appropriate path forward for MPO coordination in the Tampa Bay Region

Another important distinction of this third workshop compared to the first two is that it (1) focused on detailed assessments of specific situations in a more closed-ended format; and (2) permitted participants to voice their opinions in an open-air format to a panel of experts representing the core MPOs, two other Florida MPOs, and the consultant team leader.

In all, 70 people participated in the workshop, structured according to the graphic shown on the opposite page. The study team wants to sincerely thank everyone that participated in this workshop, which was highly regarded in several comments received afterwards.

The following pages highlight the results; the full record of the third workshop is found in the appendices.

SOME TAKEAWAYS

Participants in the third workshop discussed the following.

While there was a minority of vocal opposition, the majority of participants voiced support for a more regional voice than exists now.

Similarly, people wanted dedicated regional project funding sources and revenues to increase, although providing funds for local “connectivity” projects to the regional infrastructure was deemed important.

An emphasis was placed on more regional funding for transit projects, specifically.

Support for regional structures that included population-weighted and modal representation.

Although not specifically addressed, considerable support was expressed for including non-transportation (economic, development, environmental resource) functions under the same decision-making structure as long-range transportation planning.
3.2 | Workshop #3 Format. The third workshop started with a traditional sign-in table with participants getting one of two nametags that indicated which split session they would join initially. An opening presentation welcomed people and reviewed progress to-date. Every participant then went into one of two split sessions for an hour where they answered polling questions and discussed them, or answered questions about two hypothetical planning scenarios - then the groups “switched” to do the other split session exercise. Finally, a closing presentation featured a panel of MPO directors to allow people to ask open-ended questions. An infographic summary of the results follows.
Preliminary Pathways

This page was provided to participants at the third workshop to help generate discussion.

**working closer together**

**philosophy:** The region has worked together for a long time with good results. Let’s establish objectives and work towards them without potentially sacrificing identity, local priorities, or wasting time wrangling new structures.

- **no or very minor changes to MPO bylaws or organizational structures**
- **Assume Greater Control of Technical Analysis.** The MPOs will take lead responsibility for decision-making tools, promoting collaboration on data collection, analysis, and forecasting. Bring together real-time traffic data streams for use in priority-setting.
- **Increased Authority of TMA Leadership Group.** The TMALG becomes an authoritative decision-making body for the selection, justification, scoping, prioritization, and development of a plan for regional projects. Revisiting the voting structure to align with population variations may be necessary. Also consider holding periodic joint meetings of MPO Boards to facilitate broader regional transportation decisions.
- **Regular Joint Board Meetings.** Establish twice-per-year joint meetings of CACs, TACs, and ITS committees, complementing the existing regular joint meetings of BIPACs and LCB. To reduce the number of meeting dates, allow committees to conduct regular, local business in separate rooms first, then meet together to address regional issues.
- **Direct Coordination with State Leadership.** Conduct one (annual) meeting with state representatives from the House and Senate to discuss regional priorities and funding concerns.
- **MPO Advisory Positions.** Create new positions (advisory) on policy and technical boards of each MPO for the chairs of the other two MPOs in the core region.
- **Formalize the Regional Transportation Plan Element.** The TMALG adopts and approves a regional transportation plan for facilities physically or functionally crossing MPO boundaries (including air and sea port facilities).
- **Create a Single, Regional Performance-Based Planning Process.** The three core MPOs would jointly develop a regional Congestion Management Process to be approved / adopted by each of the three MPOs individually.
- **Consolidate Regional Priority-Setting at TMA.** TMALG should adopt priorities for funding streams available to regionally significant projects, such as TRIP, SUNTrail, FDOT Transit Service Development, Urban Corridor and Intermodal programs, SIS, and BUILD.
- **Develop a Single Citizen Advisory Committee.** The three MPOs would still have direct subcommittee representation, and report to the regional CAC their goals, objectives, strategies, and priorities. Could also be done with a new committee dedicated to freight, safe routes to schools, or other area of common interest.

**moving closer together**

**philosophy:** While past successes are undeniably significant, the complex issues facing our region today won’t be solved without improving the processes to address a new level of regional cooperation.

- **some changes to MPO structures and formation documents, but retain separate policy boards**
- **Single MPO Staff.** The MPOs combine their existing separate policy boards, technical boards, and LRTPs. A single host agency and a stable funding source will accommodate the staffing component with resources at current host agencies. Staffing for transition, engagement, modeling, planning, design, implementation, and policy will be provided by an administrative arm.
- **Single Technical Committee.** A single technical committee (subcommittees initially) would report to the MPO Boards. Rotating chairs and meeting locations to accommodate existing MPOs is suggested. Financial planning impacts, and how the single committee works with TMALG is required to advance this action.
- **Continue to Increase Role of TMA Leadership Group.** TMALG would continue to mature, adding non-voting state board representatives to its membership. A state director who lacks funding authority is required to change their existing bylaws, with interlocal agreements to include these states in TMALG in a non-voting, advisory capacity.
- **Develop a Collective Regional Funding Strategy.** To fund and lead to identify and develop both regional funding bank or enhance / diversify regional projects (such as indexing local options and interlocal agreements) and provide credit to public sector capital-owning government agencies, and be reimbursed with federal matching funds.
- **Create Regional Modal Agency Seat on All Three MPO Boards.** To create a more transportation providers (freight/port, transit, etc.) governance board.
3.3 | “Three Pathway” Graphic (from Workshop #3)

source: Stantec Consulting Services Inc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>together</th>
<th>one board together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>philosophy:</strong> if starting from a blank slate today at least three MPOs would be represented by a single entity - we compete on a regional stage and our system for making decisions has to reflect that fact.</td>
<td>A single policy board would represent a single metropolitan administration, although not without distributed elements. New agreements (e.g., apportionment) and modified state laws addressing a specific MPO or all MPOs are highly likely.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Single MPO Board / Multiple MPO Technical Committees.** The single MPO policy board would have three technical committees to ensure sub-regional inputs and decisions that appear before the policy board. Requires additional staffing and meetings to maintain and serve multiple boards. |  |
| **Single MPO Policy Board / Multiple MPO Advisory Committees.** Regardless of the status of the Technical Committee(s), a single policy board would potentially benefit from receiving input from separate CACs or bicycle/pedestrian advisory committees. Requires additional staffing and meetings to maintain and serve the multiple boards. |  |
| **Add State Representation to the MPO Policy Board as Full Voting Members.** As with the “blue” and “purple” tiers, adding state representation would potentially facilitate more discretionary sources of revenue, connectivity to state actions, and increase the voice of the MPO(s). However, new members (at least two) would potentially further reduce the number of seats available under the 25-seat cap in current state law. |  |
| **Modify Voting Structure to Ensure Local Influence Remains Strong.** The voting structure under a single MPO Policy Board would change. Requiring a two- or three-tiered condition for action would help ensure more collaboration. An example would be requiring for a valid vote 60% of population representation voting in the affirmative and 60% members present (e.g., 60% member quorum) and voting in the affirmative. |  |
| **More Cooks in the Kitchen.** As problematic as voting structures are the determination of seats on the single MPO Policy Board. One member per 250,000 population in each county as of the last decennial census; one member for each city over 100,000 population, one transit representative, one water port representative, and two airport representatives would allow space for additional members to represent rotating local government coalitions, citizen advisory groups, or state-level politicians as suggested in (g.3). Ultimately, the 25-person cap may seem too small a tent, requiring a change to state law to better reflect diverse populations in regional contexts across the state. |  |
| **More Related Functions.** Consider co-locating the MPO agencies that support economic development, transit, housing, environmental review boards, and/or agencies on the needs of aging populations in a regional context and have a position on the MPO board. |  |
Q. A decision-making structure that focuses on regionally-significant projects more than the current structure may result in a reduction in available federal funding for one or more “locally-significant” projects. Under what, if any, conditions would that be acceptable?

A. It would be acceptable if the decision-making process also funded “locally-significant” projects that were reflective of my community’s needs.

Less than 3% said it would not be acceptable under any circumstances; another 26% said it would be acceptable if projects were rotated geographically over time.

Q. Would your community be willing to see “regionally-significant projects funded in neighboring communities while your community waits for project funding?”

A. Yes, if the project will directly benefit commuters and businesses from my community by improving regional movement of people and goods.

There were three possible “no” responses; less than 3% responded with any of them.

Q. Would you support a dues structure to support either a single MPO for the region or a single MPO staff to support multiple MPOs in the region?

A. Yes, I would be willing to support a dues structure for a decision-making structure that significantly improves the mobility in the region.

About 40% responded that there would have to be additional conditions; others noted that the RPC or TBARTA could host a single MPO or staff, if funded adequately.

Q. What transportation projects or activities do you think are not happening in the region because there is more than one MPO?

A. Premium regional transit projects (like passenger rail or bus rapid transit).

Other responses included regional funding initiatives (20%) and fixing bottlenecks on regional transportation facilities (13%).
3.4 | Anonymous Polling Responses. Participants were asked several questions in one of the small breakout groups (each person got to answer every question that attended the workshop). The specific question and most-frequent answers are shown on this page. Additional “lead-in” information for each question and all of the responses are contained in the report appendix.
GROUP QUESTIONS FOR SCENARIO A (3.4)

- What are actions that the two MPOs could take to engage the “communities of concern” in this scenario? Does the answer change if there is only one MPO (or only one policy board addressing regional project decisions)? For a MPO with a single Citizen Advisory Committee? Are there other organization arrangements that might influence the approach to address these communities?

- The State has acknowledged that SeaPort and its operations are of statewide value and is willing to provide 80% of the funding for the bridge project. The remaining 20%, plus improvements to approaches to the bridge, amount to an estimated $220 million needed to start the project. How likely (and why) is it that two MPOs could find funds for the remaining amount? How does the financing picture and likelihood of reallocating funding change if the two MPOs had one policy board to address regional decisions?

- The two MPO boards acknowledge the environmental challenges that exist now and might be exacerbated by the project. How does the current situation of two separate MPOs, one merged MPO, a regional policy board that deals with regional issues (with two MPOs dealing with local issues still in place), or some other organizational structure potentially put a plan of action in place to address the regional problem of development-related impacts to Lake Hippa?

Group Scenario Discussions. The other small group breakout had people (6-8 in a group) discuss the two hypothetical scenarios and questions shown above in a facilitated discussion. The purpose of this breakout group was not to engender a typical response to any of the questions (although the appendix contains a detailed accounting of the discussion points made at each table). Instead, this format encouraged a detailed exploration of issues that are keys to success in the Tampa Bay Region but in a hypothetical setting that might allow for more open discussion.

Participants generally debated if a single MPO board would make a difference to the challenges described in the questions posed to them. Others suggested that having a separate, standing policy body (while maintaining separate MPOs for more localized matters) to address regional project issues is another pathway to explore. Project development (for projects that cross MPO boundaries) might become easier if there was only one entity collaborating with local, state, and federal agencies. Participants also discussed the creation of a multi-MPO “task force” to plan and advance regional projects.
GROUP QUESTIONS FOR SCENARIO B (3.5)

- Alpina is fast-growing thanks to a booming petrochemical industry. Workers travel from suburban communities in both MPOs to blue-collar jobs here, and complain about problems at interchanges and secondary road congestion. Although not benefiting directly from the first phase of commuter rail, what might Alpina’s leaders have to say in the ongoing financing discussions? How does their strategy or input change if there is one merged MPO, one merged technical committee, or some other MPO organizational structure?

- The MPOs acknowledge that there is probably enough locally-sourced funding that could be shifted to provide the match for state/federal funds if they combine resources. The M2M Express price tag goes up with each passing year. Do the capabilities or resources change if the two MPOs remain separate? What if there is one regional policy board for both (otherwise still separate) MPOs, and what kind of authority would that regional policy body require to substantially “move the needle” to progress the project?

- Community issues cross MPO borders, and the M2M Express is bringing into sharp relief long-standing concerns from agricultural, environmental, tribal, and other stakeholders. Regional engagement and land use planning require big resources and actions being taken at the end of the process - does one MPO, two MPOs, a regional planning authority, or some other organizational structure or partnership have a better chance at effectiveness? Are there winners and losers likely under different set-ups, and could they be mitigated?

A panel discussion was conducted at the end of the workshop to allow people to talk about their experiences in the breakout sessions, air their views, and ask questions of the panelists (also summarized in the appendix). The panel included MPO directors from the three core MPOs and from Broward and MetroPlan (Orlando) MPOs.

- Beth Alden, Executive Director, Hillsborough MPO
- Whit Blanton, Executive Director, Forward Pinellas
- John Villeneuve, Chief Planner, Pasco MPO
- James Cromar, Strategic Initiatives Deputy Executive Director, Broward MPO
- Gary Huttman, Executive Director, MetroPlan Orlando
- Jeff Kramer, Center for Urban Transportation Research
- Scott Lane, Stantec Consulting Services Inc.
Perico Preserve Restoration (2011). A bird sanctuary park in Manatee County that has been beautifully restored to protect wildlife habitats and nesting grounds.
Chapter 4
Peer MPO Study

A description of the MPOs considered for peer group assessment, selection of those peers, and documentation from interviews with them.

The consulting team reviewed a number of MPOs across the country to create a matrix identifying potential peers for this study.

The nine selected Peer MPOs and the process of studying, interviewing, and comparing the collected information are listed in this chapter as means of providing direction going forward in the TBARTA administered effort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection &amp; Format of Peer MPO Studies</th>
<th>66</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conducting the Peer Review Studies</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting the Peer MPOs (MPO Characterizations)</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Area Insights from Peer MPOs</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After the first Technical Report (Conditions + Directions), a list of nine key issues was presented that collectively reflected the information gleaned from a review of relevant data (including the May 2017 public workshop comments) and past discussions with the members of the Study Management Team. A tenth topic area, Engaging the Public, was subsequently added to the original nine topics in a recommendation by the Study Management Team. These ten topic areas are listed below.

- Regional Revenue: Generating and Managing Dollars
- Internal Operations: Structural Setup and Procedures
- Local vs. Regional: Regional and Local Needs Satisfied
- Project Implementation: Traditional and Non-Traditional Roles of the MPO
- Dispute Resolution: Handling the Inevitable Clash
- Internal Communication: How to Work a Crowd
- Working with State Agencies: Generating and Managing Dollars
- Land Development: Linking Land and Transport Decisions
- Resiliency: How MPOs Manage Change and Challenges
- Engaging the Public

Part of the purpose of identifying these topic areas was to help aid in the selection of MPO peers, particularly those MPOs that may be seen as aspirational in one or more of the topic areas (or at least inspirational in generating relevant, portable concepts to the Tampa Bay Region). The following table of candidate peers and the preliminary evaluations were prepared by the consulting team, reviewed with the client staff, and then reviewed with the Study Management Team. The MPOs selected for peer review are indicated by boldface text in this table.

Note that 2010 population and largest city population were used to create a consistent measure of centricity (how much of the population is contained by a single large city).

Clearwater Beach. (2017) The barrier islands in Clearwater are a great example of the coastal environments the Tampa Bay Region is known for.
### Table 1. Assessment of Peer MPOs (Part 1 of 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MPO Name</th>
<th>Largest City</th>
<th>Counties (All or Part)</th>
<th>2010 MPO Population in millions (1)</th>
<th>2010 Largest City Population in millions (2)</th>
<th>Center City / MPO Population percent</th>
<th>MPO Website</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Core Tampa Bay Region MPOs</td>
<td>Tampa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>multiple</td>
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<td>Hampton Roads TPO (Chesapeake)</td>
<td>Virginia Beach</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hrtpo.org">www.hrtpo.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Metroplan Orlando</td>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>metroplanorlando.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metro (Portland)</td>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td><a href="http://www.oregonmetro.gov">www.oregonmetro.gov</a></td>
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<td>Wasatch Front Regional Council (Ogden)</td>
<td>Salt Lake City</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td><a href="http://wfrc.org/">http://wfrc.org/</a></td>
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<td>B Broward MPO</td>
<td>Fort Lauderdale</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td><a href="http://www.browardmpo.org">www.browardmpo.org</a></td>
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<td>B Capital Area MPO</td>
<td>Raleigh</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.07</td>
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<td>37%</td>
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<td>B Nashville Area MPO</td>
<td>Nashville</td>
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<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>B North Florida TPO</td>
<td>Jacksonville</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td><a href="http://www.northfloridatpo.com">www.northfloridatpo.com</a></td>
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<td>B Regional Planning Commission</td>
<td>New Orleans</td>
<td>6 (?)</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td><a href="http://www.norpc.org">www.norpc.org</a></td>
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<td>B Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada</td>
<td>Las Vegas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B Western Connecticut Council of Governments</td>
<td>Stamford</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<td>Tallahassee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C Charlotte Region TPO</td>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<td>C Indianapolis MPO</td>
<td>Indianapolis</td>
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<td>1.56</td>
<td>0.83</td>
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<td>C Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Council</td>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td><a href="http://www.morpc.org">www.morpc.org</a></td>
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<td>A Metropolitan Council (St. Paul)</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
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<td>Dallas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.40</td>
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<td>B Atlanta Regional Commission</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.82</td>
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<td>5.89</td>
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<td>36%</td>
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<td>B Puget Sound Regional Council</td>
<td>Seattle</td>
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<td>Tier</td>
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<td>Project Implementation</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>Regional Planning Commission</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Western CTCouncil of Governments</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Capital Region TPA</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Charlotte Region TPO</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Indianapolis MPO</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Council</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1. Assessment of Peer MPOs (Part 3 of 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MPO Name</th>
<th>Regional</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>Operations</th>
<th>Local V.</th>
<th>Regional</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Dispute</th>
<th>Resolution</th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Working with S&amp; Agencies</th>
<th>Land Development</th>
<th>Railways</th>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Metropolitan Council (St. Paul)</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>Polycentric; unique org structure; commuter rail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A North Central Texas COG (Arlington)</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>More polycentric; light rail system; regional coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Atlanta Regional Commission</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>MPO / ARC are deeply intertwined; extremely large geographic area; issues with regional rail and coordination; shares a UZA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Baltimore Regional Transportation Board</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>Shares UZA; light rail; polycentric (includes Annapolis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Denver Regional COG</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>Multi-county MPO and region; interesting committee structure (technical) with freight, environmental, business interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Houston-Galveston Area Council</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>Polycentric; massive area; COG; light rail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Puget Sound Regional Council</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>Light rail and streetcar; COG; monocentric, but does have spread out geography due to Puget Sound; county / city balance; challenging to emulate the MPO structure in Florida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B San Diego Association of Governments</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>Single county; COG; unique revenue stream; interesting weighted voting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Southeast Michigan COG</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>Single county; COG; unique revenue stream; interesting weighted voting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Boston Region MPO</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>Lack of county-level government and representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>Old fixed guideway; urbanized area shared with neighboring MPO (south jersey); enormous area; COG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Mid-America Regional Council</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>Bi-State; 119 municipalities as members; COG; streetcar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTES:**
(1) Source: Transportation Planning Capacity Building (www.planning.dot.gov/mpos1.asp)
(2) Source: US. Bureau of the Census, 2010
(3) Circles represent perceived opportunities for education on specific topic:
   ○ = no information/reason to believe that discussion would not be fruitful;
   ● = should ask questions on this topic; or
   ● = strong potential for insight on this topic.

Additional MPOs considered, but not listed or evaluated: Mid-Region MPO, Santa Fe MPO, Alamo Area MPO, Lower CT River Valley MPO, Sacramento COG, Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council, French Broad River MPO, East-West Gateway COG, Memphis Urban Area MPO, Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln MPO, Capital Region COG
The nine MPOs chosen for peer review were:

1. Hampton Roads TPO (Virginia Beach and Norfolk, VA)
2. MetroPlan Orlando (FL)
3. Metro (Portland, OR)
4. Wasatch Front Regional Council (Salt Lake City, UT)
5. Capital Area MPO (Raleigh, NC)
6. Nashville Area MPO (TN)
7. Metropolitan Council (St. Paul and Minneapolis, MN)
8. North Central Texas COG (Dallas, TX)
9. Denver Regional COG (CO)

MPOs were initially chosen based on research and prior experience, with an emphasis on how well each MPO may inform one or more of the ten study topics (indicated by a tier ranking in the left-most column of Table 1). Additional review of websites from the MPOs helped in assessing the final tiering of the MPOs. Ideally, at least two of the MPOs would address each topic area (indicated by black dots in the Table under the Topic headings). The Study Management Team provided input on the MPOs selected based on the Study Management Team (SMT) input. As a result, three additional MPOs were added by the Study Management Team to the original six peer study MPOs identified by the consultant.

Additional MPOs identified through this process might have been used to replace one or more of the initial case studies if an MPO had proven to be inaccessible by telephone and other communications in a timely manner.
Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park, Port Richey.

Four miles of protected beach in Pasco County offer visitors kayaking and viewing bald eagles or a gray fox - but no swimming. The Salt Springs are a measured 351 feet deep.
Conducting the Peer Review Studies

The purpose of the peer interviews is to gather first-hand details pertinent to the ten topic areas previously identified. Although the project team has collectively completed research in advance on many MPOs, it was impossible to know with certainty that a specific MPO will or won't have valuable insights into a topic - and certainly no MPO is exactly like the existing three core MPOs in the Tampa Region (which are also different from each other) nor identical to what might be proposed for this region. Therefore, the initial contact – the MPO Director and their chief staff – helped provide information but also helped refine the relevancy of the topic areas to each MPO studied.

The following discussion topics, like its counterpart prepared for the focus group interviews conducted with the Tampa Region MPO representatives during Phase I of the Project, was considered as a series of prompts rather than a rigid or restricted question-and-answer script. It was fully intended that each discussion would be unique and offer differing perspectives. One way to ensure a more comprehensive perspective is to also engage one or more representatives from partnering organizations, such as public transit providers, board members, regulatory agencies, or other bodies that may be identified during the initial contact with the MPO Director. The questions shown below for each topic area derive fairly directly from the information shown at the end of Technical Report #1, but were edited or expanded in some cases. Public engagement was added as a unique topic at the March 30, 2018, meeting of the Study Management Team; some other questions were modified or added as a result of that meeting and review. Therefore, the interview framework represents the outcome of past discussions of the Study Management Team, consultant staff, and prior (May 2017) workshop with a broad group of stakeholders.

Finally, some of the characterization information about the MPOs, such as board composition and representation, were further vetted during the discussion to help enrich the MPO characterization and ensure its accuracy.
Prompts for Peer Interviews

The prompts for the peer interviews follow the list below, with two or three questions pertaining to each topic being asked to the MPO representative.

**General**

*(Initial Interview with MPO Director)*
- Introduce project and inquire about experiences with each of the ten topic areas, emphasizing those that are initially thought to be areas of strength for the MPO.
- Engage in discussion about board composition and other characterization data to ensure accuracy from information obtained from on-line sources. Clarify any issues presented about procedural matters.

**Regional Revenue**

*(Generating and Managing Dollars)*
- What are the funding mechanisms employed by the MPO (note: emphasize non-traditional sources, matching requirements, spending limits, authorization levels)?
- Who manages those funds (e.g., prioritization) and by what level of authority?
- What role(s) does the MPO have in implementation of projects (prompt here for any inputs into design or environmental commitments from NEPA/SEPA processes)?
- How do localities contribute? How is local funding utilized in planning activities?

**Internal Operations**

*(Structural Setup and Procedures)*
- What are the current MPO staffing levels and talents associated with regional governance?
- What is the structure and organization of staff – do MPO staff ever work on other, non-MPO assignments (e.g., for host entity)?
- Are there other shared staffing arrangements; how are consultants used in the planning process?

**Local v. Regional**

*(Regional and Local Needs Satisfied)*
- How are voting structures, representation, and quorums set up (note: review prior, and validate bylaws information)?
- How is “regional” defined, especially in terms of project differentiation, and does that terminology impact financing or other implementation practices (elaborate)?

**Engaging the Public Effectively**

- How is the public successfully engaged in both levels of decision-making (project selection and prioritization)?
- How does the public input effectively play into regional-scale projects?
- What happens when there is local opposition to a regionally significant project?

**Project Implementation and Prioritization**

*(Traditional & Non-Traditional Roles of the MPO)*
- How does the MPO prioritize projects and collaborate with partners and the public to do that?
- What role does the MPO play in post-project planning, if any?
- How is funding shared with neighboring MPOs or other partnering agencies to accomplish typical tasks (e.g., modeling, planning studies)?
- How are planning decisions made at the MPO level articulated to state, private, and local implementation agencies in later stages of project development?
**Dispute Resolution**

*(Handling the Inevitable Clash)*

- What’s an example of a challenging project decision, and how was it resolved?
- Who are the internal and external players and forces that influence dispute resolution?

**Internal Communication**

*(How to Work a Crowd)*

- How are smaller jurisdictions participating in larger MPO structures, especially in regional decisions?
- How are meetings and other resource-intensive actions made more effective across a larger geographic and demographic space (e.g., rotating meetings, proxy voting, or remote conference hosting)?

**Working with State Agencies**

*(Generating and Managing Dollars)*

- How has the state’s department of transportation supported (or not) regional decision-making, collaboration, and implementation and prioritization?
- How could this relationship be made even more effective?

**Land Development**

*(Linking Land and Transport Decisions)*

- What’s the role of the MPO in long-term and short-term land development decisions? Is that role “hard” or “soft,” and is there a mechanism for tying project prioritization or funding to land use decisions that support transit development, access management, or other approaches to best practice?
- How are land planning activities coordinated among jurisdictions and the MPO?
- What, if any, feedback loops between transportation and land use are in place, either from a technology or a policy standpoint?

**Resiliency**

*(How MPOs Manage Change and Challenges)*

- Describe how the MPO has addressed changes from external forces, such as federal policy, funding challenges, non-governmental agencies/advocates (e.g., ports, airports, and so forth)?
- Is there an action in recent memory that has tested “the system” currently in place?

Other actions to be conducted associated with the interviews include:

1. Identify possible auxiliary interviewees from related agencies, particularly those that have a long institution memory.
2. Allow interviewee(s) opportunity to review draft interview notes.
Presenting the Peer MPOs

Comparing the nine peer MPOs

The goal of the peer review studies in the second technical memorandum of the Project is to inform future decisions regarding the organizational structure and operations of the MPOs in the Tampa Bay Region. Appropriately, the presentation of the results of the peer study assessments focus on that part of the discussion. 

The following is presented for discussion at the meeting of the Study Management Team; additional comments and edits are likely to occur before the final draft.
Improvements made to Ashley District led to beautified medians in this popular district within the city.
Hampton Roads TPO
Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO)

PRINCIPAL CITY
Virginia Beach, Virginia

HOST
Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC)

BOARD MEMBERS / 47 members
(24 voting and 23 non-voting members + 4 military liaisons)

NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES/COUNTIES REPRESENTED
10 municipalities / 5 counties

PLANNING AREA
2,658 square miles

PLANNING AREA POPULATION
1,619,202

POPULATION DENSITY
609.2 people/sq. mi

TOTAL EMPLOYED IN VA-NC MSA
704,634

BOARD COMPOSITION
3 municipality (number of representatives)
4 county
2 regional scope

City Officials (20)
County Officials (10)

ADVISORY COMMITTEES (6)
Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
Community Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)
Freight Technical Advisory Committee (FTAC)
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
Legislative Ad-Hoc Committees
Rail and Public Transportation Task Force

STAFFING
Size: 28
Dual Purpose: Yes

inputs

$2.6 m planning funds
In brief

The Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) is the body created by the Hampton Roads localities and appropriate state and federal agencies to perform the duties of an MPO under the federal regulations. The Hampton Roads region, with more than 1.7 million residents, is situated in the middle of the Eastern seaboard where the James, Nansemond, and Elizabeth rivers pour into the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. It is recognized as the 33rd largest Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in the United States. Hampton Roads includes an intricate system of bridges, tunnels and ferries, which provide those much needed connections between places where people live, work, and recreate on both sides of the water.

– Information taken from organization website

Selected highlights of interviews

- A significant event for HRTPO was the federal certification review that occurred approximately 10 years ago, prompting major reforms to internal processes, staffing, and even a name change.
- Dedicated public engagement staff help the MPO integrate issues of concern to the public in all aspects of MPO work.
- State legislators contribute directly by sitting on the governing board.
- The technical project prioritization system that was developed has helped avoid conflicts about funding allocation and priorities.
MetroPlan Orlando

PRINCIPAL CITY
Orlando, Florida

HOST
Independent

BOARD MEMBERS / 20 members
(20 voting members with 5 non-voting advisors)

NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES/COUNTIES REPRESENTED
22 municipalities / 3 counties

PLANNING AREA
2,859 square miles

PLANNING AREA POPULATION
1,837,385

POPULATION DENSITY
642.7 people/sq. mi

TOTAL EMPLOYED IN ORLANDO-KISSIMMEE-SANFORD MSA
1,157,075

BOARD COMPOSITION
- 3 municipality (number of representatives)
- 1 county
- 1 regional scope

City Mayors (6)  County Representatives (9)

ADVISORY COMMITTEES (8)
- Executive Committee
- Personnel Committee
- Finance Committee
- Regional Leadership Council (RLC)
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Community Advisory Committee (CAC)
- Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC)
- Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO)

STAFFING
Size: 18
Dual Purpose: No

$2.6 m planning funds
In brief

The Orlando Urban Area Transportation Study began in 1965 under the guidelines of the 1962 Federal Aid Highway Act. The Orlando Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization was formally created in 1977 and staffed by the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council. In August 1997, the Orlando Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization changed its name to MetroPlan Orlando to stress the importance of regional cooperation and became an independent agency.

Selected highlights of interviews

- An agreement to pool funding allocations among three counties (as opposed to dividing the funds to individual urbanized areas or counties) has proved to be an important step in furthering regionalism, since cooperation is required to prioritize the combined, larger pool of funds.
- Local revenue for MPO operations is derived primarily from per capita dues on full members and a fixed assessment for modal (e.g., transit) members.
- The MPO values its role as a forum for debate, even in the cases where some projects, like toll roads, aren’t necessarily under its direct control.
- As the only in-state (Florida) MPO peer, MetroPlan is likely to get a lot of comparisons in this study.
**Metro**

**PRINCIPAL CITY**
Portland, Oregon

**HOST**
Metro; All-in-One MPO

**BOARD MEMBERS**
7+17 members
(7 serve on the Metro Council which governs Metro and 17 serve on the J PACT which deals with transportation issues, with 3 Council members serving on both)

**NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES/COUNTIES REPRESENTED**
4 municipalities / 5 counties

**BOARD COMPOSITION**
3 municipality (number of representatives)
5 county
3 regional scope

City Elected Officials (5)
County Commissioners (4)

**ADVISORY COMMITTEES (3)**
Metro Council
Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT)
Transportation Policy Alternative Committee (TPAC)

**STAFFING** (MPO dedicated)
Size: 30+
Dual Purpose: Yes

**PLANNING AREA**
487 square miles

**PLANNING AREA POPULATION**
1,499,844

**POPULATION DENSITY**
3,079.8 people/sq. mi

**TOTAL EMPLOYED IN PORTLAND-VANCOUVER-HILLSBORO MSA**
1,115,721
In brief

Metro is a directly elected regional government, established in 1979 via a regional referendum. With its inception, Metro assumed the planning responsibilities from the former Columbia Region Association of Governments (1966-1978). Metro Council’s structure is not aligned to federal law on MPO governance, thus within Metro, J PACT was formed to conduct all 3-C planning requirements, the creation and maintenance of the UPWP, and National Ambient Air Quality Standards State Implementation Plan. J PACT policies and plans are formally adopted by the Metro Council and coordination between Metro and J PACT is ensured by Metro serving in a non-voting capacity on the J PACT board.

Selected highlights of interviews

- The organizational structure of Metro, being led by an elected body dedicated to the organization and not individual local governments, is unique.
- Metro has had a historically outsized role in parks, solid waste, and large-scale land development policies, including an urban growth boundary.
- Metro also has the ability to directly levy property taxes.
- Transit development is a key issue in the region, considerably more so than the construction of new freeways.
Wasatch Front

Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC)

**PLANNING AREA**
1,777 square miles

**PLANNING AREA POPULATION**
1,561,348

**POPULATION DENSITY**
878.7 people/sq. mi

**TOTAL EMPLOYED IN SALT LAKE CITY MSA**
657,202

**PRINCIPAL CITY**
Salt Lake City, Utah

**HOST**
WFRC; All-in-One Agency

**BOARD MEMBERS**
27 members
(21 voting and 6 non-voting members)

**NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES/COUNTIES REPRESENTED**
6 counties

**BOARD COMPOSITION**
3 municipality
1 county
1 regional scope

**Advisory Committees (12)**
- Active Transportation Committee (ATC)
- Budget Committee
- Joint Policy Advisory Committee (JPAC)
- Regional Growth Committee (RGC)
- Regional Growth Committee TACs
- Salt Lake Council of Governments
- Corridor Preservation
- Morgan County-Odgen Valley Rural Planning Organization (RPO)
  - Tooele Valley Rural Planning Organization
  - Transportation Coordination Committee
  - Transportation Coordinating Committee TACs
  - Wasatch Front Economic Development District (WFEDD)

**Staffing**
Size: 28
Dual Purpose: No

**Inputs**

---

**Outputs**

- Planning
- Cities & towns rep
- State
- Transit
- Enviro.
- Non-profit

$3.7 m** planning funds
In brief

On December 26, 1973, then Governor Calvin Rampton designated the Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC) as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation planning in the Salt Lake and Ogden urbanized areas in Utah (roughly Salt Lake, Davis, and western Weber counties), taking over these responsibilities from UDOT. As the MPO, every four years WFRC is responsible for the development of a 20- to 30-year, long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). WFRC first adopted the RTP, then known as the Long-Range Transportation Plan, in 1977. Additionally, WFRC is responsible for the preparation of a six-year, short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is updated annually. As an element of transportation planning, WFRC has also worked with the member cities and counties to establish a vision for future development in the region.

Selected highlights of interviews

- When the UTA, Utah Transit Authority, was created, the state implemented a sales tax in four counties and gave them the authority to increase the tax.
- Sales tax at the county level can now be levied by action of county officials; no need for referendum to support transit investments, for example (although this law is too new to understand the willingness of county officials to increase taxes).
- The MPO and the other three in Utah adopt a unified transportation plan for the entire state in cooperation with the Utah DOT.
- Like HRTPO, Wasatch Front has state legislators (two) on its policy board.
- Although local governments still make local land use decisions, the MPO takes a leadership role in developing a region-wide land use plan in cooperation with the units of local government.

Information taken from organization website
**Capital Area MPO**

**NC Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)**

**PRINCIPAL CITY**
**Raleigh, North Carolina**

**HOST**
**City of Raleigh**

**PLANNING AREA**
**1,604 square miles**

**PLANNING AREA POPULATION**
**1,074,420**

**POPULATION DENSITY**
**669.8 people/sq. mi**

**TOTAL EMPLOYED IN RALEIGH MSA**
**645,930**

**BOARD MEMBERS**
**30 members**
(28 voting and 2 non-voting members)

**NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES/ COUNTIES REPRESENTED**
**19 municipalities / 5 counties**

**BOARD COMPOSITION**
- 3 municipality (number of representatives)
- 3 county
- 2 regional scope
  
  **City Elected Officials (19)**
  
  **County Commissioners (5)**

**ADVISORY COMMITTEES (3)**
- Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)
- Wake County Transit Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC)
- Capital Area Bicycle & Pedestrian Stakeholders Group (BPSG)

**STAFFING**
- Size: 12
- Dual Purpose: No

**inputs**

- State d.o.t.
- Toll author.
- Hwy. author.
- Transit

- Planning funds $0.7 m
In brief

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) grew from a collaborative effort between Cary, Raleigh, Garner, and Wake County known as the Greater Raleigh Urban Area Thoroughfare Plan of 1964. During the 1980s and 1990s Apex, Fuquay-Varina, Holly Springs, Knightdale, Morrisville, Rolesville, Wake Forest, Wendell, Zebulon, and Wake County joined the MPO. In early 2005, the MPO invited a number of governments in the surrounding counties to become members. Many accepted, and as of October 1, 2005, the Capital Area MPO expanded its planning boundary to include parts of Franklin, Granville, Harnett, and Johnston counties, including the municipal governments of Angier, Clayton, Creedmoor, Franklinton, and Youngsville. Most recently, after the 2010 Census, the Town of Archer Lodge was incorporated within the MPO’s boundary and became a member of the MPO. These counties and towns which border the expanding Raleigh Urban Area were invited to join MPO in order to comply with federal regulations that require the MPO to coordinate transportation planning in all the areas that will be part of the “Raleigh urbanized area” within the next twenty-five years. The Capital Area MPO serves as the coordinating agency between local governments, NCDOT, and FHWA. Staff has established a close working relationship with the planning departments of municipalities within the MPO as well as with the planning staff of the neighboring Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro (DCHC) MPO.

Selected highlights of interviews

- Although discussions about merging with the neighboring MPO have arisen from time to time, those interviewed generally suggest that dual MPO arrangement has been more beneficial than harmful to achieving objectives.
- The MPOs have a long history of collaboration, including holding joint committee meetings, development of a regional travel demand model (in cooperation with state and regional transit agencies), and specific joint projects.
- A recent passage (2016) of a county sales tax for transit investment has reinvigorated the transit discussions in the region, which is being facilitated by CAMPO and the center county (Wake).
- Expansions of the CAMPO planning area boundaries have meant increasing the number of county and municipal seats, but for now they are still allocating individual seats to each member unit of government.
Nashville Area MPO
Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (NAMPO)

PRINCIPAL CITY
Nashville, Tennessee

HOST
Greater Nashville Regional Council (COG)

BOARD MEMBERS / 33 members
(30 voting and 3 non-voting members)

NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES/COUNTIES REPRESENTED
20 municipalities / 7 counties

PLANNING AREA
3,951 square miles

PLANNING AREA POPULATION
1,494,356

POPULATION DENSITY
476.8 people/sq. mi

TOTAL EMPLOYED IN NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON-MURFREESBORO-FRANKLIN MSA
898,096

BOARD COMPOSITION
- municipality (number of representatives)
- county
- regional scope

Metro Nashville (2) & City Mayors (19)

COUNTY MAYORS (6)

ADVISORY COMMITTEES (5)
- Joint Committee on Regional Collaboration
- Planning Oversight Committee
- Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)
- Freight Advisory Committee (FAC)
- Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)

STAFFING
Size: 30
Dual Purpose: Yes

inputs

host: Greater Nashville Regional Council

transit

state

hwy, author.

$1.7 m planning funds
In brief

When a MPO was first established in the Nashville area in the 1960s, it consisted only of Nashville and Davidson County. Following the 1980 Census, the MPO expanded its planning boundary to include areas outside of Davidson County including the cities of Hendersonville and Brentwood. On December 16, 1992, the governing Board of the Nashville Area MPO voted to expand its membership to include the local governments within Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Wilson, and Williamson counties to correspond to the Nashville region’s non-attainment area as defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The MPO functioned as a five-county organization until 2002, when the planning area was expanded again to represent the urbanized area as defined by the 2000 Census. Today, the Nashville Area MPO includes the city limits of Spring Hill in Maury County and the city limits of Springfield in Robertson County.

While the MPO’s planning program (effective October 1, 2017) is administered by the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC), the MPO is governed by the Transportation Policy Board (TPB), which is comprised of city and county mayors within the MPO’s planning area, as well as representatives from regional, state, and federal agencies.

--- Information taken from organization website

Selected highlights of interviews

- Nashville’s MPO has recently (2018) moved under the regional planning agency, in part to alleviate concerns about too-close affiliations with the City of Nashville.
- The Greater Nashville Regional Council, which now houses the MPO, is now led by the former MPO director, who thinks the move is very beneficial and allows sharing of several types of staff like administration, IT, and human resources.
- The MPO has strived to develop public-facing tools to make transportation accessible to decision-makers and the public; termed by the staff as making transportation planning happen with a “little T.”
- The Greater Nashville Regional Council also staffs the neighboring MPO which is a second urbanized area that could potentially merge with Nashville into one larger statistical area in the 2020 Census.
Metropolitan Council

**PRINCIPAL CITY**
*St. Paul, Minnesota*

**HOST**
*Metropolitan Council, All-in-One*

**BOARD MEMBERS / 17 + 37 members**
(17 members on Council board that governs Metropolitan Council and 37 voting members and 3 non-voting members on the Transportation Advisory Board which focuses on transportation.)

**NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES / COUNTIES REPRESENTED**
*10 municipalities / 7 counties*

**BOARD COMPOSITION**
- City Council Reps (10)
- County Members (7)
- Citizen Members (8)

**ADVISORY COMMITTEES (18)**
- Planning Committee
- Environment Committee
- Management Committee
- Transportation Committee
- Litigation Review Committee
- Audit Committee
- Equity Advisory Committee
- Land Use Advisory Committee
- Southwest Light Rail Project
- Community Development Committee
- Livable Communities Advisory Committee (LCAC)
- Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC)
- Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC)
- Transportation Advisory Board (TAB)
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Funding and Programming Committee
- Water Supply Advisory Committee
- Blue Line Extension Light Rail Project

**STAFFING (transportation dedicated)**
- Size: 25
- Dual Purpose: Yes

**PLANNING AREA**
*2,970 square miles*

**PLANNING AREA POPULATION**
*2,642,062*

**POPULATION DENSITY**
*959.3 people/sq. mi*

**TOTAL EMPLOYED IN MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL-BLOOMINGTON MSA**
*1,864,482*

**HOST**
*Metropolitan Council, All-in-One*

**BOARD MEMBERS / 17 + 37 members**
(17 members on Council board that governs Metropolitan Council and 37 voting members and 3 non-voting members on the Transportation Advisory Board which focuses on transportation.)

**NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES / COUNTIES REPRESENTED**
*10 municipalities / 7 counties*

**BOARD COMPOSITION**
- City Council Reps (10)
- County Members (7)
- Citizen Members (8)

**ADVISORY COMMITTEES (18)**
- Planning Committee
- Environment Committee
- Management Committee
- Transportation Committee
- Litigation Review Committee
- Audit Committee
- Equity Advisory Committee
- Land Use Advisory Committee
- Southwest Light Rail Project
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- Livable Communities Advisory Committee (LCAC)
- Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC)
- Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC)
- Transportation Advisory Board (TAB)
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Funding and Programming Committee
- Water Supply Advisory Committee
- Blue Line Extension Light Rail Project

**STAFFING (transportation dedicated)**
- Size: 25
- Dual Purpose: Yes

**PLANNING AREA**
*2,970 square miles*

**PLANNING AREA POPULATION**
*2,642,062*

**POPULATION DENSITY**
*959.3 people/sq. mi*

**TOTAL EMPLOYED IN MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL-BLOOMINGTON MSA**
*1,864,482*
In brief

Metropolitan Council was established through Minnesota Legislature in 1967 for the purpose of planning for the economic development of the seven-county metro area, as well as to provide services that could not be provided by any single city or county. At the time of legislative designation, Metropolitan Council, along with its Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), was assigned as the MPO for the area to fulfill federally mandated 3-C planning requirements.

Selected highlights of interviews

- Like Metro (Portland), Metro Council has a near-unique range of responsibilities, including utility investments and all transit operations in the covered regions, resulting in an over 4,000-person staff (although the MPO has approximately 25 people).
- The long-range transportation plan is just one of several plans that contribute to an overall framework plan updated every 10 years, and includes elements such as land use, utilities, wastewater, transportation, regional parks, and housing. In addition to this is the MPO plan must be updated every 5 years and every 4 years in non-attainment areas.
- Although there are many separate jurisdictions within the planning area of the MPO, the long-standing Metro Council structure has been accepted by government units and there is little dissent to that authority.

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Information taken from organization website
Regional Transportation Council

North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)

**PRINCIPAL CITY**
Dallas, Texas

**HOST**
North Central Texas COG

**BOARD MEMBERS / 44 members**

**NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES/COUNTIES REPRESENTED**
26 municipalities / 8 counties

**PLANNING AREA**
9,448 square miles

**PLANNING AREA POPULATION**
6,417,630

**POPULATION DENSITY**
679.3 people/sq. mi

**TOTAL EMPLOYED IN DALLAS-FORT WORTH-ARLINGTON MSA**
3,372,034

**BOARD COMPOSITION**

- 3 municipality (number of representatives)
- 1 county
- 1 regional scope

**City Officials (24)**

**Counties Officials (10)**

**ADVISORY COMMITTEES (10)**

- Air North Texas Coalition
- Air Quality Technical Committee
- Air Transportation Advisory Committee
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities
- NTCASC Oil and Gas Task Force
- Regional Safety Advisory Committee
- North Texas Clean Air Steering Committee (NTCAS)
- Regional Efficiency and Emission Reductions Initiatives Roundtable (RERI)
- Travel Demand Management/Congestion Management Process Task Force (TDM/CMP)

**STAFFING**

- Size: 159
- Dual Purpose: Yes

**inputs**

- $22.9 m** planning funds

****amount includes both FHWA PL-112 and FTA 5303 funds
In brief

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) is a voluntary association of, by and for local governments, and was established to assist local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit, and coordinating for sound regional development. NCTCOG’s purpose is to strengthen both the individual and collective power of local governments and to help them recognize regional opportunities, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and make joint decisions. It was created in January 1966 and became the region’s metropolitan planning organization in 1974.

The Mobility Plan establishes sustainable development as the region’s strategic approach to transportation planning, programming, and construction. Sustainable development leverages the land use/transportation relationship to improve mobility, enhance air quality, support economic growth, and ensure the financial stability of the transportation system by promoting livable communities. By providing planning support for a diverse range of mobility options, such as rail, automobiles, bicycling, transit, and walking, this plan helps local governments present a range of development opportunities to the private sector.

Selected highlights of interviews

- NCTCOG credits much of its success to having one MPO cover many cities (making it a polycentric MPO) and three urbanized areas, including important strides in innovation, regional project development, and funding.
- Representation on the MPO policy board is limited now to 44 members; collections of counties or municipalities with an aggregate population of 250,000 people are allocated one seat to the board.
- The MPO generally defines projects as neighborhood, regional, or international to help disassociate a project with a specific unit of government (e.g., city or state).
PLANNING AREA
3,605 square miles

PLANNING AREA POPULATION
3,139,500

POPULATION DENSITY
784.2 people/sq. mi

TOTAL EMPLOYED IN DENVER-AURORA-LAKEWOOD MSA
1,404,819

PRINCIPAL CITY
Denver, Colorado

HOST
DRCOG, All-in-One

BOARD MEMBERS / 61 members
(58 voting and 3 non-voting members)

NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES/ COUNTIES REPRESENTED
49 municipalities / 9 counties

BOARD COMPOSITION
- 3 municipality (number of representatives)
- county
- regional scope

City Elected Officials (49)

host: Denver Regional COG

ADVISORY COMMITTEES (4)
- Regional Transportation Committee (RTC)
- The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Agency Coordination Team (ACT)
- Interagency Consultation Group (ICG)

STAFFING (transportation dedicated)
Size: 32
Dual Purpose: Yes ✓

County Commission (9)

inputs

state

transit

$4.7 m planning funds
In brief

Formed in 1955, when Denver Mayor Quigg Newton invited fellow elected officials from Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder and Jefferson counties to talk about joint issues and concerns. These leaders created the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) and it continues as one of the nation’s three oldest councils of governments. DRCOG has served as the MPO for the Denver region since 1977.

DRCOG is the regional planning commission for the Denver metro area. The Metro Vision is the current regional plan to guide growth, transportation and environmental quality. The Mile High Compact is a voluntary intergovernmental agreement through which local governments manage growth using the Metro Vision principles.

DRCOG, the Colorado Department of Transportation, the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and the Denver Metro Chamber are creating a planning and funding partnership called Mobility Choice Blueprint to coordinate strategic planning and funding for walking, bicycling, driving and transit in the metro Denver region.

Selected highlights of interviews

- Like some other MPOs and regional planning councils, the MPO’s operations depend in part on member dues; however, dues for DRCOG take into account assessed property values to help lower-income jurisdictions participate. Noteworthy is that Denver is experiencing heavy growth in senior populations: by 2035 one in four residents will be over the age of 60.
- Denver is a dominant force in Colorado: their information claims that 58% of jobs in the state are located in the Denver metropolitan region, for example. There is a significant rural/urban divide in the state that they have to acknowledge and accommodate.
- Like some other MPOs housed in regional councils, the nature of the two-board system (MPO policy board and regional council) implies that jurisdictions may get additional representation through the council board and hence greater local participation.
- The MPO and the state are working jointly on a “Mobility Choice” plan to help lay out a directional framework for the organization.
1| Regional Revenue

Generating and Managing Dollars

- What are the funding mechanisms employed by the MPO?
- Who manages those funds (e.g., prioritization) and by what level of authority?
- What role(s) does the MPO have in implementation of projects?
- How do localities contribute? How is local funding utilized in planning activities?

All metropolitan planning organizations can use 23 USC 104 (PL) and other federal (e.g., transit section) formula funds to conduct planning activities in their planning study area boundaries. Some MPOs studied actually combined the transit planning and 104 PL funds into one pool. The MPO also has the responsibility of prioritizing federally funded projects in their planning area and, in the case of Transportation Management Areas (TMAs), a lead responsibility for identifying projects off the National Highway System that go into the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In practice, the selection of projects revolves around a collaboration of the state department of transportation (state DOT), the MPO, modal operators, and sometimes (especially for transit projects operated by a city or county) larger units of local government. For their part, local governments provide local match to federal dollars (normally 20% or 10% for transit planning funds) if funds are expended on planning projects that affect those jurisdictions – this practice varies considerably, however. The ways in which the peer MPOs apply these broad rules, as well as sources of funding and management, vary significantly.

In almost all cases, MPOs generally aren’t “implementers” of transportation projects, and their role in designing transportation projects declines as the project moves from planning to ROW acquisitions to construction and maintenance. However, MPOs often stay involved in projects to help ensure that the objectives stipulated by local government and other stakeholders remain consistent through the project development process. One exception is the Metro Council (Twin Cities) MPO, embedded within a much larger (4,500 employees) organization that operates and manages regional transit and has important roles in extending utilities, park planning, and some aspects of land development in a more comprehensive framework than is seen nearly anywhere else in the country.

DRCOG (Denver) and its regional transit authority (RTD) collaborate on transit project implementation, even jointly funding transit studies. Under state law, DRCOG plays an oversight role relative to RTD project implementation. DRCOG leads planning for fixed-guideway projects that are not part of the cost-constrained LRTP (“vision”), but what goes into the cost-feasible plan and in the TIP is driven more by RTD request - illustrative of how state-specific conditions can complicate planning efforts for federally created MPOs.

Funding sources beyond the traditional state and federal funds help implement projects identified in the MPO planning process in many regions. The Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), for example, was the recipient of approximately $160 - $200 million annually in additional funds thanks to a 0.7-cent sales tax and fuel tax increase. After a brief period, the management of those funds was passed to a new organization, the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission. The HRTAC has its own board, staffing, and bylaws. In essence, the additional funds allow more projects identified through the MPO planning process to be funded or constructed faster than otherwise would have been the case. The Portland, OR MPO (Metro) has a property tax that accounts for a relatively small percentage (6%) of its operating expenses. A payroll tax imposed on employers and net earnings of those who are self-employed helps fund the regional transit authority, TriMet – note that Oregon does not have a state sales tax. Also, Metro has the ability to directly collect property taxes.
Internal Operations

Structural Setup and Procedures

- What are the current MPO staffing levels and talents associated with regional governance?
- What is the structure and organization of staff – do MPO staff ever work on other, non-MPO assignments (e.g., for host entity)?
- Are there other shared staffing arrangements; how are consultants used in the planning process?

The staffing levels of MPOs, while varying (even on a per capita basis), appear to fall into two broad groups: staff that serve the MPO only, and staff that serve the needs of the MPO and other parts of a host organization such as a regional planning commissions, districts, or councils of government (with functions similar to Regional Planning Councils in Florida, although perhaps with stronger financial resources and staffing levels). MetroPlan (Orlando) provides all of its own staffing, including administration, finance, and so forth.

The Portland MPO (Metro) notes that there are about 18 staff that do MPO work, but another 40 staff are dedicated to regional land use and transportation modeling. The contacts at Metro note, however, that assigning a specific individual to the MPO is challenged by the fact that staff often work flexibly across a range of projects that may or may not be strictly funded by the MPO or represent part of the MPO’s core mission.

Similarly, the HRTPO (Hampton Roads, VA) noted that being hosted by the Planning District Commission (HRPDC) allowed them to build their public engagement staffing, although they did possess this staff prior to joining the HRPDC. Other functional areas where merging with a broader host are IT, Human Resources, and administrative staff. The Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC) that now hosts the MPO after a recent change has MPO staff that shifts fluidly between the rest of GNRC and the MPO; the only dedicated MPO staff are the director and a manager of the transportation improvement program. Of the peer MPOs studied, the NCTCOG (Dallas) was the most forceful about the benefits of merging into a regional organization to help address regional issues and not have overlapping responsibilities with county governments.

While merging into a larger organization potentially benefits in terms of efficiencies in communication and staff, such an arrangement was not perceived as a successful strategy in every area. Several commenters in the Capital Area MPO (Raleigh, NC) region suggested that the region has done quite well without a merger with the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO and that such a merger may have been counterproductive to the progress made there over a period of decades due to a potential for deadlock among governmental units that have little tying them together. One interviewee there noted that, while merging the staff of the two MPOs together in this same region (with the staff of the regional planning agency) may improve efficiencies, merging the policy boards together would likely have fewer benefits.

To coordinate land development and transportation policies in a manner that fosters region-wide transportation systems.

FLORIDA STATUTES, TITLE XIII, §186.505(22), POWERS AND DUTIES OF REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCILS
WFRC; All-in-One Agency
Regional and Local Needs Satisfied

How are voting structures, representation, and quorums set up?
How is “regional” defined, especially in terms of project differentiation, and does that terminology impact financing or other implementation practices?

Perhaps the biggest barrier to consolidating planning agencies, especially those that have direct influence over project programming, is ensuring that local needs are still contemplated while regional goals are being effectively implemented. From a distance, this issue tends to be driven towards voting structure and board representation. MPOs have two boards: one policy body and one technical committee which additionally acts as an advisory body – they may also have other boards that advise the MPO on matters like citizen perspectives (in Florida, this isn’t optional), freight operations, or bicycle/pedestrian advocacy issues.

The peer study MPOs had a variety of perspectives on this issue, in part driven by historical context and, in some cases, how influential larger cities are compared to smaller jurisdictions. In the commonplace instance where the MPO board and functions are a subset of a larger (in scope) regional planning agency, the overlap between the two boards (regional planning agency and MPO) may help create additional opportunities for interaction and engagement that smooth out potential conflicts. This situation exists at the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), where the two boards share several members in common – and where the two boards have to agree on any MPO action. Otherwise, the action moves back to the MPO for reconsideration (very rare).

An interesting twist to board membership that was supported by the Hampton Roads MPO (HRPTPO) was the presence of two state senators and two state delegates (representatives) on their policy board. (Wasatch Front has a similar arrangement, with two state officials on their policy board.) The HRPTPO staff noted that communicating the need for more transportation funding would have been much more difficult without that level of representation, and credited recent passage of regional and state revenue-generation measures, in part, to the state-level participation at the MPO.

In some instances, the issue of local representation is muted due to historical context or the relative size differential of the center city compared to the absence or number of smaller jurisdictions. For example, Metro council (Twin Cities) noted that, while they have considered that more geographic representation in project decision-making could be useful, to date they rely on a scoring mechanism that is absolute: the highest-ranking project always moves forward with no “skipping” to lower-ranked projects.

Where MPOs did acknowledge the challenge of engaging smaller governments and their representatives, a trend developed along the lines of continuous engagement. The Capital Area MPO (Raleigh), Hampton Roads (Virginia), and GNRC (Nashville) said that MPO staff going to the member jurisdictions for meetings was important. The accommodation did not typically extend to rotating board meeting locations to make geographic access easier, but in at least one case (CAMPO) the offer to do so was not viewed favorably by the local board members. Additionally, making planning funds available directly to local governments to accomplish studies in alignment with MPO objectives is also a noteworthy practice.
4| Engaging the Public Effectively

- How is the public successfully engaged in both levels of decision-making (project selection and prioritization)?
- How does the public input effectively play into regional-scale projects?
- What happens when there is local opposition to a regionally significant project?

Similar to successfully engaging local agency members of the MPO boards, ultimately the effectiveness of the MPO in reaching out to various segments of the public is crucial to the perception of its success as a transportation planning agency. MPOs are required to not only engage the public, but to focus their efforts on low-income and minority (Environmental Justice) populations. They also have to engage modal representatives in their decision-making processes for the metropolitan transportation plan.

One MPO case study that stood out prominently among the peer cases was the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), which has a growing number of staff dedicated to public outreach. The success that the MPO has experienced in the past eight years is made more remarkable by the fact that a prior federal certification review identified 11 corrective actions, most of which were related to engaging the public more effectively. The most recent federal certification review recommended that the MPO actually reduce the engagement efforts now underway. A key to that successful transition was framing engagement as an equity issue, and not only for lower-income and minority populations, but by expanding the definition of equity populations to include children, the elderly, disabled, and others. By doing so, the issue of transportation equity attracted a much broader circle of interest in the MPO planning process. Once the MPO staff realized that their work was having an impact on the broader community and that they were getting real feedback on the decisions that they made, the staff began to incorporate public engagement in more facets of their work and processes. It did not happen overnight – the change in mindset took five years to accomplish. Over 54,000 people visited the TIP review website, and 46,000 visited a corridor study website that the organization published. A second key was the reliance on major projects in the region – bay crossings, tunnels, regional transit, tolling – as leverage to get people interested and involved in all aspects of the planning process. A final note shared by the HRTPO engagement lead was that having multiple MPOs potentially harmed engagement through more meetings of overlapping staff, reduced efficacy of resources, and increasing chances for miscommunication.

Other MPOs continue to struggle with lower-than-desired levels of public participation. Wasatch Front (Salt Lake, UT) MPO noted that they lean heavily on local government members to engage their own populations to attain better engagement. Similarly, DRCOG (Denver) and NCTCOG (Dallas) noted that their sheer size makes it difficult to effectively engage in neighborhood-scale engagement. The latter depends on local governments to engage the public on smaller projects. MetroPlan (Orlando) has engagement staff that travel throughout the planning area to engage segments of the public.
5| Project Implementation & Prioritization

Traditional & Non-Traditional Roles of the MPO

- How does the MPO prioritize projects and collaborate with partners and the public to do that?
- What role does the MPO play in post-project planning, if any?
- How is funding shared with neighboring MPOs or other partnering agencies to accomplish typical tasks (e.g., modeling, planning studies)?
- How are planning decisions made at the MPO level articulated to state, private, and local implementation agencies in later stages of project development?

The roles in project development after inclusion in the TIP / STIP of most of the MPOs in the peer cases are generally negligible; the state DOT, municipalities, or other implementing authorities assume greater responsibility for project construction (or operation, in the case of transit – although Metro Council in the Twin Cities Region could be viewed as an exception). However, MPOs do continue to serve as “watchdogs” during project development (e.g., NEPA / SEPA), often helping to represent the interests of local government members.

Project prioritization in an era of increasing state and federal involvement in developing project priority mechanisms has become more complex. Several goals common in long-range transportation planning and programming have been observed: mobility, safety (crash reduction or severity reduction), and alternative (to single-occupant car travel) mode choices. Other objectives, like equity, environmental protection (especially mobile source emissions reductions), reliability, and quality of life factors are less frequently found but still commonplace. Land consumption, utility demand, and other land use-driven metrics may also be factors, as is geographic equity – spreading funding or projects out across the MPO planning area. The Wasatch Front MPO has a prioritization scheme designating projects by their ten-year horizon implementation schedule, with first-priority projects happening in the first ten years, the second priority in the second ten years, and so forth. Like many MPOs, Wasatch Front recognizes that some needed projects do not “fit” within fiscal constraint and are relegated to an unfunded-but-needed category in the LRTP. The priorities are based on alignment with LRTP goals, local government and agency input, cost / benefit, and how projects work together. Like many MPOs, Wasatch Front is in the process of a LRTP update, and (like many MPOs) appear to be doing a scenario plan as part of that update. Each scenario is being evaluated with the measures in the table below, effectively adding more criteria to project selection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>walkability</td>
<td>miles of commercial streets that are walkable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>access</td>
<td>number of jobs on average accessible from households within a 30-minute drive or transit trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freight</td>
<td>average truck speed on freight corridors during the evening commute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>auto travel time</td>
<td>the total time per day that the average household spends in a vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation choices</td>
<td>the percent of people who have access to a frequent bus route, stop, or bike facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transit use</td>
<td>the miles per day that the average household travels by transit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>air quality</td>
<td>the number of vehicle trips the average household takes per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cost of living</td>
<td>percent of household income spent on housing and transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local budget impacts</td>
<td>local costs versus revenue that comes from new growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>access to recreation</td>
<td>percent of people within half-mile of parks, open space, or recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water use</td>
<td>gallons of water used by the average household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>land consumption</td>
<td>the acreage of farmland and open space converted to development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Table 2. Wasatch Front MTP Scenario Evaluation Criteria
6| Dispute Resolution

Handling the Inevitable Clash

- What’s an example of a challenging project decision, and how was it resolved?
- Who are the internal and external players and forces that influence dispute resolution?

Inevitably, a project, organizational change, or process decision occurs that is not likely to be agreed upon by a 100% consensus of all MPO board members—although many decisions made by MPOs are made by a unanimous decision. As the peer MPOs related some of their experiences, some themes for managing these challenges emerged.

The first point is that a disproportionate amount of time is usually spent on “what-if” speculation about which entities would have a controlling voice compared to the actual number of times that split votes occur. These discussions and concerns are often brought up when MPOs consider changing voting rights, representation, or quorum requirements. In this study and past studies, it has been universally noted by MPO representatives that decisions are almost always made with a 100% unanimous vote, in part because the process allows for slowing decision-making and allowing for multiple discussions at both technical and policy levels prior to reaching a final vote.

Some MPO boards have the ability to invoke a weighted vote, usually weighted by the population of the governmental units doing the voting. Weighted voting is seldom invoked, however, and begs the question of how useful the practice of weighted voting is since it (a) doesn’t avoid the question of ultimate authority among the members, and (b) won’t get used if everyone knows the outcome (as one MPO board member said, “If everyone in the room knows who has the longest knife then no one ever draws their knife”). The triple voting criteria of HRTPO is of note here, since no action is taken by the policy board if all three of the following criteria aren’t met: (1) simple majority of total number of voting members of the board, (2) 66% of MPO population (of all municipalities or counties, regardless of whether or not all of those areas are inside the MPO planning area boundary) voting in favor of motion, and (3) 60% of all local government members are in attendance. If all three conditions aren’t achieved, then the item is tabled for further discussion at a subsequent meeting.

HRTPO staff also noted that in one recent dispute, an outside party (military base representatives), sound technical information from MPO staff, and a commitment to study other alternatives helped navigate the process through to a final decision.

The final concept to highlight is that when discussing voting arrangements with MPOs, they all say that they are either happy with their current structure or are at least happy enough with it that they would find it difficult to justify going through the pain necessary to dramatically alter it. This attitude may be attributable in part to the fact that at least some member agencies feel that they would lose authority under a different system, and in part to the uncertainty about how a new voting structure would impact them under different combinations of circumstances.

Not all of the study MPOs have an adjacent MPO with which they have to coordinate. Those that do noted that regular, joint projects and even a shared project priority list helped set the stage for cooperation when disputes may arise, or help avoid disputes altogether. This was particularly noted as a commonplace practice with the Capital Area MPO (Raleigh) and the neighboring MPO of Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro (DCHC).
How to Work a Crowd

- How are smaller jurisdictions participating in larger MPO structures, especially in regional decisions?
- How are meetings and other resource-intensive actions made more effective across a larger geographic and demographic space (e.g., rotating meetings, proxy voting, or remote conferencing)?

Overlapping with other topics, the issue of how to keep all member agencies of a MPO involved and participating in the planning process is central to functionality. This issue can be problematic for MPOs with one or two larger city or county members and a larger number of small jurisdictions. MPOs have attacked this problem in various ways, such as assigning one member (for example, a county official) to represent smaller jurisdictions. A variation of this structure sees a "rotating" seat, so that various jurisdictions in a group will at least see some direct representation on the MPO board – eventually.

The MetroPlan (Orlando) MPO takes the representation of multiple jurisdictions by a single person a step further. The Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC) is a separate, advisory committee whose chair has a voting seat on the MPO policy board. The current MetroPlan website says, “Because there is a limited number of seats on the MetroPlan Orlando Board, only the most populated cities in the three-county area are represented there. The Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC) ensures views of elected officials from cities that do not have direct representation on the board are part of the transportation decision-making process.”

The HRTPO underwent a trial when deciding how best to handle a crossing of the Chesapeake Bay: Portsmouth, Norfolk, and Suffolk sit on the south side of the bay, while Newport News and Hampton are on the north side. The current I-64 crossing consists of bridges and tunnels originally opened in 1957 and are heavily congested. The MPO and state elected to widen the existing tunnels based on a corridor study, but the decision was contentious. The MPO undertook not only the study, but many one-on-one meetings with stakeholders as well. The final decision was to move forward, but to continue to study other options as well. The Record of Decision of the FEIS was signed in June 2017, clearing the path for VDOT to move forward with design and construction.

The Capital Area MPO (Raleigh) noted that candidate projects are always funneled through the MTP development process. That is, no project is considered for project prioritization that isn’t in the MTP. The state’s system is very quantitative, and provides a framework for project evaluation; however, points for priorities are available to MPOs to assign priority weight to second- and third-tier categories of projects.

Finally, DRCOG (Denver) noted that the MPO is typically involved at the end of a locally driven process. By supporting local decision-making for most projects, the MPO assumes that the local governments and agencies studying projects will hammer out most of the differences of opinion before a decision is to be reached by the MPO. Even in this case, the MPO greatly aids in the decision-making process by (1) soliciting calls for local projects using specific evaluation criteria, and (2) providing a forum and framework for collaborative decisions that otherwise would be lacking in the region.
8| Working with State Agencies

Success Usually Means Partnerships

- How has the state’s department of transportation supported (or not) regional decision-making, collaboration, and implementation and prioritization?
- How could this relationship be made even more effective?

Some of the peer MPOs in this study have a special relationship to their state and department of transportation simply because they are, by far, the largest MPO in their state and hence play on a more level field than smaller MPOs. Historically, the relationship between metropolitan planning organizations and state departments of transportation have been problematic, in part due to federal requirements for collaboration between the two without always identifying who is in the lead in every situation. Indirectly, the state DOT has a powerful role, since they implement many projects and “pass through” state and federal funds to MPOs and their member jurisdictions and agencies. However, relationships between metros and states seem to be on a positive trajectory, and state DOTs have played important leadership and collaborator roles in achieving the outcomes desired by MPOs. In practice, the MPO-state relationship is fluid, changing with staff turnover, changing board members, and shifts in federal and state policies and legislation.

The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) cited examples of an improving relationship, in spite of the fact that the two entities had different planning objectives. They note that a rural/urban divide exists there, which has made moving forward in a consensus fashion challenging for both the state and the MPO – shared challenges can provide the basis for future collaborations. A jointly funded project, the Mobility Choice initiative, is helping provide direction for a shared future vision of the region.

There are, of course, state agencies other than the DOT that can and do work with the MPO. In the case of Metro Council’s MPO (Twin Cities Region), the Department of Natural Resources plays an important role in developing the comprehensive planning “framework” studies that are the repository of transportation, utility, parks, housing, and other planning functions led by that large and comprehensive organization. As noted earlier, the HRPO (Hampton Roads) MPO has four state legislators on their policy board; Wasatch Front (Salt Lake) also has state-level representation. (Note that MPOs are not allowed to directly engage in lobbying activities using federal transportation planning funds.) Both MPOs report that having this direct involvement by the state officials helps greatly when it comes time to support funding and other initiatives that promote the MPO and their member’s transportation agendas.
9 Land Development

Linking Land and Transport Decisions

- What’s the role of the MPO in long-term and short-term land development decisions? Is that role “hard” or “soft,” and is there a mechanism for tying project prioritization or funding to land use decisions that support transit development, access management, or other approaches to best practice?
- How are land planning activities coordinated among jurisdictions and the MPO?
- What, if any, feedback loops between transportation and land use are in place, either from a technology or a policy standpoint?

Generally, metropolitan planning organizations haven’t often enjoyed a leadership role in the regulations that pertain to land development. Exceptions do exist, however, even among the peer agencies studied. For an example of a land use-transportation linkage conducted by a regional transportation agency that wasn’t one of the peer studies (or even a MPO), the Atlanta Region’s state-formed [Georgia Regional Transportation Alliance](https://www.grta.org) (GRTA) reviews “Developments of Regional Impact” that exceed a certain threshold size if they are proposed anywhere within its 13-county planning area. In the years since its inception, partly as a response to tightening air quality standards (another potential motivator for some MPOs to deal more directly with land use issues), GRTA has merged with the toll authority.

Even when the MPO’s influence over land use policy isn’t as direct, there are myriad opportunities for the MPO to engage with municipal, county, and other partners to create a framework for smart land use principles. One channel of involvement is computerized transportation models, which have as a key input the quantity and type of forecasted development over a 20-, 30-, or even 40-year period. This forecasting exercise is challenged by the need for control totals (for the region) and allocation of future growth (to individual planning subareas, like towns), but MPOs are uniquely positioned to help facilitate this process, particularly if they are the lead modeling agency in the region.

Perhaps the most broadly acknowledged efforts at integrating MPO transportation functions with land use frameworks occurred in the Metro (Portland) and Wasatch Front (Salt Lake City) MPOs. The latter considers development of a “softer” land use plan a core part of their (“hard”) transportation plan, and has created a $1 million/year program to help municipalities develop plans that increase mode choice and reduce reliance on single-occupant vehicle use, emissions, etc. Metro’s involvement in land use is the source of books and many studies on the subject, and Metro (a regional government) still updates a regional land use plan as well as its infamous Urban Growth Boundary.

The Capital Area MPO (Raleigh) deals with land use-transportation in a more supporting role, working with its neighboring MPO and regional planning commission (council of government in North Carolina parlance) to create the [Imagine 2040](https://www.capitalareampo.com/lands-uses) land use study, the results of which feed directly into the MPOs’ regional travel demand model. Interestingly, the council of government now leads this process, and has recently completed an update. The outputs include “placetypes” that describe various kinds of developments that are applied to developed and undeveloped areas; these placetypes can attach to factors like trip generation, classroom demand, utility demand and so forth to create a picture of impacts even beyond transportation demands. This sophisticated methodology is a significant improvement from the more qualitative method used previously.
10 | Resiliency

How MPOs Manage Change and Challenges

- Describe how the MPO has addressed changes from external forces, such as federal policy, funding challenges, non-governmental agencies/advocates (e.g., ports, airports, and so forth).
- Is there an action in recent memory that has tested “the system” currently in place?

MPOs usually come into (or go out of) existence shortly after decennial census population counts, with the first ones appearing after 1970 (although some regional transportation planning agencies existed before then and continued under the same or different names afterwards). They are typically stable entities, only adjusting their boundaries and membership if they are in growing areas. This growth may encompass parts of new counties or entire municipalities, necessitating a change in the membership and bylaws of the MPO. However, there are other changes and challenges that come to MPOs, either internally or through external pressures. Both GNRC (Nashville) and HRTPO (Hampton Roads) have experienced relatively recent incorporation into regional planning agencies, for example. A federal rule that would have required MPOs within a single Metropolitan Planning Area to have a common set of documents and encourage merging of MPOs caused a lot of concern in those areas until it was repealed by Congress in 2017. The following considers some of the actions in these MPOs that have posed challenges, and describes how they were managed.

Restructuring of MPOs, when it occurs, appears to be moving towards either becoming independent agencies or integrating with regional planning agencies (similar to Regional Planning Councils in Florida), but often with additional authority provided under state law. Two of the MPO peer cases had recently gone through the latter process, with GNRC still making the transition and HRTPO having largely completed the integration. In both cases, the MPO leadership felt that the move was a good one for the MPO, in part because the arrangement provided more staff resources efficiently, such as engagement, human resources, technology, and administrative support. The Greater Nashville Regional Commission now houses the Nashville Area MPO, formerly part of the City of Nashville (itself a consolidated city-county government). Notably, since the MPO board is often different than the regional commission board (although they usually share some members in common), there is an additional layer of review on all MPO actions which, while potentially delaying an action, may also provide additional input opportunities for smaller jurisdictions.

The HRTPO has made remarkable strides in the area of public engagement in the aftermath of a long-standing, difficult relationship with the FHWA state office. New staffing resources (that will also support staff in the HRPDC after the HRTPO merger into that regional planning agency) and a strong cultural shift in the rest of the MPO staff towards engagement considerations in their daily work, even extending to disaffected populations, have made positive contributions to the planning process and earned HRTPO a more prominent place in the minds of many new stakeholders.

A strong technical process that provides information to the policy board was also cited by several peer study MPOs as a contributor to successful change management and decision-making. Finally, partners like military bases and business interests may also play a role in motivating and informing resolutions to a challenging event or decision.
Fort Hamer Park (2018). This small, local park on Manatee River provides access to a public boat ramp in Manatee County, Florida.
Chapter 5
Recommendations

An overview of how the recommendations were developed through the study process.

The short-term and long-term recommendations presented at the third workshop (October 29, 2018) are expanded in greater detail, highlighting barriers to and resources required for implementation.

This final section considers how the short- and long-term recommendations might be implemented, and comments received.

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“All human actions have one or more of these seven causes: chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reason, passion, and desire.”

- Aristotle

Opened in July 2017, this section of the Pinellas Trail connects with the Suncoast Trail and all three core counties in a trail system that links the Gulf to the Atlantic.

(photo credit: Steve Newborn / WUSF NEWS)
Short-Term Recommendations

S.1 | Assume Greater Control of Technical Analysis and Data Collection

Short Description:
The MPOs will take lead responsibility for decision-making tools, promoting collaboration on data collection, analysis, and forecasting. Bring together real-time traffic data streams for use in priority-setting.

Long Description:
The primary tool used by metropolitan planning organizations and state departments of transportation to forecast future transportation conditions (for roadways and sometimes for transit, very rarely for walking or biking trips) is a computer model that considers future growth of population and jobs as well as existing/future roadway conditions and transit services. Typically in Florida, local governments, facilitated by a MPO or planning agencies (including the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission and the Pinellas Planning Commission), lead the development of future-year population and employment estimates based, in part, on County estimates provided by the University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research. These are the organizations responsible for reviewing and approving private development actions and land use plans, zoning, and infrastructure investments that shape development. (Water and sewer infrastructure, also directed by local government, plays a strong role in the type, density, and location of private development and is ideally aligned with transportation infrastructure improvements). Florida has developed a single, statewide modeling platform (FSUTMS) that every MPO in the state uses. The accumulation of private development over time creates the demand for transportation infrastructure and services. These transportation models are, in some ways, where the technical “rubber meets the road” in determining the priority of proposed projects in long-range transportation plans created by the MPOs and state DOTs - although other factors such as environmental impact, cost of construction, and community support can be just as important if not more so than the anticipated future utility of the proposed project. By transitioning to a regional travel demand modeling framework and process that places the

CONCEPTS

The Capital Area / Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPOs created a model service bureau and space at a university, contributing both staff positions and financial support to the modeling effort (along with NCDOT, regional transit authority, and council of governments which is the equivalent of a Florida RPC).
MPOs in the lead position instead of the current framework led by the Florida Department of Transportation, District 7 (FDOT D7), the MPOs will be forced to work collaboratively to identify and provide staffing to operate and update the models. This will strengthen and enlarge the MPOs in-house technical capabilities, putting them in a more equal position with FDOT D7 and private consultants that are often the primary hands-on users of the models. Additionally, the MPOs will also be required to collaborate very closely to determine future growth allocations that these models rely upon to produce forecasts of future traffic on the transportation system. In a very practical effect, this framework would create a closer synergy between the technical analysis of impacts, land use development, and transportation project programming – particularly at the regional project context that is the particular focus of this study. Creating a joint technical analysis and data collection framework that is the responsibility of the Tampa Bay Region MPOs creates a platform for collaboration, one that is crucial to be done well and on-time since the federally required, long-range transportation plans are viewed as requiring inputs from these models before they can be adopted. In turn, directing a model team effectively would require the MPOs to collaborate and agree upon specific needs and priorities for maintaining, operating, updating, and improving the travel demand model and its substantial data inputs, more so than is currently the case.

**Barriers to Implementation:**

Transitioning from the current DOT-MPO shared modeling framework would require shifting more MPO resources devoted to modeling and identifying a specific, physical location for the computer model and model team to meet, at least periodically. Cloud-based networking can help alleviate the need for a dedicated, full-time space, but not for creating a dedicated staff. These models require an ongoing and substantial investment in data collection and management, but the resulting centralized data “warehouses” are useful to many organizations in the public and private sectors to create more efficient, streamlined, and relevant information access to many decision-makers. Hiring competent modeling staff is challenging, however, requiring a model lead as well as mid-level and junior staff (4-5 in all, in the case of the CAMPO-DCHC MPO case study that also utilizes a modeling executive committee to help direct its five-way partnership among two MPOs, regional transit authority, state DOT, and the equivalent of the regional planning council to facilitate the process and land use inputs; see also this link: [https://itre.ncsu.edu/focus/modeling-and-computation/trm/](https://itre.ncsu.edu/focus/modeling-and-computation/trm/). Generally, the recommendation is for increased technical capacity at the MPO level.

**Timing:**

The process could begin at any time, but anticipate a comfortable transition taking 3-4 years. A top-priority schedule could make the basic structure happen inside of two years. Ideally, modeling staff is hired first to coordinate the transition so that existing staff can maintain their current assignments.

**Connectivity:**

An MPO-led regional modeling platform and data collection framework would empower the Tampa Bay area MPOs and support and benefit a regional approach to decision-making and the creation of a regional plan element (although in the near-term the creation of the regional modeling framework would divert existing staff resources from other tasks during the formation of an expanded program).
Increased Authority of TMA Leadership Group/TMALG & Joint MPO Board Meetings

Short Description:
The TMALG becomes an authoritative decision-making body for the selection, justification, scoping, prioritizing, and development of a plan for regional projects. Revisiting the voting structure to align with population variations may be necessary. Also consider holding periodic joint meetings of MPO Boards to facilitate broader regional transportation decisions.

Long Description:
Identified originally in both the “easy” and “moderate” pathways presented at the third workshop, the TMA Leadership Group (TMALG) or a modified version of it is central to creating a recognizable regional leadership. The recommendation is not, at least initially, to have a singular MPO (policy) board directing the actions of all three core counties. Instead, regional projects identified by the MPOs would become the responsibility of the TMALG to plan and direct in a separate planning document adopted by the three MPOs. This separated functionality – county-level projects directed by the MPOs as it is now and regional projects receiving the full attention of a regional board – also sidesteps some of the issues pertaining to state-level restrictions on MPO board compositions. Regardless, modal authorities, including airport, transit (that operate in more than one county), and port authority, should be represented on this board. Each municipality over 50,000 people should also have representation, as well as the largest municipality within a single County. The remaining seats are apportioned by the population outside of the cities otherwise represented. The TMALG would not select projects under its control, but two out of three core MPOs would have to agree on the scope of a regional project to be managed by the TMALG. In essence, the MPOs agree to abide by the decision of the TMALG on regional projects through an interlocal agreement, but retain full control of the projects that the TMALG will be responsible for advancing.

Barriers to Implementation:
If the TMALG remains a discussion forum, the challenging issue regional-scale voting remains a relatively distant concern (although the TMALG has discussed this issue). While population (in the three counties/core MPOs) is a preeminent factor in any voting structure, it does not have to be the only factor. If the TMALG concerns itself with regional projects, policies, and programs while the individual MPOs continue to focus (and perhaps actually increase their level of dedicated resources) on “local” and sub-regional matters, then a two-tiered voting system that respects the regional- and MPO-specific concerns is warranted. While this system makes passing a vote on any controversial matter harder, the difficulty is proportionate to the impact from regional projects to communities and funding resources. The recommendation here is that a majority of the TMALG member agencies that represent a majority of the population in the three-county/three MPO area be used to act on any motion.

Timing:
The transition should be accomplished to coincide with the 2020 – 2022 census designation process, managed by a transition committee of MPO Board members.

Connectivity:
A regional decision-making body with authority to act on its recommendations depends on funding for its success, both with staffing and project planning, design, and development. This recommendation makes direct (or indirect) state representation easier to comprehend, since state legislators could serve on the larger TMALG board as non-voting advisors without as deep an impact on state disclosure laws. A regional-focus citizen’s advisory committee, regional plan, and regional funding strategies would be focal points of such an organization as well.
Balancing Local and Regional Authority:
MPOs have struggled since their inception to understand how local jurisdictions (municipalities and counties) can collaborate on projects that are of significant importance to multiple jurisdictions (including projects that cross jurisdictional lines and some that don’t) without sacrificing too much local autonomy. Transit agencies, water/sewer authorities, and emergency response systems face similar challenges. The suite of recommendations contained in this document propose the following balancing structure to help ensure that a regional policy body has sufficient authority to focus on “regionally-significant” projects while keeping individual MPOs and their member agencies in control for local projects and having input at key decision points for regional projects.

1. Board composition should include modal representatives including international commercial aviation and port authorities, as well as individual governments of at least 50,000 population and the largest municipality in each member County.

2. Actions taken by the TMA Leadership Group (TMALG), as suggested here, would require a majority of voting members that also represent a majority of the population.

3. Retain local (sub-regional) decision-making with the MPOs and their members by having the MPOs create a succinct description of regional projects (user origins/destinations, physical crossing of county/MPO boundaries, connection to international airport air or seaport) that the TMALG manages and develops.

4. Federal law requires MPO action for state and federal funding; the interlocal agreement could be worded to bind the MPOs to the TMALG’s decision on regional projects.
Direct Coordination with State Leadership

Short Description:
Conduct one (annual) meeting with state representatives from the Florida House and Senate to discuss regional priorities and funding concerns. Additionally, appoint two representatives from the state legislature to join the modified TMALG board as non-voting advisors.

Long Description:
Two of the nine peer MPOs studied included state representatives (State House and Senate members) on their policy boards, and both cited this element as a key reason for successful passage of revenue and other measures. This arrangement makes some intuitive sense, given that dedicated funding sources of the magnitude to implement regional projects need to pass through or be authorized by state government. However, the participants in the third workshop had reservations about including state elected officials on their policy boards, including concerns about potential conflicts with state transparency (“sunshine”) laws, but perhaps also considering the 25-seat cap currently placed on MPO policy boards contained in Florida law. The recommendations are therefore more limited in scope: (1) add state official representation to the TMALG (including a modified TMALG body as recommended herein) in a non-voting advisory capacity; and (2) conduct one joint meeting of the three MPO (policy) boards with an invitation to all members of the Tampa Bay area state legislative delegation. One member of the State House of Representatives and one from the State Senate representing the study area (selected by the legislative delegation itself) is recommended for the modified TMALG body, with no allowance for proxy representation.

Barriers to Implementation:
The success or failure of this particular action is almost uniquely dependent on the roles, approaches, and mindsets of the two state officials that would serve as ad hoc members on the regional board. Ideally, people that would want to be action-oriented, take a 360-degree view of issues in front of them, and then energetically represent the regional decisions in Tallahassee are desired. Modifying the current setup of the TMALG would be required to define the roles of state legislators, and perhaps clarify roles and communication to help address lingering concerns about transparency and the state’s healthy sunshine laws.

Timing:
There is no restriction on when to open a dialogue with state representatives and their staff could take place, but certainly any action to give additional decision-making authority to the TMALG as described herein would make for a timely setting for a discussion of its membership.

Connectivity:
Connections to the augmented TMALG structure and revenue strategy are obvious, but an interesting aspect of this action is that the discussions at the TMALG may be more informed by considerations of state-level decision-making and thereby influence many discussions. It is hoped and anticipated that this, more-inclusive input may make the overall regional decision-making process a more effective and productive effort. It is additionally hoped that this arrangement would provide the region with internal advocates in the legislative process, ones that participate directly in the ongoing TMALG conversation.
S.4 | Formalize the Regional Transportation Plan Element

Short Description:
The TMALG adopts and approves a regional transportation plan for facilities physically or functionally crossing MPO boundaries (including airport and seaport connections to the surface transportation network).

Long Description:
Of all the recommendations contained in this study, the formation of a regional, long-range planning element appears to be the easiest to implement, one similar to the regional plan element the three MPOs are already in the process of completing during the 2045 long-range plan update cycle. Additionally, an adoptable regional transportation plan, almost by definition, requires detailed coordination among the three MPOs. However, a few key considerations are part of this recommendation for a minimum content standard of the regional transportation element:

1. The regional planning process clearly defines what is and what is not a regional project that contemplates not only geopolitical boundaries, but also connections to port facilities;
2. The regional planning element becomes a chapter of each core MPO’s adopted, long-range transportation plan;
3. Each regional project (including studies) have an associated cost, scope, and purpose that identifies benefits and costs as well as any public input opportunities and results; and
4. A separate fiscal constraint assessment is applied to the regional projects identifying funding sources and shortfalls.

The three core MPOs have conducted such a regional exercise in the past and present, potentially making this effort one that is easier to address and more familiar to decision-makers. As with any similar document, plain language and translation should be an expectation for the final product, including mapping and depictions of cross-section, services, and impacts.

Barriers to Implementation:
The largest barrier initially to creating a sound transportation plan or plan element is dedicating a staffing resource equal to the task, through either (or both) in-house and contracted services. If the augmented TMALG structure recommended herein is executed, then that group will need a dedicated staff. This staff could be expanded to include the technical capacity necessary to execute the regional plan component (or at least manage consulting staff to do it).

Timing:
The three core MPOs are in the process of creating a regional plan element as of this writing. The next opportunity to create / update the plan would occur in the next 3-5 years. However, an update of the regional transportation plan could occur at any time and serve as a “warm-up” to creating the new plan and applying the structural elements in this recommendation without having to update a lot of the foundational data for demographics, trip-making, forecasts, and so forth.

Connectivity:
As noted, an augmented TMALG would produce a regional plan as a central part of its mission. The development of a funding strategy would also be dependent on creating a credible set of projects vetted through a regional planning process. The next recommendation, “Creating a Single, Regional Performance-Based Planning Process” would ideally be conducted at the same time and within the regional planning process.
S.5| Create a Single, Regional Performance-Based Planning Process

Short Description:
The three core MPOs would jointly develop a regional Congestion Management Process (CMP) to be approved / adopted by each of the three MPOs individually.

Long Description:
During the first phase of the study, it was noted that the MPOs centered on the Tampa Bay Region (the “core” MPOs of Forward Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Pasco) currently have similar, but not the same, viewpoint of how they characterize transportation projects and performance (see Figure 1).

The degree of commonality in how the three core MPOs view projects serves as a starting point for developing and updating a study of those factors from a regional perspective. Florida MPOs (Section 339.175(6)(c)(1), F.S.), and MPOs over 200,000 population across the country generally, are required to prepare, document, and update a Congestion Management Process (CMP) that identifies locations within the MPO that suffer high levels of congestion and propose alternative methods for dealing with the causes. These causal factors and solutions are intended to focus on operational and other improvements, relying on road widenings as a last resort, and include land use-transportation policies, technological infrastructure improvements, connectivity, alternative modes, and other non-single-occupant vehicle transportation services. The information in the CMP helps inform the short- and long-range planning processes (ideally) and requires considerable coordination to prepare and maintain. Doing one, coordinated CMP would help conserve resources and move the region towards increased levels of collaboration.

Barriers to Implementation:
Since MPOs are already creating the CMP individually, moving towards a regional system is mainly devoted to discussions of content, ways of identifying / characterizing “problem” locations, and creating a set of solutions that could be applied. The initial run will require staff time, but perhaps not much more than creating / updating the CMP normally requires.

Timing:
Since CMPs are ideally undertaken as a lead-in to the update of the long-range transportation plan, the ideal situation is to undertake the development of a regional CMP prior to the regional transportation plan described earlier. However, that relationship doesn’t imply a “hard-and-fast” rule – the CMP could be updated at any time. Each MPO would be required to adopt the region-scale CMP after its completion, and three meeting schedules typically take longer to arrange than one.

Connectivity:
As implied here, the Regional Transportation Plan can be “fed” from the information and process used to develop a regional CMP. The other obvious connection point is with the additional control over technical analysis and data collection, with both modeling and data collection (crash, traffic volumes, equity factors, transit ridership, etc.) being central to the development of a CMP.

5.1 Three Core MPO Project Evaluation Factors.

source: Stantec Consulting Services Inc.
Develop a Single Citizen Advisory Committee

Short Description:
The three MPOs would still have direct subcommittee representation, and report to the regional CAC their goals, objectives, strategies, and priorities. The recommendation could also be done with a new committee dedicated to freight, safe routes to schools, or other areas of common interest.

Long Description:
Like the CMP, there is a state-level requirement for MPOs to facilitate and manage a Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC; as described in Section 339.175(6)(c)(1), F.S.) or an “alternative mechanism” (see text box, part (2)). This requirement is not represented in federal legislation, although federal requirements include engaging the public and process stakeholders. A regional CAC could require that one-third of its members originate from each core MPO planning area (county) to ensure equal representation.

A second recommendation would be a new technical advisory committee that serves the (modified) TMALG that has multi-modal, freight, school, emergency response, and other common areas of interest among the region’s core MPOs. Ideally, at least one – and possibly three – representatives for the regional technical advisory committee would also serve on the CAC.

Barriers to Implementation:
One reason that MPOs in other parts of the country have explored CACs and then abandoned them, or maintained them at a low level, is that it is often challenging to identify, contact, and retain members from a broad cross-section of the community. Staffing the CAC, particularly one of this complexity, potentially with three sub-regional (county/MPO) components, will require a dedicated staff person that probably doesn’t exist now. Depending on how the committee is structured and the relationship to the individual MPOs, this proposal may require a modification of current state statute.

Timing:
Likely a mid-range objective, the development of new advisory committees may be better positioned after any changes to the TMALG occur, since a regional advisory committee would ideally report to a regional policy committee with specific duties and authority.

Connectivity:
As noted, changes to the TMALG would likely happen before the development of a regional advisory committee; however, having an established regional advisory committee structure would be desirable to help steer any future merger of the three MPO policy boards. Another consideration is if a regional CAC with equal participation from the three core counties, could supplant the three CACs in place at each of the core MPOs. A quarterly meeting structure for the regional body, and a quarterly (or monthly) meeting schedule for the CAC county-level “subcommittees” could be envisioned that would provide a more seamless, integrated, and efficient way of connecting local and regional initiatives.

Florida’s Statutes on MPO Citizen Advisory Committees

(e). Each M.P.O. shall appoint a citizens’ advisory committee, the members of which serve at the pleasure of the M.P.O. The membership on the citizens’ advisory committee must reflect a broad cross-section of local residents with an interest in the development of an efficient, safe, and cost-effective transportation system. Minorities, the elderly, and the handicapped must be adequately represented.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of subparagraph 1, an M.P.O. may, with the approval of the department and the applicable federal governmental agency, adopt an alternative program or mechanism to ensure citizen involvement in the transportation planning process.
S.7 | Develop a Collective Regional Funding Strategy

**Short Description:**

Finance a study jointly funded and led to identify and develop both new funding sources (e.g., regional funding bank or multi-county transportation surcharge) or enhance / reserving existing sources for priority regional projects (like pooling a portion of federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STB) funds with state District Dedicated Revenue (DDR) funds). Investigate options to cover staffing services, including a private sector line of credit or public sector capital float agreement, to allow expenses to be incurred and reimbursed with federal planning grants.

**Long Description:**

Repeatedly, people in the study process mentioned that the most important cause of regional transportation projects not moving forward isn’t the organizational structure of MPOs, but instead is the amount of revenues coming into the region as a whole. While it’s hard to prove or disprove the veracity of that statement, there is little doubt that regional transportation projects are often a magnitude order higher in their costs for design, right-of-way acquisition, construction, and maintenance when compared to local projects. However, more funds coming into the region may also mean that they are diverted to local projects and funds never get devoted to tackling regional-scale issues, which tend to be tied to a few projects scattered sporadically over time. Therefore, the recommendation for this action is to develop a source or sources of revenue for regional projects. Such a study should focus on viable options, trade-offs, and a clear set of evaluation factors such as yield, stability, political/public viability, and alignment with state and federal legal frameworks. Consideration of the mid- and long-term prospects of federal funding for transit and roadway projects should establish a baseline and potential range of anticipated funding, and future actions such as county fuel tax increases (municipalities in Florida are not currently allowed to do so), fees/surcharges, and various bonding programs should be considered in the study. A focus, however, should be placed on implementation of recommended funding actions: what is needed to gather support for the action, who is responsible for carrying it forward, and how the funds are to be managed and to what (clear) benefits and costs would accrue to local communities.

**Barriers to Implementation:**

The task represented by this action – that of developing a future financial plan that would have to be accepted by all three MPOs or a regional leadership organization representing them in the matter of regional project development – is complicated and substantial. Federal and state laws, economic analyses, and negotiating trade-offs if current revenue streams are required to match or supplement new sources of revenue create a complex picture that would have to be done by a qualified consultant and managed with input from all three MPOs.

**Timing:**

Ideally, this recommendation happens after any changes to the TMALG so that a policy body with solitary ties to regional project development oversees the effort.

**Connectivity:**

Similar to other actions, a regional funding study and subsequent actions are tied to recommendations for a modified TMALG, but more loosely to additional control over technical analyses and regional advisory (or technical) bodies being formed.
S.8 | Create Regional Modal Agency Seats on TMA Leadership Group and on All Three MPO Boards

Short Description:
To create a more regional outlook regional transportation providers (freight/port, transit, airport) can have a position on existing boards.

Long Description:
Another recommendation has suggested creating a separate, supporting technical board for a modified, more authoritative TMALG. This recommendation suggests that modal agencies (a total of three positions with representation from transit agencies that cross MPO / county boundaries, commercial airports, and water ports) have direct representation on the TMA Leadership Group. If the TMALG is to continue to evolve to emulate the cross-section of MPO interests, then this action helps create that alignment. More importantly, non-voting advisory positions that represent agencies that have massive influences on the travel patterns and economies of all three counties help create a regional perspective while providing insights to specific modes of travel and would enhance MPO decisions by being represented on all three Tampa Bay area MPO Governing Boards.

Potentially, each MPO could create a non-voting advisory position from the other two, Core MPOs. Finally, including state legislative representatives in a non-voting capacity (to minimize potential “sunshine” law conflicts) should be explored during this reorganization.

Barriers to Implementation:
The action would require changes to the formation and operating documents that govern the TMALG and passed through the individual MPO boards for review, revision, and adoption. It would also require changes to formation documents for individual MPOs if adding regionally impactful modal representation.

Timing:
The TMALG and individual MPOs could adopt this action at any time, although a greater understanding of how and if additional changes recommended in this study would occur might suggest a more convenient opportunity to add member agencies.

Connectivity:
Ties to the modifications of the structure of the TMALG and individual MPOs are apparent. Otherwise, this action is fairly independent of the other recommendations.
Amazon Cooperative

... Amazon on Thursday released its list of location finalists for its second headquarters, and neither Tampa nor St. Petersburg was on it.... That said, local officials said St. Petersburg, Tampa, Pinellas and Hillsborough counties, plus their economic development organizations, had never cooperated before like they did on the Amazon bid....

"Historically you’ve seen kind of a battle of egos between the two communities, which has really impacted and interfered with progress," Kriseman said. For the Amazon bid, “we put our egos aside for the betterment of the region.”

— Excerpted from Danielson, Richard and DiNatale, Sara, “Tampa Bay area doesn’t make cut as Amazon second headquarter finalist,” Tampa Bay Times, January 18, 2018.
Long-Term Recommendations

The development of the short-term recommendations should inform the decisions after 2023, but this study does make recommendations for continuing to evolve a regional structure in the Tampa Bay area. It is recommended that the three core MPOs continue their regional development, ultimately forming a single policy board by the time of the completion of the 2030 census designation (circa 2032-33). This recommendation stems from the following facts, in no particular order of importance.

1. Census Designation. By federal law – which is the founding source designating metropolitan planning organizations generally – the U.S. Census holds a key role in determining what area is defined as an urbanized area – the building block for MPO designation. The general requirements for an urbanized area are that a single urbanized area (UA) consist of a densely populated area of at least 50,000 people defined by a somewhat bewildering array of conditions that generally revolve around meeting population density criteria in census tracts surrounding the center city. This definition produces an often-patchwork shape as new development begins to link formerly distant parts of the urbanized area together. The dominant urbanized area in the Tampa Bay Region includes large portions of all three core counties (Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas). If there were no MPOs today, then it is highly unlikely that three separately designated MPOs would be formed from the current arrangement of municipalities and counties. It is worthwhile noting that there are two other urbanized areas (all or in part) in Pasco county (Spring Hill and Zephyrhills), and that the Lakeland urbanized area extends into Hillsborough County. All three UAZs can grow through 2030 and potentially be merged with neighboring urbanized areas depending on how the Census definitions are formed and executed in the future.
2. Co-Dependencies are Increasing. As noted in the Phase I reporting of this study, the relationships among the three core counties (and even among some of the “shell” counties and MPOs around them) are several and growing in strength. Apart from the successful end to the region’s water wars through the formation of Tampa Bay Water (a regional effort covering the three core counties and their central cities) and emergency response (for example, mutual aid agreements for fire and medical services were signed by Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas counties) and the ongoing coordination of the Local Emergency Planning Committee housed within the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, itself another body formed with an emphasis on regional cooperation, the most obvious connections between Pasco, Pinellas, and Hillsborough are the growing numbers of commuters that traverse between them each workday. Just over one-third of workers in Pinellas County live in another county, while four out of ten workers in Hillsborough and half of all workers in Pasco County do not start their trip to work in those same counties. (Note that one outlier is the number of Pasco County workers who live in Pinellas County, which has declined from 2002 to 2015. However, Hillsborough and Pinellas counties collectively still accounted for 45% of the origins of Pasco County workers in 2015.) A similar change is happening over time to workers that live in these counties, with more residents leaving their home counties to work in the other two core counties. It is not that these three counties are so similar that is driving this change; rather, it is differences in economic and residential opportunities.

3. Changing Problems and Contexts. The issues confronting many urban areas such as resource protection, environmental conservation, global climate change, and economic viability and impacts, are not local or sub-regional issues. The Tampa Bay Region, like the nine case study areas explored in the Phase II report, does not only compete for resources and jobs internally, city-to-city or county-to-county.

4. Balance of Power with State Interests. An unfortunate trend that some have observed – and that will hopefully not continue – supports some commenters in this process that cite the need for a stronger regional voice to counterbalance state authority. Ironically, a stronger regional entity might be necessary to help support and advocate for local interests, including allowing local governments to apply local measures.

5. A Broader Planning Discussion. As noted in the Phase II reporting of this study, several of the peer regions consider their success
in planning for a regional transportation network to be inextricably linked to their role as a Council of Governments or multi-pronged regional planning agency. Many of these agencies, beyond their work as MPOs, oversee regional land use planning, regional economic development planning, regional storm water management, and other regional infrastructure planning activities. In a few cases, these agencies also operate regional facilities including, transit services, convention centers and even a zoo. The synergies in staffing, data collection, and administration allows these agencies to employ a large, specialized staff and to achieve economies of scale not only from an administrative standpoint, but also in terms of data collection and supportive planning practices. Any responsible discussion of a consolidated transportation planning framework for the region would also consider opportunities for consolidation across a broad range of infrastructure areas.

The following recommendations are logical next steps after the shorter-term actions have been accomplished, but also when the member MPOs are ready to join forces. Timing of the actions is not addressed, since the following actions build on the preceding short-term actions, occur jointly, and would only occur at all when a joint authority is deemed necessary by its members. Local authority over local matters can and should still be a priority, as discussed in the third workshop and generally throughout the study process.

A caution about accelerating a partial or full merger of the three MPOs is worthwhile as well: many of the shorter-term actions would have to be addressed even if the MPO boards create a joint policy board much sooner than this study recommends. For example, citizen advisory committees, data collection/technical capacities, and other actions (including staffing increases) would be required for a joint MPO policy board to be functional. A longer time frame is going to be required for changes to state laws and to avoid substantial disruption to MPO processes.

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Water Under the Bridge

“The creation of Tampa Bay Water ended the region’s ‘water wars’ and created a new alliance between the six governments in west-central Florida…. Under Tampa Bay Water, the local governments work together to develop and supply drinking water to the region in an environmentally sound manner…. Today, the region is served by a combination of groundwater, river water and desalinated seawater, which has reduced wellfield pumping by more than 50 percent since 1998.”

– Excerpted from Tampa Bay Water: History, Tampa Bay Water website, December 27, 2018 (www.tampabaywater.org/history-of-tampa-bay-water)
L1 | Single MPO Policy Board with Multiple MPO (Technical) Advisory Committees

Short Description:
The single MPO policy board would have three technical committees to ensure sub-regional inputs into decisions that appear before the policy board. Requires additional staffing and meetings to maintain and serve multiple boards.

Long Description:
While this recommendation envisions a single MPO Governing Board for ultimate policy level decision-making, it recognizes the necessity for that policy body to fully vet all decisions through a local lens. It is the role of an MPO technical committee to bring together a full range of professional and technical expertise to consider all potential MPO actions (as is required in Florida law) by bringing together a wide and diverse membership with expertise in urban planning, engineering, emergency response, economic development, public health, safety, and more. By creating a technical committee for each county, the issues of the day will receive a full vetting from a local perspective and provide the consolidated policy board with more localized input. Some of the transitional and functional losses that might occur if technical staff were removed from the current place in the county may be avoided under this option.

This approach is one used in Salt Lake City where the Wasatch Front Regional Council covers two urbanized areas under a consolidated policy board, but with input from two separate technical committees. If desired or deemed appropriate, the membership of the county-level technical committees could also include representation from county and city attorneys’ offices, county administrator and city manager offices, state legislative bodies (if not already accomplished earlier), and other county and city agencies (e.g., economic development, utility, environmental) to broaden the discussion and input provided to the MPO Governing Board.

Barriers to Implementation:
This action would require the MPOs to go through a formal re-designation process including a new apportionment plan and adoption of a new interlocal agreement (potentially including adoption of resolutions of support from member agencies). Depending on the desired size of the new MPO Governing Board, a change in state statute may be required. Additionally, modifications to the statutes governing the TBARTA MPOs Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC) may be required if members of the new, consolidated policy board were to be the representative to the CCC.

Connectivity:
The consolidation of three policy boards into one is a rarity in general (e.g., city-county government consolidation being one example), vanishingly rare with MPOs, and typically based on the real or perceived increases in efficiency of having a single coordinating group making decisions. By definition, such a policy body would require or at least benefit from supporting services and functionality implied by the earlier short-term recommendations as well as a thoughtful voting structure addressed in the next recommendation.
The voting structure under a single MPO Governing Board would need to be designed to remain sensitive to local issues while providing a regional decision-making process. Requiring a two- or three-tiered condition for action would help ensure more collaboration. An example would be requiring 60% of population representation voting in the affirmative and 60% members present (e.g., 60% member quorum) to carry a motion.

### Long Description:

There are a variety of voting mechanisms in use by metropolitan planning organizations across the country. Based on this study and prior research, a few typical approaches are used that are perhaps bedrock considerations for a voting system of an MPO policy board.

- Population is king – it would be hard, if not impossible, to find an MPO voting process (or at least a stipulation for the number of representatives that equates to population) that doesn't rely on a principle of more population equals more voting power with the degree of power reassessed every 10 years in concert with the release of US Census counts.

- Weighted voting is usually optional, and seldom invoked – some metropolitan planning organizations have weighted voting that is dependent (again) on the population size of the agency that the board member represents, but it is usually invoked only when a member calls for it, which is extremely rare.

- Voting weight and number of members representing an agency are intertwined considerations, as is the achievement of a quorum – it's pointless to consider voting structures without member representation or how many members are required to get a quorum to vote, since any of these factors can complement or cancel each other out.

The voting arrangement developed for a modified TMALG can be the starting point for a voting structure for a joint MPO policy board. One promising approach is to have a two-tiered voting structure. In some MPOs that are hosted by a regional planning council (or similar organization), the tiering happens when the host agency, which has a separate and larger voting structure, takes subsequent action on the smaller-in-number MPO board. This situation is not desirable for the autonomy of the MPO, however, and a better approach to tiering is to have a two- or three-pronged voting system such as that employed by the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO). An affirmative vote is reached by agreement of the simple majority of total number of voting members of the board, representatives of two-thirds of MPO population (all of the municipal or county population) voting in favor of the motion, and finally representation of 60% of local government member agencies in attendance.

### Barriers to Implementation:

Unusually in the country, Florida state law has requirements about county representation and board size that complicate any attempt at forming a voting structure, but the major difficulty is (1) convincing those seeking to create a new voting system that weighting or authority (very) seldom changes the outcome of a decision since most decisions are unanimous; and (2) getting agreement on an arrangement that satisfies those rare situations when a contentious vote does arise. It is worthwhile to note that an active MPO works continuously to engage its member agencies productively to build an atmosphere...
of mutual respect and trust that are invaluable assets when difficult and divisive decisions have to be made. Both internal discussions and external MPO peer studies agreed upon this point.

**Connectivity:**

MPOs generally are at their most basic a grouping of local officials meeting to discuss and vote on joint matters of concern. Their actions carry weight in federal law, particularly for the assignment (along with the agreement of the state) for the distribution of state and federal funds. Without an acceptable voting structure, there can be no single, regional MPO Governing board, so connectivity to other issues is something of a moot subject with one important exception. The effort and coordination required to achieve the earlier (short-term) recommendations necessitates an increase in the levels of trust, partnership, and cooperation that many people during this process said that they would like to see happen in the future.
Short Description:
Consider co-locating the MPO agencies that support economic development, transit, housing, environmental review boards, land planning, and/or agencies on the needs of aging populations foster greater collaboration on a variety of cross-cutting issues beyond what is done on a regular basis today.

Long Description:
Any responsible discussion of a consolidated transportation planning framework for the region should also consider opportunities for consolidation across a broad range of infrastructure areas. Many successful regions across the country that manage to cover multiple counties and urbanized areas with a single MPO process consider their success to be built in linking transportation decision making with other related functions such as economic development planning, water resources planning, land use planning and other forms of infrastructure planning. In these cases, the MPO is hosted by a Council of Governments or regional planning agency, often using the same logo, same agency name and (sometimes) the same policy board. The economy of scale achieved through this approach reflects itself in a broad range of operational areas.

- Increased purchasing power for a wide array of services and necessities including health insurance, retirement benefits, IT services, office furniture, etc.
- A revenue stream to provide capital float for the MPO (as necessity as federal transportation funds are cost reimbursable, necessitating that the MPO have access to a revenue stream to cover operations ahead of the federal reimbursement).
- Increased staff capacity and specialization. For example, the MPO in Nashville, TN is hosted by the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC), an agency that also focuses on economic development, community development, tourism, aging and disability services, land use, and solid waste management. As a result, the GNRC has the resources available for a full-time position that focuses on social equity issues for all aspects of the work in which the agency engages, a luxury many MPOs cannot afford.
- Enhanced data collection and research services, as similar data is required for the various focus areas of the agency and because the data generated by one area is usable by other functional areas of the agency.

The second related functional area is to consolidate functionality with economic development initiatives and programs. Regions compete against each other domestically and globally for major economic development opportunities, and beneficial economic activity occurs in places where transportation offers safe and reliable access and choices to efficiently connect one place or region to another. As one commentary prepared jointly by a Core MPO Director and the Director of Policy and Research for the Tampa Bay Partnership wrote:

“From such diverse issues as workforce development and regional connectivity to creating a livable community through people-first transportation policies, transportation and economic development are linked. As the local governments and key stakeholders in the Tampa Bay region consider a new model for regional transportation planning, there is an opportunity to ensure that development of transportation plans and projects provides an indelible link to economic growth for the region and its diverse communities.”

The reverse is also true: the expansion of transportation capacity and service tends to expand land development opportunities and the complicated secondary effects of such expansion, both positive (like job creation) and negative (like environmental degradation).

Similarly, there are opportunities for increasing the involvement of a regional-scale MPO in matters of public transportation, regional environmental initiatives, utility development and land planning. This last concept – that of a regional land planning function – is potentially the most controversial but can be constructed to help inform transportation, utility, environmental stewardship, and other decision-making without carrying a heavy-handed approval responsibility. Most importantly, the problems that are facing many of these functional areas are increasingly regional in scale but shared concerns that may benefit from a more tightly organized and focused regional approach. The Metropolitan Council in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Region considers many of these functions under an umbrella where the MPO is just one of many cooperative divisions.

**Barriers to Implementation:**

This concept of realigning functionalities with a regional MPO is a much broader conversation than the one being considered in this study and would need to engage a wide swath of agencies involved in infrastructure planning and implementation. Current state statutes may need to be amended to allow the creation of a multi-faceted agency as found in other states. Most importantly, the region’s political leadership would have to consider the costs and benefits of such a broad-ranging concept and agree to its implementation platform and processes. Retaining local control over core local governance responsibilities doesn’t disappear with the emergence of a consolidated, regional body but rearranging those responsibilities to take advantage of a regional resource without sacrificing the ability to deal with nuanced community-based concerns will require a lengthy discussion. One pathway to make this happen is to realize success at a regional transportation organization first, incorporating elements of land planning (through traditional forecasting of development and environmental impacts) then evolving the organization to increase its stature as an economic development agency (or tourism, aging, environmental, or other functions).

**Connectivity:**

Although connectivity with other actions suggested by this report is somewhat tenuous, there is no other recommendation where the term “connectivity” has such expansive and inclusive potential. Although no two people may agree on all of the details associated with aligning transportation, effective community engagement, economic development, environmental, and land planning functions, very few people would deny that there is a strong linkage between all of them. Working to strengthen those linkages is, ultimately, the foundation of this particular recommendation and not a prescription for a specific structure.
Going Forward

The stated objectives were laid out at the beginning of the project, and printed on every update of the project schedule / work plan progress chart prepared for the Study Management Team:

- Successful regional coordination means for Tampa Bay;
- Identify the barriers to its execution; and
- Develop several implementable scenarios based on an examination of nationwide best practice.

The following pages describe how all of the recommendations contained herein should play out over time, as well as several additional implementation-related strategies and concepts. It may be worthwhile to first review the current thinking of how and why individuals (and, the agencies that they manage) consider adopting new technologies or practices over time.

Innovation Adoption.

The most commonly accepted mechanism that describes how new ideas and innovations diffuse throughout a population was pioneered by Everette M. Rogers in his seminal 1962 work, Diffusion of Innovations. Rogers described 15% of any population as Innovators (2.5%) or Early Adopters (12.5%); another 70% as Early Majority or Late Majority (35% each); or Laggards (about 15%). The proportions of these five groups of adoption “agents” are illustrated in Figure 6.1.

The comparison between diffusion of innovations and adoption of a new organizational structure or structural element isn’t perfect, but there are some similarities. Rogers’ book is now in its fifth edition and, as he notes in this most recent copy, the advancement of social media and online information sources (a notable example of diffusion of a technological innovation in

6.1 | Diffusion of Adopters. The approximate breakout of adopters by type (Rogers, 1962)
itself) has changed the shape of this adoption curve as well as the pace at which change can happen. No longer are Early Adopters or Early Majority populations affected only when they go to conferences or read a journal - information is disseminated almost continuously and instantaneously. Rogers also notes other characteristics of innovations that make them more or less likely to get adopted quickly, such as perceived advantage over other operations; compatibility with existing values or experiences; ease of understanding or use; “trial-ability” of ideas in a partial or temporary form; and observe-ability of results to other potential adopters. Technological dissemination of information has made the last characteristic easier but implementing a stark change in a public organization’s basic structure doesn’t lend itself to trial-ability or ease of understanding.

Part of the reason for describing specific actions in this report rather than an idealized end state for metropolitan planning in the region is that a stepwise approach with specific, implementable, and readily parsed actions is more likely to achieve the objectives of the study. Some, if not a majority, of the input received from the workshop participants identified a perceived relative advantage to a more regionalized MPO structure, although when offered a chance to explain that position further the desire to be compatible with existing values was crucial to that acceptance for many people. It is these two characteristics – relative advantage and compatibility – that Rogers identifies as the two most important of the five characteristics that describe the level and pace of innovation diffusion.

At the time of this writing, and likely to be the case for some time, any MPOs that undertake a substantial merger of functions would have to be placed in the Innovator (a full merger of the policy boards) or at least Early Adopter (consolidating functions) categories. The fact that so few MPOs have undertaken a merger or even a major consolidation of functions is a problem for other MPOs moving forward, since peers are more likely to adopt an innovation if they get their information from another peer agency. The character of this study might have changed had the Study Management Team and consultants been presented with the opportunity to study MPOs in the act of or recently having gone through various types of mergers. The nine MPOs reviewed did represent some cross-sectional consolidation of functions, and one (Greater Nashville Regional Council) had recently completed a switch to a new host agency that it credits with improved access to resources for public engagement and integration.
with regional-level land planning studies. The functional consolidation of services is more likely between a single MPO and a municipal/county agency, transit agency, or the equivalent of a regional planning council than between two or more MPOs.

**First or Best**
The preceding discussion about innovation diffusion suggests directly or indirectly that it is better to be on the front end of the adoption curve when it comes to a new practice or innovation. Even the terminology used to describe the two endpoints – “innovator” and “laggard” – have a qualitative bias. But being first isn’t always the best move; some fighters are better counterpunchers and the first lemming to approach the cliff isn’t in the best position to see the results of its actions. In the private sector, the “first mover” advantage can be significant, allowing a company to establish a competitive advantage through patents, copyrights, branding, and encouraging early customers to incur sunk costs that discourages them from switching to another offering later even if it’s better. Even then, being first isn’t always enough of an advantage – Betamax, AOL chatrooms, or the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line did not survive VHS, Facebook, or Delta. It’s not clear that any of the private sector advantages are relevant to the public sector, which tends to adopt change sporadically and incrementally over time while providing an often-different set of services compared to the public sector (see text box).

The successful implementation of the recommended strategies in the preceding section will heavily depend on the identifiable advantages (even if they are initially perceived instead of quantifiable) and how well the values of the individual MPOs and their member agencies can coexist within a new, regional operational structure.

Figure 6.2 illustrates how the procession of short- and long-term recommendations could proceed. The completion of some actions should logically precede the beginning or completion of other actions, such as performance-based planning leading into the update of a formalized regional transportation plan.

Two additional actions are implied by Figure 6.2, the addition of more staff resources and the development of formation committees preceding most of the short- and long-term recommended actions. The considerations for both of these

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**Sector Differences**

“...There is no need for the government to start a chain of hamburger stands, hardware stores, or coffee shops. Rather, they run child protective services, the National Park Service, and the Air Force. Profit is the realm of business, while unprofitable but socially useful tasks is the responsibility of government.

This is not to say that every government agency is actually performing a useful public service or that it is not wasting resources (by whatever standard) ... The point, however, is that saying that government is inefficient because it does not turn a profit is the equivalent of saying that Peyton Manning is a poor quarterback because he doesn’t hit enough home runs. He’s not supposed to.”

– Excerpted from John T. Harvey, Forbes, October 12, 2012.
implementation-related actions are described below.

**Staffing Resources:**
The current staffing of all three core MPOs is housed in county government offices and are occupied fulfilling the mandates of federal, state, and MPO/local responsibilities. At no point in this study was there an indication that the MPO roles being carried out today were unimportant, or that there was the staffing capacity available to divert a substantial portion of the time of existing resources.

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S.1 Assume Greater Control of Technical Analysis and Data Collection
S.8 Create Regional Modal Agency Seats on TMA Leadership Group and on All Three MPO Boards
S.6 Develop a Single Citizen Advisory Committee
S.5 Create a Single, Regional Performance-Based Planning Process
S.4 Formalize the Regional Transportation Plan Element
S.2 Increased Authority of TMA Leadership Group and Joint MPO Board Meetings
S.3 Direct Coordination with State Leadership
S.7 Develop a Collective Regional Funding Strategy

L.2 Voting Structure to Ensure Local Influence Remains Strong
L.1 Single MPO Policy Board with Multiple MPO (Technical) Advisory Committees
L.3 More Related Functions: Working with Other Agencies

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6.2 | Scheduling of Recommendations.

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- Additional Staffing Needs
- Revise Documentation (bylaws, interlocal agreements, etc.)
- Ad-Hoc Formation Committee
staff to the responsibilities of administering to the recommendations contained in this study. An early indicator (along with the formation committee recommended below) of the willingness of the region and the region’s MPOs to proceed with the recommendations of this study is the dedication of new resources in the form of full-time staff and, if necessary, private consulting, to execute the initial short-term recommendations. Technical staff (e.g., for carrying out modeling runs and enhancing the technical capacity suggested by S.1) as well as a policy-oriented position are necessary at the outset. Managing enhanced committees (as in S.2 and S.6) will require two more mid- to senior-level staff positions and one additional administrative position.

Hosting the MPO Regional Functions:
Unspoken in this discussion so far is the question of the permanent seat of new staff as well as paying for modeling/technical resources. The long-term answers are intertwined with the additional functionality that the political leadership wants to see in a regional body (as in L.3). While there are federal and state resources available to help finance these positions, they are in the form of reimbursements and thus require an “up-front” expenditure that would have to be matched as well. It may be premature to attempt to calculate these expenses, but budgeting for the salaries, fringe, rent, supplies, training, and indirect expenses for (initially) 4 – 5 positions is advised based on some of the short-term recommendations.

There are visible possibilities for partnerships that can host a regional staff component in the shorter term, including the Regional Planning Council (TBRPC) or the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA), both of which have a stated interest in regional transportation matters. During the comment period provided for the initial recommendations, the TBRPC noted the capacity to host meetings and additional technical staff dedicated to regional transportation planning objectives like those cited in this report (Sean Sullivan, email dated January 18, 2019). Obviously, the choice of which agency hosts the staff tasked with regional obligations has to contemplate how that choice may tinge operations and perceptions, not to mention operational matters like office and administrative capacity and costs. A final option is establishing a stand-alone agency independent of any existing agency, although compared to some other options the independent agency might work at cross-purposes to the goal of increasing regional collaboration. Establishing a clear, multi-year work program with specific objectives is a critical first step. This responsibility, as well as the oversight of the additional resources, is ideally managed by the three core MPOs through the
**Formation Committee:**
One of the lessons learned from the peer MPO case studies (Greater Nashville Regional Council’s transition to a new hosting agency, for example) was the importance of prioritizing the transition requirements and dedicating a committee to oversee progress. It is likely that two formation committees, one for short-term recommendations initially and one developed later for long-term recommendations, will be necessary.

The Formation Committee(s) would meet monthly (at a minimum) and be comprised of the existing MPO directors, lead staff, and appointees named by the TMALG as well as a committee chairperson not associated with (a member of any board) any of the three core MPOs. The committee should have a clear charter for the specific actions it is to implement, milestones, and a clear sunset date along with reporting requirements back to the TMALG.

The first commercial airline in the U.S. was the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line owned by Percival Elliott Fansler (left) offering trips between St. Petersburg and Tampa. On January 1, 1914 the inaugural trip was piloted by Tony Jannus (right) and carried then-Mayor of St. Petersburg, Abram C. Pheil, (middle) to do business in Tampa and back again. One way, the trip took about 23 minutes and cost $100 (in today’s dollars). The company carried 1,205 passengers in its brief four months of existence.

Comments on Preliminary Recommendations

The three Core MPOs conducted a presentation (by the Consultant Team) and review of the initial draft of the recommendations (Technical Memorandum 3.1) during January 15-18, 2019. The Hillsborough MPO conducted a special open work session on January 15th; the Pasco MPO heard an item at their regular, scheduled meeting of the policy board on January 17th; and Forward Pinellas included the item as part of workshop conducted on January 18th. In each case, a brief presentation was made by the lead consultant and was followed by an opportunity for those in attendance to ask questions or make additional commentary. The individual metropolitan planning organizations should be contacted for a complete summary of the discussions held at each MPO forum. The following responses also address comments expressed by Florida DOT (District 7) and Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council.

The following is a summary of the primary comments received and the direct responses and/or modifications made to the preliminary recommendations as a result. This information does not constitute the majority opinion of those officials and participants at any of the three public workshops conducted to support this study, many of whom recognized the impact that regional restructuring could have on existing operations and decisions in the Tampa Bay Region.

MPO Merger. Much of the dialogue at the Hillsborough MPO workshop, as well as some comments presented at the other two MPO forums, were directed at just one of the recommendations in the report; namely, the ultimate merger of the MPO policy boards at after the 2030 Census designation. Concerns expressed in opposition revolved around a loss of local autonomy in project selection or decision-making (in some cases relegating authority to FDOT), diversion of funds away from local projects to regional-scale projects (including funds from the recent sales tax referendum passed in Hillsborough County), and a lack of need based on current travel patterns for more regional projects. The study and report deal extensively with this topic and some of the related issues, such as those presented by voting structure. However, focusing solely on this single (longer-term) recommendation severely misses the point of the study and the overwhelming majority of its findings that there are a number of short-term actions that can be undertaken to improve the operations and topics constructed by the Study Management Team and consulting staff. Only in the event that the short-term actions - many of which would likely occur prior to a MPO merger taking place anyway - are successfully completed and, based on the experience gained in part from those actions, would a merger be contemplated through a subsequent effort.
Migration from Local to Regional Emphasis. The study conclusions support the concerns that local autonomy on regional project selection and decision-making would be forced into a more regional decision-making framework and thus agreement and compromise would occur at a different level than currently exists today. The importance of regional connectivity is likely to continue to grow over time. The matter is increasingly a social equity issue as almost every growing, urbanized area is facing and failing to address affordable housing deficits. As housing that is affordable becomes increasingly difficult to locate within the city or county that is preferred, nearby cities and counties absorb the overflow and thereby increase the miles of travel – not to mention the stress on lower-income wage earners. It is and always was the stated intent throughout the study (as defined in the original contract and scope of services agreed to by the Consultant Team) that a full merger of the MPOs was to be one option considered for assessment, but not the only option.

Voting Structure and Authority. Closely related to the issue of local and regional representation is that of authority, weight, and/or representation on a policy board addressing regional matters. The Pasco MPO discussed the desire to have equal voting representation on a regional policy body. The study team is not aware of a situation in any other MPO or similar organization where the organization size – typically expressed as current or recent (based on the past decennial Census population count) – does not play some factor in the level of representation or voting weight. The study report does offer a suggestion for a two-tiered voting structure that helps to address this concern. Issues that are unique to a single MPO (not regional) would remain the purview of that MPO solely until and unless the MPOs do follow the recommendation to later merge the policy boards. The periodic reassessment of voting weight and representation, being updated every 10 years now, would ultimately provide faster-growing counties like Pasco a more equal share and say in regional decision-making. It was also noted during the Pasco MPO Board meeting that seldom does the MPO send the full allotment of three representatives to the quarterly TMALG meetings, possibly due to the relatively light authority that the TMALG currently possesses compared to what is recommended in the short term in this study.

Relationship with FDOT or Other State Agencies. The study findings do not support, and actually directly contradict, the concern that FDOT or other state agencies would be placed in a better position to dictate project selection and decision-making if the MPOs were merged. Larger MPOs typically carry more weight, not less, than their smaller counterparts relative to regional project issues. In fact, this consolidation and organization of multiple authorities into a larger structure that focuses on cross-boundary issues is perhaps the main benefit presented by metropolitan planning organizations to their member agencies. FDOT District 7 asserted that
the report erroneously states that the current modeling process is not collaborative; the process is certainly collaborative now, but the intent stated in the report was for the MPOs, not FDOT, to take the clear leadership role in developing the data for, and having the internal capacity to update and operate, the travel demand model. This process has resulted in a closer collaboration between the MPOs to develop land use forecasting tools, joint scenario plans, and shared technical capacity. The word “forced,” taken in the correct context of the report, denotes the requirement of the MPOs to work more collaboratively to achieve this expanded role, the regional collaboration being the main impetus of the study. The need for strengthening this process, particularly technical data capacity, was supported by the SMT, not just the consultant, and was not meant to imply a deficiency in the operation of the current model structure or that no collaboration was occurring now. Also of note is the commentary provided by TBRPC that acknowledged the capacity of the organization to host meetings and additional technical staff devoted to travel demand modeling and other regional supporting tasks.

Intra-County and Inter-County Travel. There is no reasonable doubt that a substantial portion (roughly 40% to 60% as of 2015) of all work trips in all three Core counties begin or end outside of one county. Further, there is evidence that the amount of inter-county trip-making is slowly increasing in all three counties and MPO planning areas. Other trip types, such as those being made to/from schools, shopping, or recreation, are more likely to be local (intra-county) in nature and support the position that many trips are still finishing inside the county of origin. As noted, housing and other prices are rising faster than wage rates generally, creating an outward push of people looking for affordable housing opportunities. In turn, this expansion creates both a demand for more services, greater commercial development to support the residential growth, and an increasing...
Difficulty of Attending Regional Meetings. During the study process, staff noted that there are a lot of meetings now that draw the attention and attendance of both staff and elected officials. The TMALG was noted, for example, by the Pasco MPO as sometimes being attended by only one person (of three membership slots reserved for the Pasco MPO). Generally, increasing the number of meetings will put more strain on this system of participants, particularly if in-person attendance is required. Exploring remote (e.g., web conference) attendance for some meetings would be desirable, even if that requires changing existing legislation in Florida. The Sunshine Law legislation in Florida is particularly notable in several regards.

- All communications, whether in writing or verbally, are subject to Sunshine Law rules, although members of the same board can speak about other matters not pertaining to that board or likely to come before it (obviously, there is potential for a considerable degree of interpretation about what constitutes items that pertain or may one day pertain to an action of any board) – there is no restriction from board members speaking to staff; and
- While guidance offered by the State Attorney General’s Office notes that conducting public meetings entirely through electronic media is limited to state bodies, local government agencies may allow members experiencing a hardship (as defined by that board) to participate in meetings through electronic media so long as a quorum is present in person at a physical location. However, there is ambiguity in this interpretation since the guidance offered pertains to a school board and it is not clear that a MPO board that receives its authorization in part through federal statute and state authorization is actually to be considered a “local board” (First Amendment Foundation, 2018 Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual: A Reference For Compliance with Florida’s Public Records and Open Meetings Laws). It is worthwhile to either get this interpretation clarified, if possible, or to modify and modernize state statutes to allow participation through electronic conferences to occur. Such an action would not only provide for easier meeting participation by board members, but also potentially open the meetings to allow for greater on-line participation by those that are physically or economically prevented from, or seriously inconvenienced by, attending the meeting in person.

The study and report conclude that a merger of MPOs is not the only action that could be taken to address the issues facing regional decision-making concerns that currently exist as defined by the Study Management Team, workshop participants, and consulting personnel. Many of these issues will likely increase in importance over time as inter-county commuting patterns, economic ties, and regional competition continue to grow in relevance. The report is structured to address near-term, easier-to-address actions as well as longer-term actions should the three Core MPOs determine that changes to practice or structure are necessary to achieve transportation objectives.
MPO Regional Coordination Structure Research and Best Practices for the Tampa Bay Region