MPO STAFFING AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

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MPO Staffing and Organizational Structures

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- Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization
- Midland Area Transportation Study
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
- Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation System
- Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada
- Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (Metro)

Executive Summary

In the latter half of the 20th Century, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) were established and structured to accomplish the prevailing planning tasks of that period. Since then, federal legislation, regulations, and technological innovations have increased the complexity of MPO activities and tasks. As a result, MPO leaders across the country struggle to maximize the planning capacity and efficiency of their organizations. The purpose of this research report is to help those MPO leaders to evaluate their staffing and organizational structures in light of their current and anticipated responsibilities, budget, and policy environment by summarizing the structures of MPOs across the country.

This research report documents how MPOs have structured their organizations and allocated staff resources and expertise. It is an update to the 2010 report *Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations.* This report updates much of the information collected in the previous report related to administrative aspects of MPOs such as governance, host agency relationships, budgeting, and work planning, as well as issues related to staffing arrangements, technical skills, use of consultant labor, and employee retention. It also includes new information related to performance management and scenario planning. Effective and unique practices are also documented through case studies of six MPOs.

The information contained in the report was obtained through a national survey of MPOs and follow-up case study research. The survey was sent to 396 of the 409 MPOs in the United States; thirteen were excluded primarily due to hosting arrangements that were incompatible with the survey. A total of 279 MPOs participated in the survey, a 70 percent response rate. Six participating MPOs were selected for follow-up case study research to highlight unique organizational practices.

The report is organized into eight chapters which are organized as follows:

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

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

- MPO governing boards range from three to 105 voting seats, with an average of 16.7 seats. The average increases as the MPO planning area and population grow.
- Municipal elected officials have the most seats on the typical MPO board, followed by county commissioners and state DOT representatives.
- Only 13 percent of MPOs have a voting system where each board member's vote is not equal, often known as a "weighted" voting system. To strike a political balance, additional seats are often apportioned to larger jurisdictions, with each member having a single (unweighted) vote.

Chapter 3 discusses the organizational structure of MPOs. As determined in the 2010 report, MPOs fall on a spectrum including three forms of "hosted" MPOs (Component, Dual Purpose and All-in-One) and two forms of "independent" MPOs (Freestanding and Leaning Independent). Approximately 69 percent of MPOs are "hosted" by another agency, meaning another public organization acts as the MPO's fiscal

agent and/or holds hiring and firing authority over MPO employees. The remaining 31 percent exist as one of the two types of "independent" MPOs. Some specific findings in Chapter 3 include:

- About 12 percent of all MPOs are hosted at a county government, and another 24 percent are hosted by a municipal government. Taken together, MPOs hosted by local governments are the most common type of MPO in operation today.
- Being hosted provides a variety of benefits, including lower cost of operations, opportunities for cross-disciplinary cooperation, and fiscal stability. Meanwhile, benefits of being an independent MPO include greater autonomy, flexibility, and clarity in the organization's purpose, relationships, and chain of command.
- Many MPOs have difficulty raising local funds to match federal planning assistance or securing operating capital (termed "capital float") in order to exist independently.
- Hosted MPOs pay an average of approximately 25 percent indirect rate to their host agency. These funds secure a variety of necessary goods and services such as rent, shared administrative employees, employee benefits, fleet vehicles, and computer hardware/software.

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

- Nationally, the survey shows one staff member per 50,567 people in the planning area.
- An estimated 4,200 people work at MPOs nationwide.
- The most common staff specialization is Geographic Information Systems (GIS), which is present at approximately 43 percent of MPOs. Other common specializations include bicycle and pedestrian planning, transit, travel demand modeling, and public involvement.

Chapter 5 describes MPO funding. This chapter discusses work programs, funding sources, expenditures, and consultant contracts. MPOs report four federal funding sources: FHWA Planning (PL) funds, FTA Metropolitan Transit Planning (5305) funds, flexed Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) funds, and flexed Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program (CMAQ) funds. State and local governments also provide substantial support for MPOs. Sixty-three percent of MPOs (representing 36 states) receive state government funds or in-kind support. Seventy-four percent of MPOs receive local funds. Difficulty raising the required local match was cited by several MPOs. Other MPOs discussed the importance of local funds in supplying "capital float" – on hand funds to meet financial obligations in advance of receiving reimbursement from federal sources. Some specific findings in Chapter 5 include:

- About 63 percent of MPOs reported that federal sources are sufficient to complete the required 3-C planning and programming process.
- Of MPOs who reported receiving local funds, 90 percent reported using those funds for MPO core activities. Other commonly reported uses include employee training and office operation.
- The average MPO spends 27 percent of its UPWP budget on consultants.

Chapter 6 discusses a number of workforce development aspects of MPOs. MPO staff members were divided into categories for this research: directors, senior managers, professional employees, and

administrative employees. MPOs seem to be adding staff, with 73 MPOs reporting the creation of at least one new position, while only 32 MPOs eliminated a position over the same timeframe. MPOs experience 11.6 percent annual employee turnover, although smaller MPOs can experience up to 18 percent turnover. Employees depart for a variety of positions. About 29 percent of departed MPO employees leave the transportation sector altogether. Consulting firms hire another 18 percent. Pay scales for a variety of position types were collected and reported in Chapter 6 and Appendix C. Other key findings in Chapter 6 include:

- MPO directors have spent an average of 8.8 years in their current position, with directors in larger metropolitan areas holding longer tenure.
- Over 50 percent of MPO directors expect to retire within the next ten years.
- The average pay for an MPO director is $99,174. Directors at MPOs in larger metropolitan areas earn more money on average than their counterparts in smaller metropolitan areas.

Chapter 7 discusses the relatively new topics of performance-based planning/programming and scenario planning. Performance-based planning and programming requirements were introduced into federal law by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and reaffirmed in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). Scenario planning was also encouraged in those acts as a technique for performing long-range transportation planning. Some key findings in Chapter 7 include:

- Nearly 90 percent of MPOs have established performance measures for their Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Long Range Transportation Plan (MTP/LRTP). Roughly 34 percent have established performance measures for their Transportation Improvement Program.
- The most commonly reported areas for which performance measures have been established are safety and congestion.
- Seventeen percent of MPOs reported having a staff member who spends more than half their time on performance-based planning and programming.
- Approximately 80 percent of MPOs reported that performance-based planning and programming has increased staff workload, but by 20 percent or less.
- Approximately 58 percent of MPOs used scenario planning techniques in the development of their most recent MTP/LRTP.

Chapter 8 discusses findings from six case study MPOs. Case studies were selected based on unique practices and were intended to represent a variety of geographies, population levels, and hosting arrangements. The six case studies included in this report are:

- Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization – Norfolk, Virginia
- Midland Area Transportation Study – Midland, Michigan
- Chittenden Regional Planning Commission – Burlington, Vermont
- Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation System – Kittery, Maine
- Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada – Las Vegas, Nevada
- Portland Metro – Portland, Oregon

Federal legislation governing MPO staffing and organizational structures is fairly elastic, allowing a wide variety of structural arrangements. It is clear from the research described in this report that no single type of structure is preferable or “better” than another. Local planning environments, politics, funding availability, historical context, interlocal compatibility, and transportation needs have dictated how each individual MPO has been formed and administered.

Metropolitan areas expand, contract and otherwise change over time. The size and influence of member local governments also changes over time, with some growing larger and politically or economically more dominant while others fall back from prominence. As these and other societal and technological changes play out over time, MPOs need to consider the viability and efficacy of the current staffing and organizational structures and consider changes that keep the organization moving in the desired direction. The intent of this research is to help MPO leaders evaluate their staffing and organizational structure relative to their peers so that they, in turn, can consider the appropriate MPO structure for their own metropolitan area.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In January of 2015, President Obama signed the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which continues the decades-old system[1] of federal funding for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Under the FAST Act, this MPO funding will steadily increase from $329 million in Fiscal Year 2016 to $359 million in Fiscal Year 2020 for the nation's 409 metropolitan planning organizations [2] This federal planning funding (PL) is supplemented by state and local governments. The manpower and magnitude of resources dedicated to metropolitan transportation planning by federal, state, and local governments emphasizes the importance of understanding MPOs and their planning activities.

In the latter half of the 20th Century, MPOs were established and structured to accomplish the prevailing planning tasks of that period. Since then, federal legislation, regulations, and technological innovations have increased the complexity of MPO activities and tasks. As a result, MPOs across the country struggle to maximize the planning capacity and efficiency of their organizations. Yet, there are few resources available for MPOs to understand how their peers are meeting their planning and administrative challenges.

The federal government oversees individual metropolitan transportation processes and the work of MPOs through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Divisions and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Regions. However, information about these processes is rarely amalgamated at the national level. Although the FHWA Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty maintains a database of MPOs that has historically served as the primary source of nationwide information, it contains limited information regarding MPO staffing and organization. [3]

The purpose of this research is to document how MPOs nationwide structure their organizations and allocate staff resources and expertise to meet their planning and programming responsibilities, thereby helping MPO leaders evaluate their own staffing and organizational structures relative to their peer institutions. This report refreshes similar research published in the 2010 study, *Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations*[4]. The study addresses the administrative aspects of MPOs, including host agency relationships, budgeting, work planning, and governance. The report also addresses staffing arrangements, staff specialties, use of consultant labor, and employee retention. Six case studies are also included in the report to highlight effective and/or unique practices found at MPOs across the country.

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[1] The process for collecting MPO planning dollars was changed by MAP-21 in 2012. The overall total remained similar, with moderate growth.

[2] Federal Highway Administration: Census Urbanized Areas and MPO/TMA Designation. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/census_issues/urbanized_areas_and_mpo_tma/geographic_resources/

[3] United States Department of Transportation, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Database http://www.planning.dot.gov/mpo.asp

[4] Bond, A., Kramer, J., & Seggerman, K., *Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations*. Center for Urban Transportation Research, 2010. https://planning.dot.gov/documents/Staffing_Administrative_Capacity_MPOs.pdf

MPO partners, such as state departments of transportation, the FHWA, FTA, toll/expressway authorities, and local governments may also benefit from this report. Using this research, partner agencies may be able to determine areas where their relationship with MPOs can change (e.g. reducing duplicative work or collaborating on transportation planning tasks).

Research Methodology

The data collected for this research project was obtained through a nationwide survey of MPOs. The survey consisted of 55 to 111 questions, depending on each MPO's characteristics and the survey logic. Questions were a mix between multiple choice, select all that apply, and narrative response. This enabled the researchers to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey instrument could be partially completed, saved, and returned to later, which allowed respondents to consult with colleagues or retrieve needed materials and information.

The survey was collected entirely online using Qualtrics as the survey platform. Qualtrics was selected for a variety of reasons, including responsive design features (e.g. the ability to adapt to the users' system, including mobile devices, in order to maximize the online survey experience) and survey taking flexibility (i.e. multiple users could collaborate on the same survey while ensuring that only one survey is submitted per agency). The Qualtrics survey platform also has the flexibility to allow existing information from FHWA to be integrated into the final dataset.

Survey questions were drafted based on experience with MPO practice and consultation with MPO professionals. Many questions were repeated (with minor modification in most cases) from the 2010 survey to allow for comparison, though a handful of questions were deleted or added based on experience from the 2010 project. Additionally, a series of questions related to performance-based planning and programming and scenario planning were added at the request of the FHWA. Draft survey questions were circulated through the FHWA for review and comment.

The survey data collection phase lasted from February 4, 2016 to March 11, 2016 (though a handful of requests for extensions were granted). Respondents were recruited in person, in print, and most importantly, through electronic means. While the survey was directed toward MPO staff directors, they were free to assign a subordinate to complete all or part of the survey.

Direct solicitation was important to increasing response rates. Several emails were sent to each MPO in anticipation of the survey. Passive notice of the survey was publicized in newsletters for organizations such as the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) and the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), and both organizations sent emails directly to their membership encouraging participation, as did the Transportation Research Board Committee on Metropolitan Policy, Planning and Processes (ADA20). State MPO association leaders were contacted and asked to encourage members to participate. The research team also telephoned MPOs directly to ask for their participation and sent several reminders to MPOs throughout the time the survey was open. Finally, the survey was advertised at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board.

Eligibility

According to the FHWA database of MPOs, there are 409 MPOs operating in the United States. However, only 396 were eligible to take the survey. MPOs were considered ineligible for a variety of reasons. The State of Connecticut implemented a consolidation of regional planning agencies, agencies that acted as the hosts for MPOs in the state. As a result, the Central Connecticut MPO (CCMPO) was dissolved, but still appears in the FHWA database. Members of the CCMPO joined neighboring MPOs. The South Western Region MPO and the Housatonic Valley MPO appear in the FHWA database, but were in the process of combining to form a new MPO hosted by the Western Connecticut COG. The South Tangipahoa MPO in Louisiana shares a common board and staff with the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission and, as such, does not function as a separate MPO despite appearing in the FHWA database as such. The remaining nine MPOs were considered ineligible due to a staffing arrangement in which a single agency provides staff to more than one MPO. This arrangement introduces complexity in capturing accurate organizational structure information. A case study of an MPO with such a staffing arrangement was included in the 2010 report[5]. MPOs considered ineligible from the survey for this purpose included the:

- West Florida Regional Planning Council, which hosts the Florida-Alabama TPO (Pensacola), the Okaloosa-Walton TPO (Destin), and the Bay County TPO (Panama City)
- East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, which hosts the Appleton/Fox Cities MPO, the Fond du Lac MPO, and the Oshkosh MPO
- Puerto Rico Department of Transportation and Public Works, which operates the Aguadilla MPO, San Juan MPO, and the Urbanized Areas of Puerto Rico MPO

Participation

The rate of participation in the survey yielded a robust dataset. Of 396 eligible MPOs, 279 completed all or at least enough of the survey to be included in the dataset, yielding a 70% response rate[6]. This is a substantial increase compared to the 2010 survey, in which 133 of 374 (36%) eligible MPOs participated.

Table 1-1 illustrates the response rates for MPOs according to population. These classes are important indicators for MPO structure and policymaking. They are based on 2010 Census data and are used for analysis throughout the report.

[5] Bond, A., Kramer, J., & Seggerman, K., *Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations* (pg. 3-6), Center for Urban Transportation Research, 2010.
https://planning.dot.gov/documents/Staffing_Administrative_Capacity_MPOs.pdf

[6] A total of 304 MPOs opened the survey and answered at least one question. However, 25 MPOs provided too little information to be included in the final dataset.

Table 1-1 Survey Participation by MPO Population Classification

Population Class	MPOs Eligible for Survey	Number Participating	Percent Participation
Less than 100,000	92	66	72%
100,000 to 200,000	111	77	69%
200,000 to 500,000	98	73	74%
500,000 to 1 million	47	52	53%
1 million or more	48	38	79%
Total	396	279	70%

The study methodology and the nature of MPOs introduced several potential sampling biases to the survey. Participants were recruited via means of communication such as email lists, newsletters, and websites with a focus on transportation planning and metropolitan planning organizations. Due to this method of recruitment, it is possible that there is a bias towards MPOs that participate in such organizations. The survey results may also be biased toward certain states, due to active promotion of the survey by several prominent MPO leaders.

Figure 1-1 shows a map of participating MPOs. Responses were received from 48 states, though some states may be underrepresented.

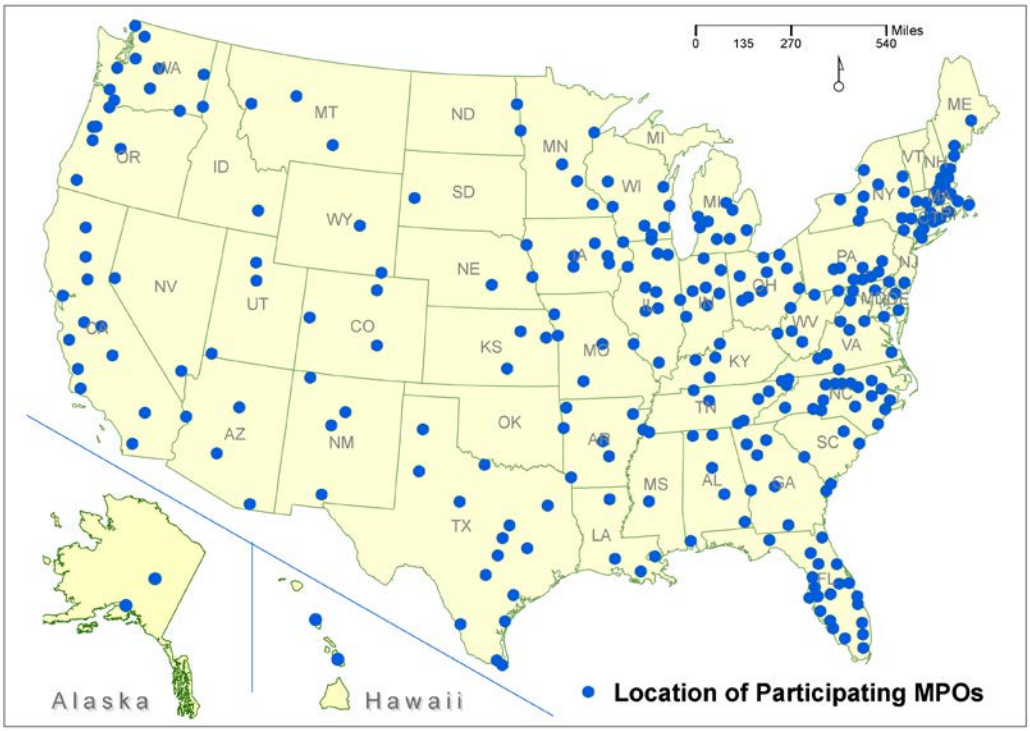

Figure 1-1 Map of Participating MPOs

Case Studies

Follow-up case studies were performed for six MPOs. The case-study MPOs were selected based on MPO planning area population, agency hosting characteristics, and geographic dispersion. Any MPO selected for a case study must have completed the survey. The purpose of each case study was to highlight an innovative or interesting organizational characteristic or practice. Information for the case studies was gained from telephone interviews, examination of survey responses, internet research, and review of agency documents—particularly the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The MPOs documented in case studies in this report are shown in Figure 1-2.

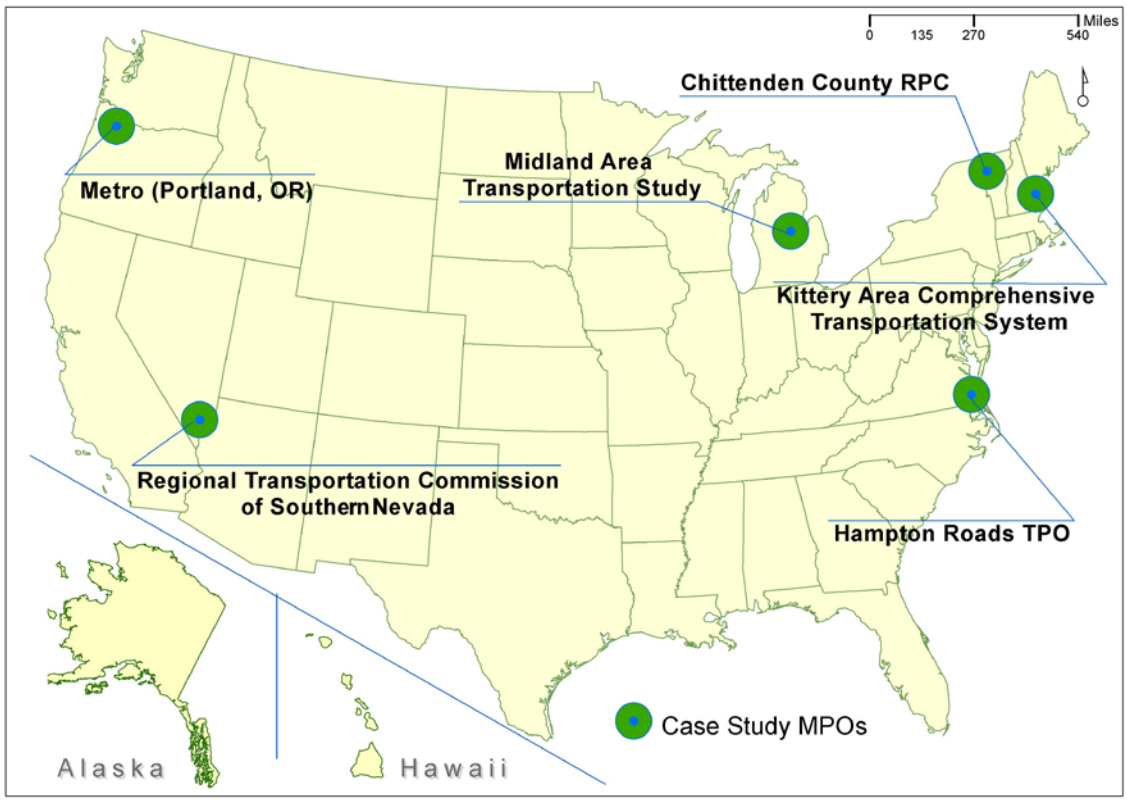

Figure 1-2 Case Study MPOs

Chapter 2: Governance of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

All MPOs that responded to the survey reported having a governing board that sets policy for the transportation planning process in their region. United States Code Chapter 23 § 134(D)(2) requires all MPOs operating in a transportation management area (TMAs, or MPOs with populations of 200,000 or more) to be governed by a policy board consisting of local elected officials, representatives of agencies that operate alternative modes of transportation, and relevant state officials[7]. However, actual board composition is not determined by federal law or regulation. Federal law encourages participation by other important stakeholders (school districts, military bases, universities, etc.), but does not dictate the manner of such participation including such matters as non-voting board membership, the constitution of advisory committees, and voting rights of board members. Some states, on the other hand, have established requirements for board composition in statute.

The number of seats on each MPO governing board is established during the designation of a newly-formed MPO. After the initial designation, each MPO may adopt bylaws that dictate the number of seats and voting rights on the governing board. Federal regulations require a new designation process if the number of seats will change substantially. MPOs revisit the governing board seat allocation after the results of each decennial census are released, adjusting their apportionment plan as needed.

The survey contained approximately ten questions relating to MPO governance to gain further insight into these issues. MPOs were asked to report the number of voting governing board seats by constituency. The 276 MPOs who responded have a total of 4,597 total board seats. Extrapolating the data indicates there are approximately 6,600 voting seats on MPO boards nationwide. Table 2-1 illustrates some descriptive statistics of the number of board members by hosting type. Because the mean is higher than the other measures of central tendency, the presence of several high outliers is indicated. High outliers were generally reported by independent MPOs and MPOs hosted by regional councils, where the board governed both the MPO and the regional council operations.

Table 2-1 MPO Voting Governing Board Seats

Host Agency Type	Mean	Median	Mode(s)	Maximum	Minimum	Number
Regional Council	18.4	13	10	105	3	71
County government	12.9	11	7	31	5	33
Municipal government	11.4	10	7,5	44	3	67
State DOT/ An independent authority/ Other	17.3	16.5	19	40	3	20
Not Hosted/Independent	20.7	15	11	102	3	85
All MPOs	**16.7**	**12.5**	**11,9**	**105**	**3**	**276**

[7] Requirements for public transit representation on MPO policy boards in Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) were first established under MAP-21 and then further clarified under the FAST Act.

Survey responses indicate wide variation in governing board size. The smallest boards have only three members, while the largest board reported 105 members. The top 25 percent of MPOs responding have 19 or more members while the bottom quarter have nine or fewer members. Board size varies in relation to the population of the MPO. MPOs with fewer than 100,000 people in their planning area have 9 board members on average, while agencies with more than 1 million people have an average of 29 board members. On average, there is one board member for approximately every 37,000 people in the metropolitan planning area. Figure 2-1 illustrates the positive correlation between MPO board size and population of the MPO planning area. This is an expected result from the addition of new planning area territory, after which the board must be expanded to include new local government representatives. Moreover, the average number of board members in 2016 has increased since 2010 in each population range. This could also partially be attributed to the MAP-21 requirement that officials of public agencies that administer or operate major modes of transportation in the metropolitan area be represented on MPO policy boards in Transportation Management Areas (TMAs).

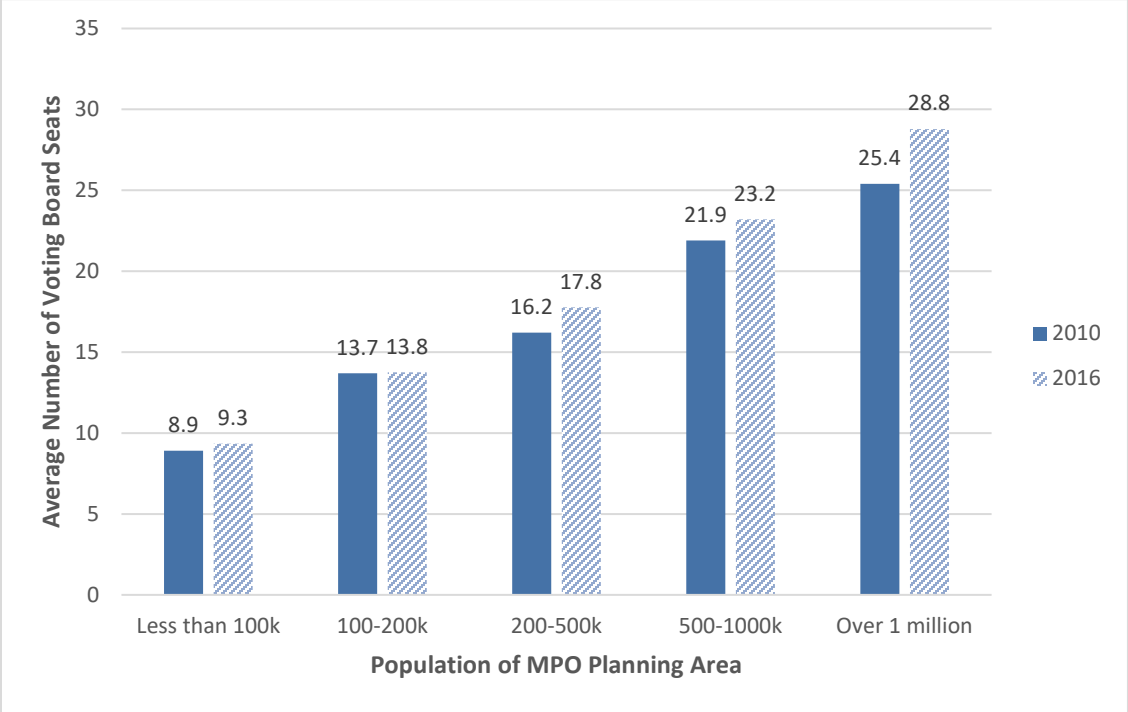

Figure 2-1 Membership Size of MPO Governing Boards by Population Group

Although a variety of people serve on MPO governing boards, the vast majority of seats belong to local elected officials—the first eligible category identified in federal law for TMAs. Table 2-2 summarizes the frequency and allocation of MPO board seats. Municipal elected officials (i.e. non-executive mayors, council members, aldermen, etc.) are the dominant participants in the MPO process; they serve on 93 percent of all MPOs in the survey and hold nearly 9 seats on average across all MPOs.

Federal law also states that "appropriate state officials" should serve on the MPO governing board in TMAs. These are typically state department of transportation (DOT) officials. After local elected officials, state DOT officials are the most common board member category. Nearly 76 percent of MPO boards have a voting representative from their state DOT. Gubernatorial appointees to MPO boards are relatively rare. Only 4 percent of MPOs have one on their board, and in some cases the appointee is a career service employee of the state DOT who is selected by the governor to serve.

County commissioners (e.g., council members, selectmen, or supervisors) are also very prevalent on MPOs. They are found on 76 percent of MPO boards and hold an average of 2.6 seats per MPO. Seats that are not reserved, vacant at the time of the survey, rotate among different types of government, or are otherwise not defined represent an average 1.5 seats per MPO. Countywide elected officials, defined as individuals holding executive positions (county executive, sheriff, property appraiser, or county judge) have a seat on 30.4 percent of the MPOs with an average of just under 1 seat per MPO.

Table 2-2 MPO Governing Board Seat Allocation and Frequency

Seat Type	Percent with this Seat Type		Average Number of Seats Across All MPOs	
	2016	2010	2016	2010
Municipal Elected Officials/Executive Officials	93.1%	94.0%	8.5	6.8
State DOT	76.4%	64.7%	1.1	0.9
County Commissioners	75.7%	81.2%	2.6	2.9
Public Transit Agency	50.4%	45.1%	0.6	0.6
Countywide Elected Official	30.4%	30.1%	1.0	0.9
Aviation Authority	13.0%	13.5%	0.1	0.2
Regional Council	12.7%	19.5%	0.2	0.2
Seaport Authority	8.0%	12.0%	0.1	0.2
Private Sector	7.2%	9.0%	0.3	0.3
Toll Authority	6.5%	9.0%	0.1	0.1
MPO advisory committee representative	6.5%	-	0.3	-
School Board	4.3%	6.8%	0.1	0.1
College or University	4.3%	5.3%	0.1	0.1
Gubernatorial Appointee	4.0%	17.3%	0.1	0.3
Tribal Government	4.0%	6.0%	0.1	0.2
Military Installation	1.4%	3.0%	<0.1	<0.1
Other	31.9%	39.1%	1.5	1.7

Among modal transportation agencies, public transportation agencies are the most common modal agency and are represented on 50 percent of MPO boards[8]. Seaport or aviation authorities are represented on 8 percent of MPO boards, while toll authorities are represented on 7 percent of MPO boards. There are isolated examples of school boards, tribal governments, colleges or universities, private sector representatives, and military installations serving on MPO boards. Over 31 percent of MPOs responded that they have some "other" type of representative on their board not listed in the survey. Examples include the state office of environmental quality, the local planning board or commission, and city or county executive staff.

Figure 2-2 shows the type of seat as a percent of the total number of seats of reporting MPOs. Municipal elected officials occupy 42.2 percent of the board seats, with county commissioners filling another 15.4 percent.

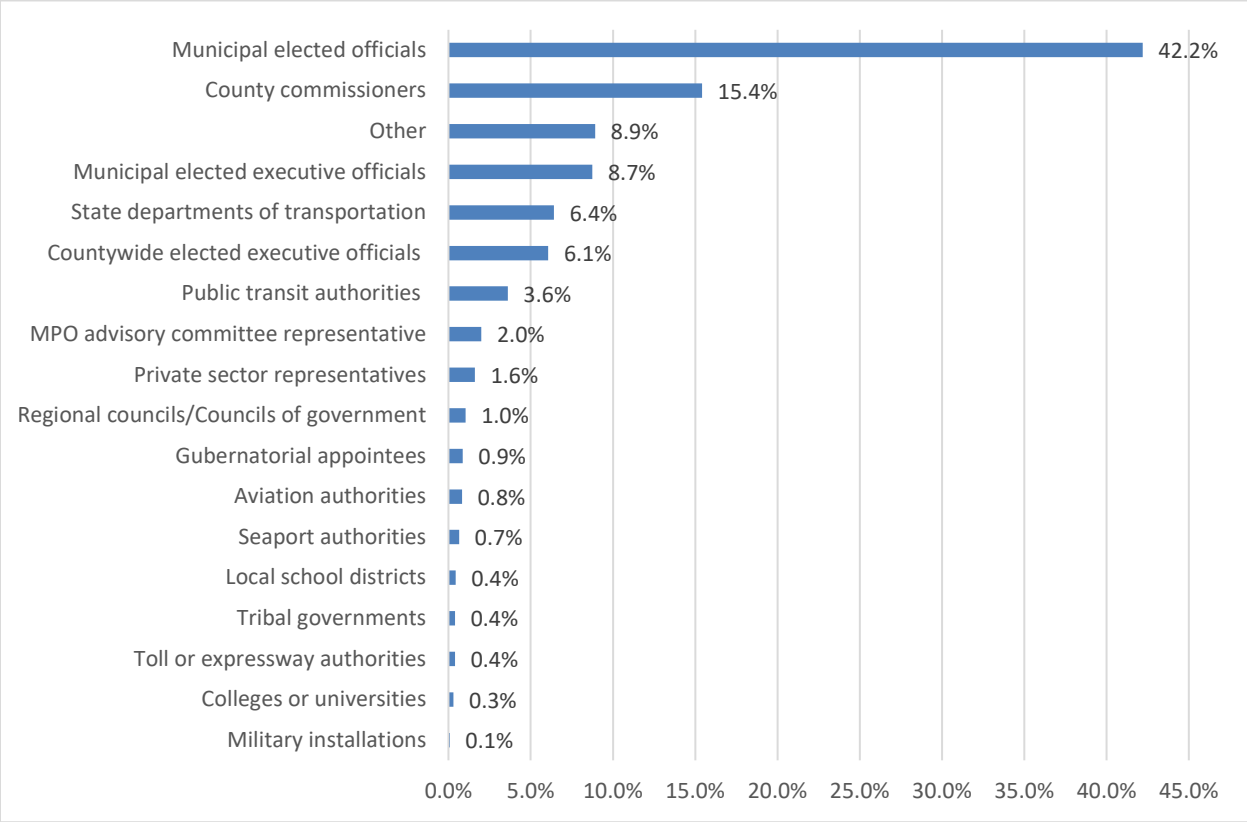

Figure 2-2 Aggregate Percent of All Reporting MPO Board Seats

[8] All MPOs representing Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) were required by MAP-21 to include transit representation. In some cases, transit is represented by the local government that owns the property.

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

The survey revealed that MPO boards range considerably in size with most having between nine and nineteen members. This board size is manageable for even the smallest staff to administer, and at the same time gives a voice to an appropriately diverse group. Extremely large boards—although impressive in their comprehensiveness—may hinder the staff's ability to work with individual board members and dilute the value of each member's time and effort. Conversely, extremely small boards may not be as inclusive in decision-making as federal law intends.

Voting Rights of Board Members

At some MPOs, politics and demographics lead to a differentiation of authority and influence between board seats. Intergovernmental balance is often addressed through seat rotation, allocation of seats, and vote weight.

Many MPOs do not have enough seats on the governing board to allocate at least one to every local government and other relevant stakeholders. One solution to this challenge is for certain seats to "rotate" among a subset of local governments. Among survey respondents, 64 of the 266 MPOs who responded (24%) reported having at least one seat that rotated among local governments. Although seat rotation is reported by MPOs of all sizes, the practice is more common among larger MPOs. Seat rotation may become more necessary within faster growing and larger regions where new areas or municipalities are more likely to be absorbed into the MPO planning area and are too numerous for each to be represented individually. Table 2-3 shows the number and percent of MPOs in each population group that have at least one seat that rotates among a subset of local governments.

Table 2-3 Frequency of Seat Rotation on MPO Governing Boards

MPO Population Class	Number of MPOs with Rotating Seats	Percent of MPOs with Rotating Seats
Less than 100,000	10	16%
100,000 to less than 200,000	14	19%
200,000 to less than 500,000	17	25%
500,000 to less than 1 million	10	42%
1,000,000+	13	35%
Total	**64**	**24%**

Some seat rotation arrangements prescribe the office a person must hold to occupy the seat, or limit the length of time that one individual may serve on the MPO board. For one southeastern MPO with over 20 municipalities in the study area, three seats are designated to rotate amongst the smaller cities. A large MPO reported that one seat periodically rotates among mayors from local municipalities. A few MPOs reported having seats that rotate among regions within the planning area. Several MPOs reported rather informal arrangements. For instance, one mid-sized mid-Atlantic MPO reported that in theory, one seat rotates among five small towns, but in practice, the towns have been satisfied with the current representative who has held the post for several years.

Another means for balancing local intergovernmental politics is to establish a weighted voting scheme within the bylaws. Although weighted voting is a frequently discussed topic in MPO circles—and there is no requirement for every board member's vote to count equally—weighted voting is relatively uncommon—it was reported by only 13.0 percent of MPOs (36 out of 276 MPOs). Several of these MPOs reported that the weighted voting structure permitted in their bylaws had never been used.

Table 2-4 shows the percentage of MPOs with established weighted voting structure within different population classes. The table shows that this percentage is greater for larger MPOs. While less than 10 percent of MPOs with populations below 200,000 reported a weighted voting structure, 26 percent of MPOs with populations over 1 million have established a weighted voting scheme. Many MPOs assign weight to votes according to the population of the member jurisdiction. Several MPOs reported that members may request a weighted vote, but that this rarely, if ever, occurs. One MPO noted a unique practice that the board votes twice on each action item: once with equal votes and then with a weighted vote based on population.

Table 2-4 Frequency of Weighted Voting Structures Among MPO Governing Boards

MPO Population Class	Number of MPOs	Percent of Category
Less than 100,000	5	8%
100,000 to less than 200,000	4	5%
200,000 to less than 500,000	12	17%
500,000 to less than 1 million	5	20%
1,000,000+	10	26%
Total	**36**	**13%**

Non-Voting Board Membership

Non-voting board members are a common phenomenon and provide an opportunity for the inclusion of perspectives in the MPO decision-making process without diminishing local control. Of the 257 MPOs that responded to this part of the survey, 147 (53%) reported having non-voting members on their board. Among MPOs that have at least one non-voting member, the mean number of non-voting seats is four. The presence of non-voting members is spread evenly across MPOs, but there tend to be more non-voting seats on MPO boards from metropolitan areas with larger populations.

The most commonly reported non-voting member is a representative from the state department of transportation with 63 (44%) of MPOs reporting having this type of non-voting seat. Table 2-5 shows the other most commonly reported non-voting seats, including regional councils (17%), public transit authorities (15%), and municipal elected officials (14%). Nearly half of respondents (48%) reported having some "other" type of non-voting seat. "Other" types of seats included MPO advisory committee representatives, staff from neighboring MPOs, state environmental quality offices, local health boards, state legislators, local planning boards, utility providers, and Mexican or Canadian consular officers.

Table 2-5 also shows the average number of non-voting seats by type. For example, of the MPOs that reported having a non-voting seat for an aviation authority representative, the average number of seats reserved was slightly more than one (1.2). This means that the large majority of MPOs that have a non-voting seat reserved for an aviation authority representative had only one of those types of seats, but that a few reserved two or more seats, increasing the average to just above one. In the case of non-voting seats reserved for municipal elected officials and for county commissioners, the average number of seats (3.2 and 3.1 respectively) is skewed by a small handful of MPOs with a large number of non-voting seats reserved for those types of officials. For example, one mid-sized MPO reserves 13 non-voting seats for municipal elected officials while one larger MPO reserves 13 non-voting seats for county commissioners. Conversely, the average of 3.3 non-voting seats for MPOs with representatives from the "Other" category is less skewed by large outliers and more representative of the actual number non-voting seats, though the representatives may not all be of the same type.

Many MPOs also grant the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Division and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Region a non-voting seat on the board. Federal officers are not permitted to have voting membership on the MPO board, but FHWA and FTA representatives can serve an advisory role and ensure that the MPO process is meeting federal expectations.

Table 2-5 MPO Non-voting Board Seat Allocation and Frequency

Seat Type	Percent with this Seat Type	Average Number of Seats
State departments of transportation	44%	1.3
Regional Council	17%	1.7
Public transit authorities	15%	1.2
Municipal elected officials	14%	3.2
Aviation authorities	12%	1.2
Military installations	10%	1.3
Colleges or universities	7%	1.4
County commissioners	6%	3.1
Toll or expressway authorities	6%	1.0
Gubernatorial appointees	5%	1.4
Seaport authorities	4%	1.2
Tribal governments	4%	1.3
School districts	3%	1.3
Countywide elected executive officials	3%	1.8
Private sector representatives	3%	1.0
Other	48%	3.3

Advisory Committees

Advisory committees play a very important role in the ongoing processes of MPOs. They help develop a wide range of planning and programming policies, provide valuable input in the drafting of planning and programming products, and providing relevant and valuable advice to the governing board. Unlike non-voting board members, the vast majority of advisory committee members do not participate directly in governing board meetings. Instead, MPO advisory committees typically transmit recommendations to the MPO governing board through votes at their own separate meetings.

Typically, an advisory committee has a chair and meets in person on a semi-regular basis. Advisory committees are not mentioned in federal law, but are sometimes required by state law. The types and frequency of MPO advisory committees reported in this survey are shown in Table 2-6.

Table 2-6 Frequency of MPO Advisory Committees

Type of Committee	2010 Total	Percent of MPOs	2016 Total	Percent of MPOs
All Respondents	133	--	271	--
Technical Advisory	121	91%	249	92%
Bicycle and Pedestrian	59	44%	96	35%
Citizens Advisory	54	41%	87	32%
Executive Committee	--	--	75	28%
Transit	32	24%	52	19%
Transportation Disadvantaged	29	22%	37	14%
Policy Advisory	--	--	34	13%
Freight or Goods Movement	12	9%	32	12%
Congestion Management	25	19%	30	11%
Air Quality	27	20%	29	11%
Land Use	13	10%	18	7%
Corridor Management	9	7%	11	4%
Emergency Management /Homeland Security	--	--	8	3%
Water	8	6%	7	3%
Asset Management/ State of Good Repair	--	--	5	2%
Non-member Local Government	--	--	2	1%
Historic or Cultural Resources	--	--	1	0%
Other	--	--	67	25%

Just over a quarter of MPOs responding to the survey (75 of 271, or 28%) reported having an executive committee. This committee is typically a sub-set of the MPO governing board (often consisting of MPO governing board officers and appointees) and is intended to make certain delineated policy decisions on behalf of the MPO governing board. This streamlines the decision-making process and is particularly useful for MPOs with large MPO governing boards or for MPO governing boards that do not meet frequently.

Nearly all (92%) of MPOs responding to this part of the survey (249 out of 271) maintain a technical advisory committee (TAC), which is usually comprised of professional and technical staff from member local governments and modal agencies. A TAC and its members typically help board members understand complex engineering and planning concepts and provide input on how MPO decisions are likely to impact local constituencies. An effective TAC facilitates the movement of information between local agencies and MPO staff and can provide important direction and insight for MPO staff.

All other types of advisory committees are less common than the TAC. Fewer than 36 percent of survey respondents reported maintaining other forms of advisory committees. Citizen advisory committees (CACs) are found within 87 (32%) of MPOs responding to the survey. CACs are populated by individuals representing the local citizenry are expected to provide input to the MPO process from that perspective.

CAC members are typically appointed by MPO governing board members (either individually or collectively, sometimes through an application process. CAC members provide the MPO staff and governing board with a “citizens” perspective and help in assessing the public view on MPO proposals and plans.

Transportation disadvantaged advisory committees are intended to represent the perspective of individuals for whom common forms of transportation are less available or accessible. Of the 271 MPOs that responded to this part of the survey, 37 (14%) supported a transportation disadvantaged committee.

Some MPOs have advisory committees devoted to a specific mode of transportation. A substantial number of MPOs (96 out of 271, or 35%) maintain a bicycle and pedestrian advisory committee. This committee is often charged with guiding or even approving the bicycle and pedestrian elements of all MPO documents and bringing together local stakeholders and agencies to resolve bicycle and pedestrian issues. Transit committees help guide the transit planning process within the MPO planning structure, and are found at 20 percent (52 of 271) of MPOs. Bicycle/pedestrian and transit advisory committees are reported more often by large MPOs, presumably because these modes tend to be more developed within those areas.

Specific-issue committees are relatively less common. Such committees can help bring issues of local or regional significance to the MPO’s attention and can be a source for ideas in solving specific problems. Freight and goods movement was assigned its own funding program under the FAST Act and is specifically mentioned in the federal planning factors, yet was only found at 12 percent of responding MPOs. Similarly, planning literature strongly suggests a close coordination between land use and transportation to achieve efficient and quality planning outcomes, but only 7 percent of MPOs reported having a land use committee.

One quarter of the MPOs responding to the survey reported having some “other” type of advisory committee. Examples include ITS, transportation demand management, regional growth, safety, livability, GIS, finance, and environmental committees.

Board Meeting Frequency

Federal law does not mandate or recommend how often the MPO board should convene. Instead, individual MPO bylaws govern meeting frequency, although state statute may impose certain requirements. Table 2-7 illustrates the frequency of MPO governing board meetings reported by survey respondents.

Table 2-7 Frequency of Governing Board Meetings

Frequency of Meeting	2010		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Monthly	72	54.1%	134	48.6%
Bimonthly	22	16.5%	40	14.5%
Quarterly	23	17.3%	59	21.4%
Bi-Annually	5	3.8%	3	1.1%
Other	11	8.3%	40	14.5%

The most common meeting frequency is monthly, which is the practice at 134 of the 276 MPOs that responded to this section of the survey (48%). A substantial number of MPOs meet less frequently. A handful meet only twice per year (just over 1%), while 59 (21%) meet quarterly, and another 40 (14%) meet every other month. Forty MPOs (15%) reported "Other" for this question, with several explaining the MPO met "as needed", but generally between 6 and 8 times per year. A few MPOs reported that their official schedule is to meet monthly, but meetings may be canceled if there are no action items. One large MPO reported that its board meets as often as three times per month depending on the amount of business at hand.

Board Meeting Location

MPOs were asked to provide information regarding where their board meets. As shown in Table 2-8, the most common meeting locations are a board room shared with the host agency (90 of 274, or 33%) or a board room shared with a member local government (73 of 274, or 27%). Other locations reported include a board room used only by the MPO, a board room shared with another public agency, or multiple locations. Several MPOs (31 of 274, or 11%) reported meeting in locations not listed in the survey, such as university board rooms and local libraries.

Table 2-8 Board Meeting Location

Board Meeting Location	Number	Percent
A board room shared with the host agency	90	32.8%
A board room shared with a member local government	73	26.6%
A board room used only by the MPO	36	13.1%
A board room shared with another public agency	24	8.8%
Multiple locations	13	4.7%
Privately-owned space	7	2.6%
Other	31	11.3%
Total	**274**	**100%**

Collaboration with Nearby MPOs and RPOs

Survey respondents were asked if their MPO participated in various types of collaboration with a nearby MPO (Table 2-9). Just over two-thirds of respondents (210 of 272, or 77%) reported some sort of formal collaboration with a neighboring MPO.

The most common form of collaboration is regular meetings between MPO leadership, as reported by 145 (69%) of responding MPOs. Scheduled meetings take place between senior staff members or between governing board members.

About 57 percent of MPOs have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a neighboring MPO, formalizing the relationship. Sometimes the MOU forms a new entity that serves a planning purpose, such as adopting a joint air quality conformity analysis or congestion management process.

Other common types of collaboration include performing joint planning tasks or projects (reported by 133 of 210, or 63% of MPOs), jointly purchasing goods or services (reported by 68, or 32% of MPOs), and conducting joint air quality planning activities (reported by 63, or 30% of MPOs).

Table 2-9 Types of Collaboration with Nearby MPOs

Collaboration Type	Number	Percent with this Collaboration Type
Met with leadership on a regular basis	145	69.0%
Performed other joint planning tasks or projects	133	63.3%
Signed a memorandum of understanding or an inter-local agreement	120	57.1%
Jointly purchased data, software, hardware, or technical services	68	32.4%
Conducted joint air quality planning activities	63	30.0%
Conducted joint public involvement activities	57	27.1%
Developed a regional transportation plan	41	19.5%
Conducted Planning and Environmental Linkages Activities	36	17.1%
Developed a joint Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Long Range Transportation Plan	24	11.4%
Developed a joint Congestion Management Process (CMP)	19	9.0%
Other	37	17.6%

Survey respondents were also asked if their MPO participated in various types of collaboration with a nearby Regional Planning Organization (RPO)[9]. Just over half of responding MPOs (145 of 272, or 53%) reported some sort of formal collaboration with a neighboring RPO.

[9] RPOs have existed in some states for decades. MAP-21 (2012) authorized RPOs and allowed federal funding to be expended on their operation.

The most common form of collaboration is regular meetings between MPO and RPO leadership, as reported by 61 percent of responding MPOs (Table 2-10). Scheduled meetings take place between senior staff members or between governing board members. Fifteen percent of MPOs have collaborated to jointly purchase goods or services. About 26 percent of MPOs have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a neighbor, thereby formalizing the relationship.

Table 2-10 Types of Collaboration with Nearby RPOs

Collaboration Type	Number	Percent with this Collaboration Type
Met with leadership on a regular basis	88	60.7%
Performed other joint planning tasks or projects	82	56.6%
Conducted joint public involvement activities	43	29.7%
Signed a memorandum of understanding or an inter-local agreement	37	25.5%
Developed a regional transportation plan	27	18.6%
Jointly purchased data, software, hardware, or technical services	22	15.2%
Conducted joint air quality planning activities	20	13.8%
Developed a joint Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Long Range Transportation Plan	13	9.0%
Conducted Planning and Environmental Linkages Activities	11	7.6%
Developed a joint Congestion Management Process (CMP)	6	4.1%
Other	32	22.1%

192 of the 268 respondents (72%) also reported joining together to form state associations. Associations serve as a forum for MPOs to share information, jointly purchase goods and services, or advocate for state and federal policy. Some form of statewide association is currently in operation in thirty-seven states: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and West Virginia.[10]

State Statute

While federal law is silent on many aspects of MPO governance and operation, states are free to approve statutes that relate to MPO governance, operation and activities. In the survey, respondents were asked if their state (or states in the case of multi-state MPOs) had statutes pertaining to MPOs. MPOs from 47 states responded to this survey question. However, MPOs from 33 states provided conflicting responses relative to whether their state(s) had MPO-related statutes. MPOs in 12 of the

[10] MPOs from two states did not participate in the survey. It is not known whether associations exist in those states.

remaining 14 states, while agreeing that their state(s) had MPO-related statutes, did not fully agree on what those statutes pertained.

A variety of factors may have contributed to differences between survey results and actual state statute, including:

- MPO mandates might be provided by rule or directive in a state, not by statute
- Statutes might be related to hosting agencies (primarily for Councils of Governments, Regional Planning Councils and other similar agencies), instead of MPOs directly
- Statutes may pertain to one MPO or a small group of MPOs in a particular state, but not to all MPOs in the state
- Survey design and question clarity could influence the respondent's ability to recall information.

Therefore, no reliable conclusions can be drawn on this subject based on these survey results. That said, it is clear, based on a majority of survey responses that several states (California, Florida, Massachusetts, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Texas, Virginia and Washington) do provide statutory guidance in a variety of MPO areas relating to:

- Governing and advisory boards
- Statewide transportation, local modal, land use, greenhouse gas and air quality planning
- Purchasing and procurement
- MPO core products (MTP/LRTP, TIP, CMP or UPWP)

Technical Support from Other Agencies

Federal and state agencies provide an array of technical support (resource documents, webinars, online training sessions, etc.) to help MPOs meet their responsibilities in a wide range of subject areas. MPOs responding to the survey were asked if they felt that they receive adequate technical support from outside resource agencies at the federal and state level. A total of 264 MPOs replied to this question.

The vast majority of those MPOs that responded to this question (252 of 264, or 96%) indicated that they receive adequate technical support from their state department of transportation (Table 2-11). Almost as many MPOs (235 of 264, or 89%) felt that the Federal Highway Administration provided them with adequate technical support. Over two-thirds of MPOs (180 of 264, or 69%) replying to this question felt that the Federal Transit Administration provided them with adequate technical support.

Table 2-11 Technical Support from Outside Resource Agencies

Outside Resource Agency	Number	Percent with this Collaboration Type
All Respondents	264	--
State Department of Transportation	252	95.5%
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	235	89.0%
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)	180	68.2%
Other state agencies	53	20.1%
Other federal agencies	32	12.1%
Other	21	8.0%

Approximately 20 percent (53 of 264) of MPOs responding to this question indicated that other state agencies provided them with technical support (with 48 MPOs indicating a specific type of state agency); while approximately 12 percent (32 of 264) of MPOs indicated that other federal agencies provided them with technical support (with 27 MPOs indicating a specific federal agency).

The most common state agencies providing technical support to MPOs (excluding state departments of transportation) included those focused on the environment and air quality (30 of 48 MPOs, or 63%), growth management and planning (9 of 48 MPOs, or 19%), and natural resources (8 of 48 MPOs, or 17%). MPOs also indicated that state agencies focused on commerce, economic development, historic preservation, health, homeland security and energy had provided them with technical support.

The most common federal agency (excluding the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration) providing MPOs with technical support was the US Environmental Protection Agency (17 of 27 MPOs or 63%). Among the other federal agencies providing MPOs with technical support were the Department of Defense (including the US Army Corps of Engineers), the Federal Railroad Administration, the Department of Homeland Security (including the Federal Emergency Management Administration), the Department of the Interior, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Energy and the Department of Commerce (including the US Economic Development Administration).

When asked what additional technical support would be beneficial, 107 MPOs provided input and suggested a number of areas where MPOs could use more technical assistance. The most common request was for more technical support in the general area of transportation modeling, data collection, and technical analysis. The next most common request was in the general area of MPO operations, followed closely by performance management, transportation funding and programming, and regulatory compliance. Other areas of technical support mentioned by a few MPOs included communication and collaboration, transit planning, freight planning, sustainability and environmental planning, project development and design, and environmental justice.

Chapter 3: Administrative Structures of MPOs

One of the primary objectives of this research is to examine MPO administrative structures. It was once widely believed that MPOs belong to one of two broad administrative categories – hosted or independent. For this project, an MPO is considered to be hosted when another organization acts as the fiscal agent for the MPO and holds the power to hire and fire the MPO's employees. On the other hand, an MPO is considered to be independent if the MPO acts as its own fiscal agent and if the director can only be hired and fired by the MPO board.

Recent research has revealed that rather than there being two distinct types of MPOs, MPOs span a continuum of administrative arrangements[11]. This continuum is discussed further in the subsection "Types of MPO Structures" below.

There is no federal guidance on the topic of hosting, though some states address the issue in statute. Some state statutes are permissive and provide guidance in structure or agreement methods, but do not dictate MPO organizational structures. Others are more regulatory, providing specific requirements for MPO hosting and staffing arrangements. Decisions on hosting arrangements are usually made when an MPO is initially designated, but these decisions are sometimes altered later due to demographic, economic, or political changes in the MPO planning area – many of which occur after the decennial Census.

The majority of MPOs responding to the survey are hosted, with 192 of 279 (68.8%) reporting being administered by another agency (Figure 3-1). The remaining 87 MPOs (31.2%) identified as independent. This proportion is roughly the same as it was in 2010. Transportation Management Areas (TMAs, or MPOs with more than 200,000 people) are more likely to be an independent agency than non-TMAs (Table 3-1). This is especially true among MPOs with a population of over 500,000 people.

Table 3-1 Independent MPOs by Population

MPO Population	Number Hosted	Number Independent	Percent Independent
Less than 100k	46	20	30%
100-200k	61	16	21%
Total Non-TMA	107	36	25%
200-500k	52	21	29%
500-1000k	14	11	44%
Over 1 million	19	19	50%
Total TMA	85	51	38%

[11] Bond, A., Kramer, J., & Seggerman, K., Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Center for Urban Transportation Research, 2010. https://planning.dot.gov/documents/Staffing_Administrative_Capacity_MPOs.pdf

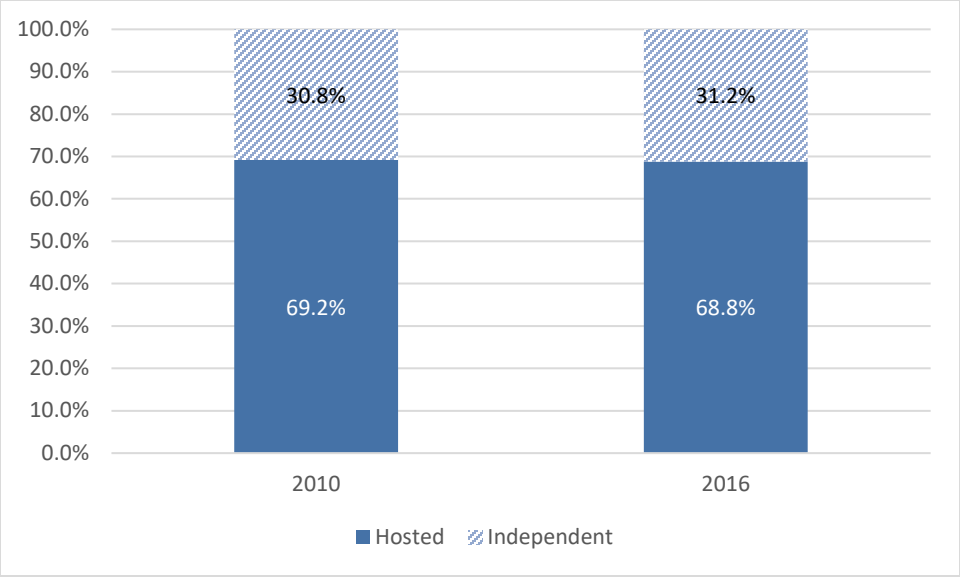

Figure 3-1 Percentage of Hosted and Independent MPOs (2010 vs. 2016)

There appears to be a correlation between MPO hosting status and air quality attainment status, though this is not necessarily a causal relationship. MPOs in attainment are more likely to be hosted than MPOs in maintenance status or nonattainment (Figure 3-2).

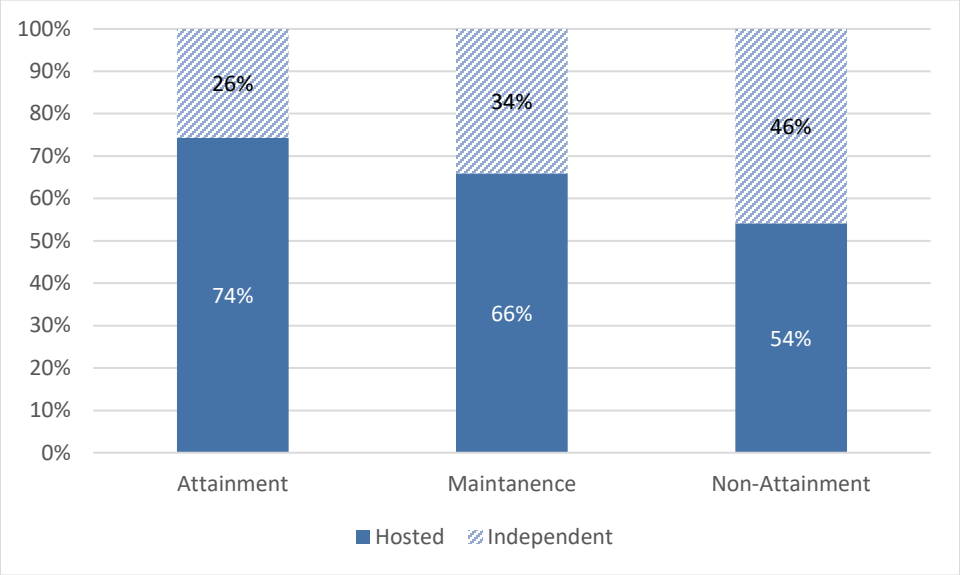

Figure 3-2 Air Quality Attainment Status vs. Hosting Status

Types of MPO Structures

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

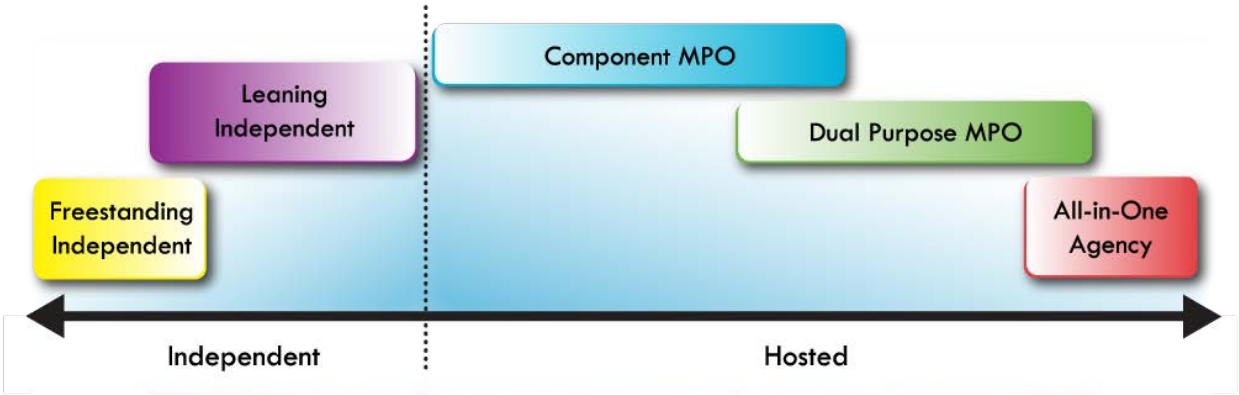

Figure 3-3 MPO Hosting Continuum

All-in-One Agency

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

- The MPO operates under the same name as the host agency.
- A board with identical membership governs the entire agency, including the MPO.
- Agency employees are engaged in MPO and non-MPO related work activities.
- The MPO is hosted within a Regional Council (defined within the Host Agencies section below), with few exceptions.

Dual Purpose MPO

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

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

Component MPO

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

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

Leaning Independent MPO

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

- The MPO board supervises the director and staff.
- The MPO director does not have a supervisor, other than the MPO board.
- The MPO board or the member government/agency providing services can sever the contractual relationship with the MPO.
- The MPO may adopt all of the personnel policies of the member government/agency it leans on.
- The MPO oversees its own finances, payroll, and purchasing, either directly or through a contractual relationship.

Freestanding Independent MPO

This is a truly independent agency. The MPO must meet all of its operating needs by itself. This is the most expensive way to operate an MPO, but the MPO has full freedom in terms of administrative and planning policy. Characteristics include:

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

Host Agencies

A large majority of MPOs are hosted by another agency. However, the level of integration between the host agency and the MPO varies. As discussed previously, instead of being completely hosted or independent, many MPOs lie somewhere between these two ends of the spectrum. For instance, some MPOs, although hosted, retain a separate name and identity from their host agency. The Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization in Virginia is one example – it is hosted by the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, but does not share the same name or logo. Meanwhile, some MPOs do not differentiate MPO products from those of the host. This can make it difficult to distinguish MPO employees and activities from those of the host agency.

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

MPOs are hosted by a variety of agencies, the most common type being the regional council. The survey defined a regional council as "an agency established by two or more local governments to address issues of regional significance." For the purposes of this research, the term "regional council" included agencies of similar name and function such as Councils of Government, Planning and Development Districts, Regional Planning Councils, Associations of Government, and Area Councils. Regional councils frequently administer government programs or offer services to member local governments. Out of 189 hosted MPOs that defined the type of agency that hosts them, 73 (39%) are hosted by a regional council (Figure 3-4).

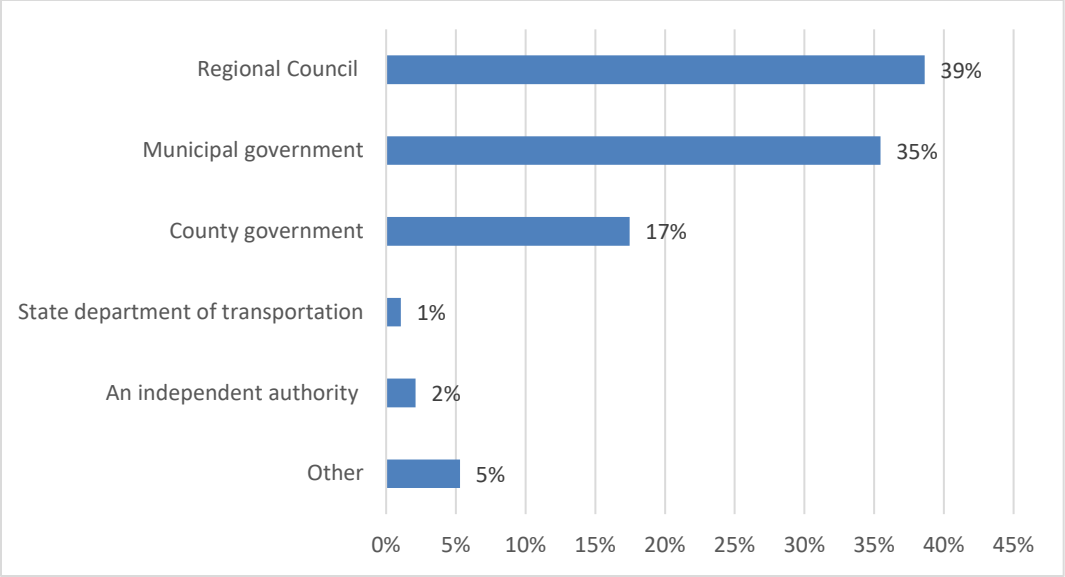

Figure 3-4 Host Agency Types

When considering all MPOs, including independent MPOs, county governments hosted nearly 12 percent of all MPOs in 2016, while municipal governments hosted 24 percent of all MPOs (Table 3-2). Taken together, local governments hosted nearly 36 percent of all MPOs responding to the survey, surpassing regional councils (26.2%) as the most common organizational structure.

While the proportion of MPOs hosted by regional councils remained relatively steady between 2010 and 2016, the percentage of MPOs hosted by county and municipal governments varied somewhat. This could be a result of different sample sizes collected in 2010 and 2016.

Table 3-2 Types of Host Agencies (2010 vs. 2016)

	Host Agency Type	Number	Percent of all Hosted MPOs	Percent of all MPOs
2016	Regional Council	73	38.6%	26.2%
	County Government	33	17.5%	11.8%
	Municipal Government	67	35.4%	24.0%
	State DOT	2	1.1%	0.7%
	An independent authority	4	2.1%	1.4%
	Other[12]	10	5.3%	3.6%
2010	Regional Council	34	37.4%	25.6%
	County Government	27	29.6%	20.3%
	Municipal Government	26	28.5%	19.5%
	Modal Authority	2	2.2%	1.5%
	State DOT	1	1.1%	0.8%
	University	1	1.1%	0.8%

Types of host agency vary across population class. County-hosted MPOs are primarily in the 100,000-500,000 population classes (Table 3-3). Relatively fewer county-hosted MPOs are found at the lowest population category (100,000 and smaller) or in the largest population categories (500,000 or more).

Table 3-3 County-Hosted MPOs by Population Class

Population Class	Participating MPOs	County-Hosted MPOs	Differential
Less than 100,000	66 (24%)	4 (12%)	-12%
100,000 to less than 200,000	77 (28%)	14 (42%)	+14%
200,000 to less than 500,000	73 (26%)	10 (30%)	+4%
500,000 to less than 1 million	25 (9%)	2 (6%)	-3%
1,000,000+	38 (14%)	3 (9%)	-5%
Total	279 (100%)	33 (100%)	-

Municipally-hosted MPOs are prevalent in smaller urbanized areas. Table 3-4 compares the percentage of MPOs in each population class that participated in the survey with the percentage of municipally-hosted MPOs in each population class. Municipally-hosted MPOs are overwhelmingly in the smallest population categories. In fact, 68 percent of all municipally-hosted MPOs are not large enough to qualify as Transportation Management Areas.

[12] MPOs indicating "Other" on the survey were hosted by the following types of agencies: combined or consolidated city/county planning agencies, economic development agencies, countywide land use agencies, and a State Department of Administration.

Table 3-4 Municipal-Hosted MPOs by Population Classification

Population Class	Participating MPOs	Municipal-Hosted MPOs	Differential
Less than 100,000	66 (24%)	27 (40%)	+16%
100,000 to less than 200,000	77 (28%)	19 (28%)	0%
200,000 to less than 500,000	73 (26%)	16 (24%)	-2%
500,000 to less than 1 million	25 (9%)	1 (2%)	-7%
1,000,000+	38 (14%)	4 (6%)	-8%
Total	279 (100%)	67 (100%)	-

Some less common arrangements were also reported. The New York Metropolitan Transportation Council and the Oahu MPO were the only two MPOs that reported being hosted by the state department of transportation. Four MPOs reported being hosted by an independent authority, such as a transit authority.

Characteristics Shared with Host Agencies

Of the hosted MPOs that provided logo information, the vast majority (154 out of 190, or 81%) do not share the same name and logo as their host agency (Figure 3-5). MPOs that are hosted by regional councils are more likely to have the same name and logo as the regional council than MPOs that are hosted by county or municipal governments (Table 3-5).

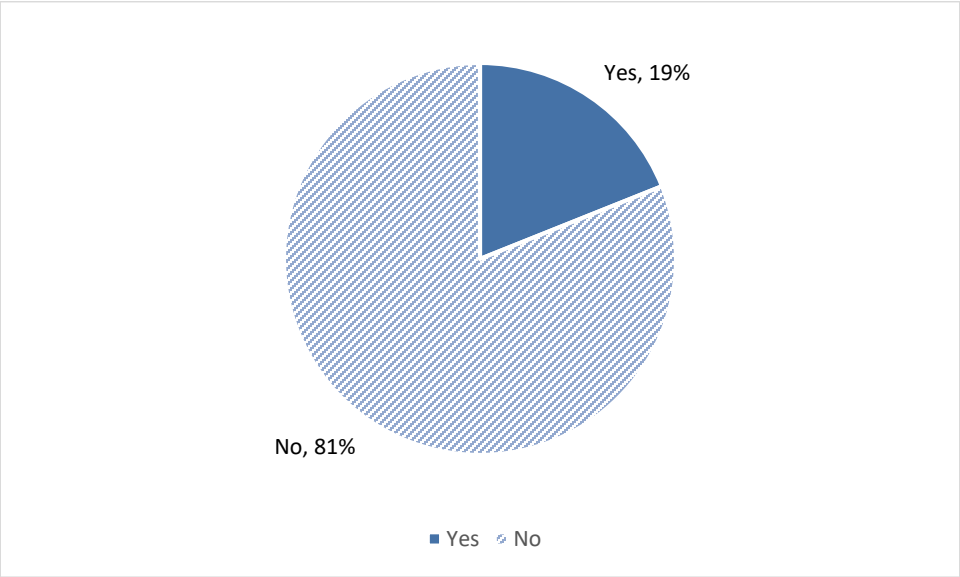

Figure 3-5 MPOs Sharing the Same Name and Logo as Host Agency

Table 3-5 MPOs Sharing the Same Name and Logo as Host Agency by Agency Type

Share Name and Logo?	Regional Council	County Government	Municipal Government
Yes	32.9%	12.1%	6.1%
No	67.1%	87.9%	93.9%

The vast majority (161 out of 191, or 84%) of hosted MPOs also have a governing board that is completely separate from the host agency's board (one hosted MPO did not provide this information). Sixteen MPOs (8%) have a board that is a subset of the host agency's board, and 14 (7%) share the exact same board as the host agency (Figure 3-6).

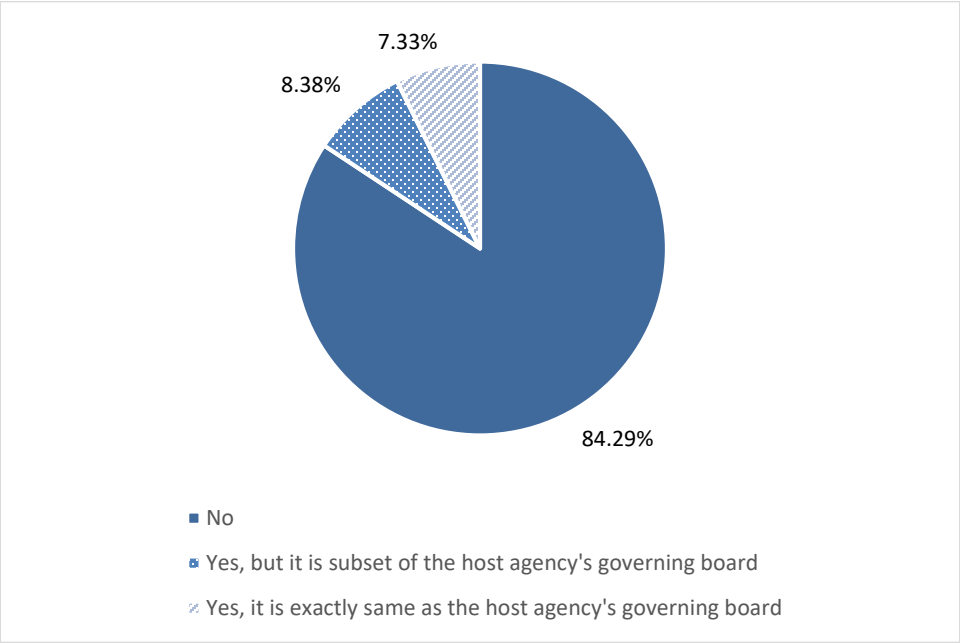

Figure 3-6 MPOs Sharing Boards with their Host Agency

The rate of MPOs sharing the same governing board with their host agency varied depending on the host agency type. MPOs that were hosted by regional councils are more likely to share a board with the regional council than MPOs that are hosted by local governments (Table 3-6). Out of 73 MPOs hosted by regional councils, 19 (26%) reported sharing their governing board with the host agency.

Table 3-6 MPOs Sharing the Same Governing Board with the Host Agency by Agency Type

Does the MPO Share the Same Governing Board with the Host Agency?	Regional Council	County Government	Municipal Government
No	74.0%	93.9%	92.5%
Yes, but subset of the host agency's governing board	13.7%	0.0%	7.5%
Yes, exactly same as the host agency's governing board	12.3%	6.1%	0.0%

A majority of hosted MPOs providing information about work completed for their host agency (116 out of 190, or 61%) reported that the MPO staff performs non-MPO work for their host agency, compared to 74 (39%) whose staff do not perform non-MPO work (Figure 3-7).

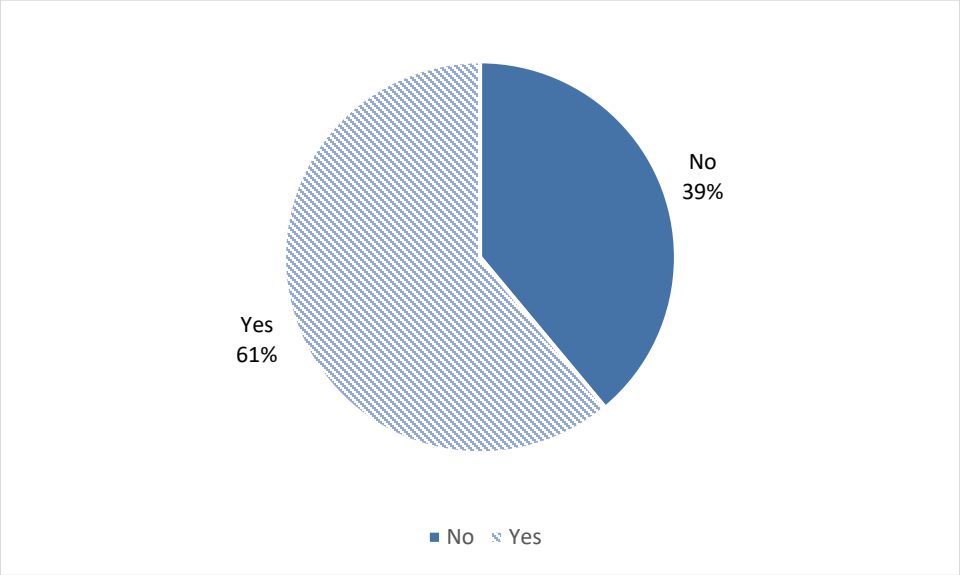

Figure 3-7 Hosted MPOs with Staff Performing non-MPO Work for their Host Agency

MPOs that are hosted by regional councils are more likely to have staff that perform non-MPO work for the host agency than MPOs that are hosted by local governments. Out of 72 MPOs hosted by regional councils, 57 (79%) reported that staff perform non-MPO work (Table 3-7). Meanwhile, only 17 out of 33 (51%) county-hosted MPOs and 31 out of 67 (46%) municipal-hosted MPOs have staff that perform non-MPO work.

Table 3-7 MPOs with Staff that Perform Non-MPO Work for Host Agency by Host Agency Type

Does Staff Perform Non-MPO Work?	Regional Council	County Government	Municipal Government
No	20.83%	48.48%	53.73%
Yes	79.17%	51.52%	46.27%

Hiring and firing authority over the MPO director can vary. Of 191 respondents, 119 MPOs (62%) reported that the host agency has hiring and firing authority. Thirty-eight (20%) reported that the MPO governing board had hiring and firing authority. Twenty-seven MPOs (14%) reported that the MPO governing board and host agency shared that authority. Seven MPOs (4%) reported some "other" circumstance (Table 3-8).

Table 3-8 Entities with Hiring/Firing Authority over MPO Director

Entity with Hiring/Firing Authority over MPO Director	Number	Percent
Host agency	119	62.3%
MPO governing board	38	19.9%
Combination of MPO governing board and host agency	27	14.1%
Other	7	3.7%
Sum	**191**	**100%**

Of 191 hosted MPOs, 120 (63%) reported that their budget was integrated with the budget of their host agency, while 64 (33%) reported that it was kept separate (one hosted MPO did not provide this information). Seven MPOs (4%) indicated some "other" arrangement (Figure 3-8). Several of these MPOs indicated that the MPO budget was developed separately, but included as an element or subset of the host agency's budget.

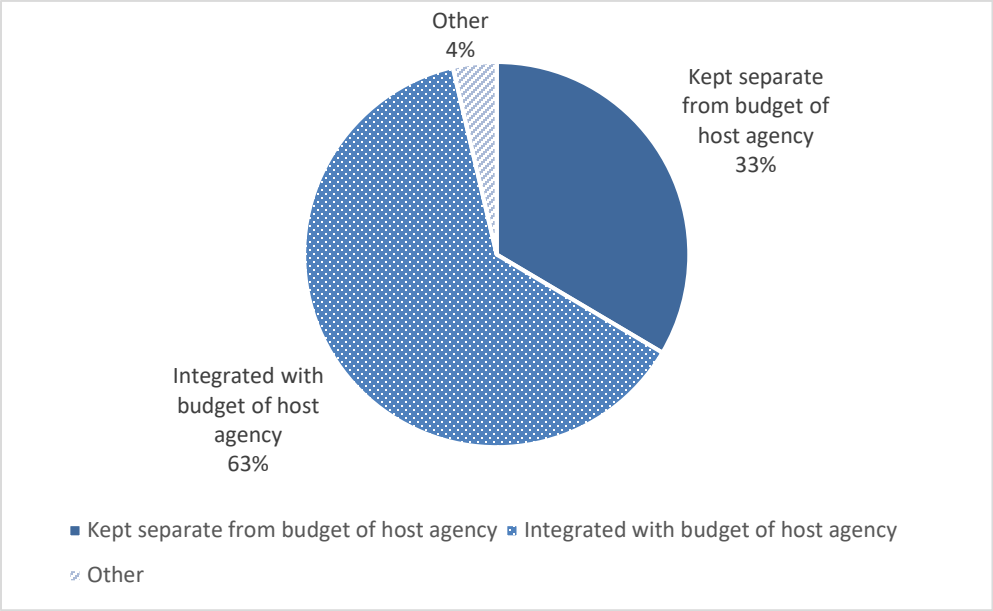

Figure 3-8 MPOs' Budget Integration with Host Agency's Budget

MPOs that are hosted by regional councils are more likely to have their budget integrated with the host agency than MPOs that are hosted by local governments. Out of 73 MPOs hosted by regional councils, 56 (77%) integrate their budget with the host, compared to 19 out of 33 (57%) for county-hosted MPOs and 34 out of 67 (51%) for municipal-hosted MPOs (Table 3-9).

Table 3-9 MPOs' Budget Integration with Host Agency's Budget by Host Agency Type

Budget Integrated or Kept Separate from Host Agency Budget	Regional Council	County Government	Municipal Government
Kept separate from budget of host agency	21.9%	33.3%	44.8%
Integrated with budget of host agency	76.7%	57.6%	50.7%
Other	1.4%	9.1%	4.5%

Overall, it appears that MPOs that are hosted by regional councils are more highly integrated with their host agency than MPOs hosted by local governments. MPOs hosted by regional councils are more likely to share names and logos, have staff that perform non-MPO work for the host agency, lack authority to hire and fire the MPO director, and have an integrated budget with the host agency.

Fees Paid to Host Agencies

Many MPOs that are hosted pay money to the host agency. Sometimes referred to as "indirect charges", these fees are intended to pay the MPO's share of certain goods, services, and supplies necessary for their operation. Fees may be levied as a percentage of the MPO's budget, as a flat fee, or on a cost-reimbursable basis.

The survey asked hosted respondents the amount of money paid to the host agency, expressed as a percent of the MPO's budget. Of the 190 hosted MPOs that responded to this question, half reported paying fees to the host agency while the remaining half did not.

MPOs that are hosted by regional councils are more likely to pay indirect fees than MPOs hosted by local governments (Table 3-10). Of 73 MPOs hosted by regional councils, 45 (62%) reported paying indirect fees for goods and services. Comparatively, 13 out of 32 (41%) county-hosted MPOs and 26 out 67 (39%) municipal-hosted MPOs reported paying indirect fees.

Table 3-10 Indirect Charges Paid to Host Agencies by Host Agency Type

Fees Paid to Host Agency?	Regional Council	County Government	Municipal Government
Yes	61.6%	40.6%	38.8%
No	38.4%	59.4%	61.2%

Half of hosted MPOs are not charged an indirect rate by their host agency. There are two main reasons for this: 1) the MPO's finances and employee structure are so intertwined with the host that a formal payment is not necessary; or 2) the MPO is operated as a separate function of a local government's transportation planning agency. Generally, MPOs that do not pay indirect fees are more dependent on the host agency than MPOs that do pay an indirect rate. Conversely, high indirect rates indicate that the MPO functions more independently.

The average indirect rate paid to host agencies as a percentage of the MPO's annual budget ranged widely from just two percent to 80 percent, with a mean of approximately 25 percent (Table 3-11). However, the middle two-thirds of MPOs had indirect charges between five percent and 48 percent. There does not appear to be a statistically significant difference in indirect charges when compared to MPO staff size.

Table 3-11 Indirect Charges Paid to Host Agencies

Statistic	Percent of MPO Budget	
	2010	2016
Maximum	62.0%	80.0%
Mean	23.8%	25.1%
Minimum	1.3%	2.0%
Standard Deviation	17.2%	19.8%

The average indirect rate paid to host agencies varies depending on host agency type. MPOs hosted by regional councils pay an indirect rate of approximately 36 percent on average, compared to only 11 percent and 13 percent for county-hosted and municipal-hosted MPOs, respectively (Table 3-12).

Table 3-12 Average Indirect Rates Paid to Host Agencies by Host Agency Type

Regional Council	County government	Municipal government
35.5	11.2	13.1

Half of all hosted MPOs (95 out of 190) pay an indirect rate to their host agency. Of the hosted MPOs that reported the percentage of their budget paid to their host agency as an indirect charge (90 hosted MPOs), 30 (33%) reported paying 10 percent of the annual MPO budget or less. Ninety percent (81 out of 90 MPOs) reported paying less than 50 percent of the MPOs budget for indirect fees (Table 3-13).

Table 3-13 Frequency Distribution of the Percent of MPOs' Annual Budget Spent Paying the Indirect Rate

Percent of MPO Budget	Number	Percent
1%-10%	30	33.3%
11%-20%	17	18.9%
21%-30%	11	12.2%
31%-40%	13	14.4%
41%-50%	10	11.1%
51%-60%	5	5.6%
61%-70%	1	1.1%
71%-80%	3	3.3%
Total	**90**	**100.0%**

Figure 3-9 shows the types of goods and services that MPOs receive in exchange for paying indirect charges. More than 60 percent of indirect-paying MPOs reported receiving payroll services, office space, utilities, computers and IT services, human resources services, phone, and employee benefits. Some MPOs noted that they received "other" types of goods and services, such as advertising, parking, and professional memberships and dues. One midsized northeastern MPO reported that indirect rate covers the MPO Director's salary and most of the Assistant Directors' salaries.

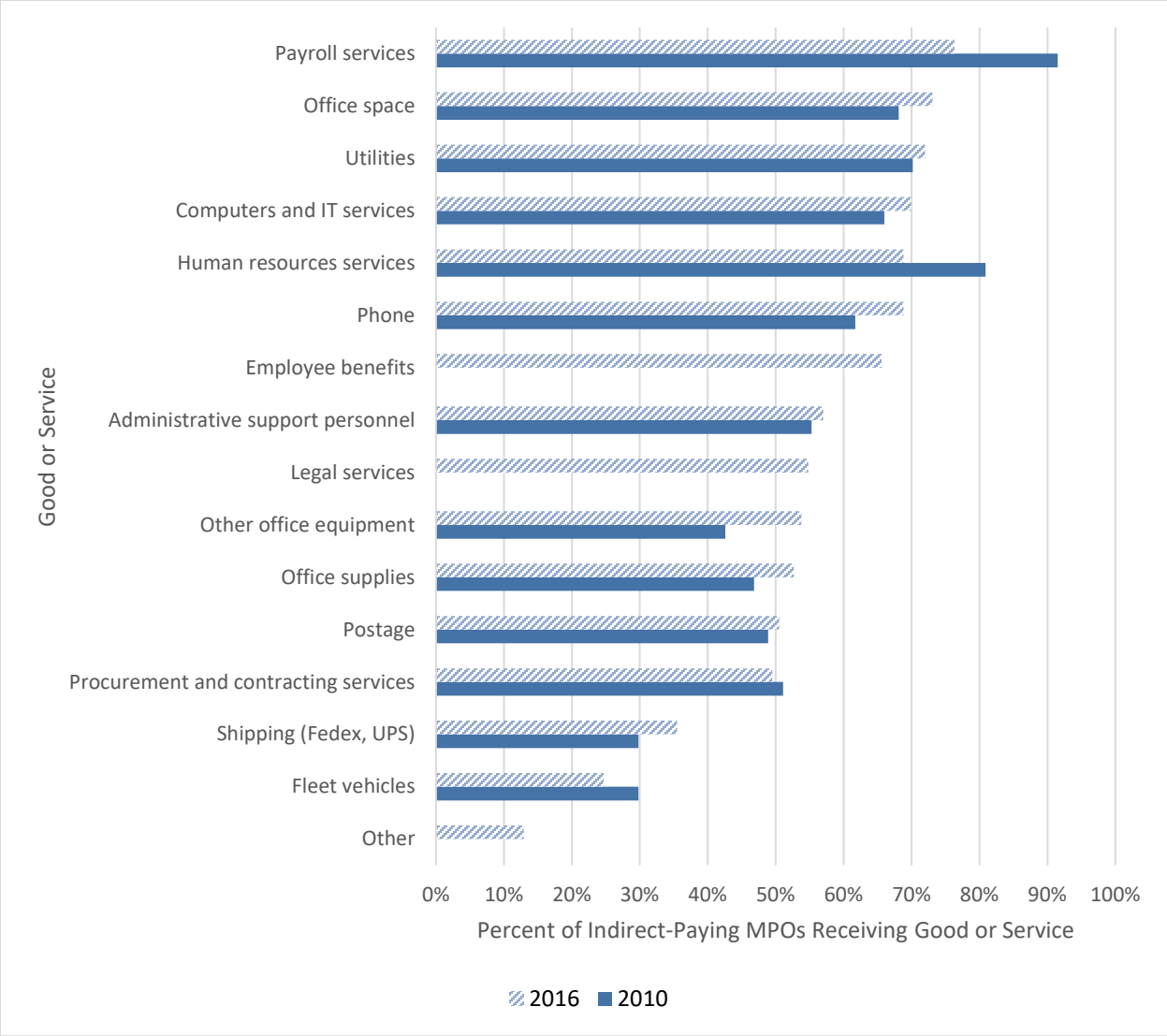

Figure 3-9 Goods and Services Received in Exchange for Indirect Charges[13]

Advantages and Disadvantages of Administrative Structures

MPOs were asked to describe the advantages and disadvantages of being hosted or independent. Of the 279 MPOs who declared their hosting status, 232 (83%) provided information on the various advantages and disadvantages of that status. The results of this question highlight the wide range of issues MPOs must consider when choosing or modifying their administrative structures. Responses clearly centered on specific themes, and benefits and challenges remained consistent with the ones reported in the previous study completed in 2010.

[13] Note: "Employee benefits", "legal services", and "other" show no data for 2010 because they were not included as possible responses in the 2010 survey.

Advantages of Hosted Structures

MPOs participating in the survey noted several clear advantages to being hosted by another agency. Summary comments are shown in Figure 3-10 below and described in detail in the following sections.

Figure 3-10 Advantages of Hosted Structures

Reduced Cost of Operations

Roughly half of the hosted MPOs who responded to this question cited reduced cost of operations as a key advantage of being hosted by another agency. MPOs are able to share resources with the host and take advantage of economies of scale. This reduces operating costs in a variety of ways, including:

- Eliminating or reducing office rent;
- Reducing the cost of office support services, such as human resources, payroll services, benefits, and IT support; and
- Reducing the cost of office supplies such as paper, equipment, and furniture through bulk ordering.

MPOs can also save on administrative costs, because administrative support is often provided by the host agency. This allows the MPO to hire fewer administrative personnel and target labor dollars for employees performing technical work. One southwestern MPO stated that “[being hosted] allows [the MPO] to focus on planning and programming more than administration.” A midsized southwestern MPO noted that being hosted by another agency means “less time spent on non-planning issues.” A mid-Atlantic MPO stated that being hosted “keeps costs down so [the MPO] can complete more studies and projects”.

These advantages are particularly important for small MPOs. With limited funds, many small MPOs see a major benefit in sharing resources with another agency, and some even see hosting as essential to sustaining their operations. For instance, one small Midwestern MPO noted, "a small MPO would not have the full range of staff and support if it were an independent agency." Another small mid-Atlantic MPO stated that "being hosted...provides budgetary feasibility, economy of scale, and is the only practical approach for a small MPO."

Financial Assistance from the Host Agency

Many MPOs cited financial assistance from the host agency as a key benefit of being hosted. MPOs receive reimbursement for eligible expenses from the federal government through either federal planning (commonly referred to as PL funds) or transit planning funds. MPOs require a mechanism for covering upfront costs until federal reimbursements are received, often referred to as "capital float". Several MPOs reported that the host agency provides this capital to pay for operational expenses until those expenses can be reimbursed.

The federal government also requires a local match for federal planning funds – the federal share is 80 percent and the local share is 20 percent. Some state DOTs meet this match on behalf of the MPO. However, in most states the MPO, its members, or the MPO host is expected to deliver local money to match the federal share. When the local match is not met, the amount of federal assistance is reduced. Several MPOs reported they had difficulty raising the local match and that meeting local match requirements would be a major impediment to operating independently.

Enhanced Coordination of Planning Efforts

About half of the MPOs responding to this question cited enhanced coordination of planning efforts and the ability to share expertise with the host agency as major advantages to being hosted. Being housed by another agency often means that MPO staff can readily communicate and coordinate with planners specializing in land use, housing, economic development, and environmental protection, all of which directly relate to transportation. This can make it easier for MPOs to accomplish the "cooperative" part of the 3-C process. For instance, one large Midwestern MPO stated that being hosted allows for more comprehensive planning and prevents the MPO from being a "transportation silo." A midsized Midwestern MPO reported that the hosting arrangement "gives [the MPO] the ability to take a holistic approach to transportation planning and utilize other expertise in the office as needed." A small northeastern MPO noted that, because of their hosting arrangement, "transportation planning is more comprehensive and is aligned with other local and regional goals." One small western MPO stated that MPO employees work part-time for the MPO and part-time for the host agency, "which results in wonderful synergies."

Disadvantages of Hosted Structures

Several disadvantages were also noted in narrative comments. These are shown in Figure 3-11 and described in more detail in the following sections.

Figure 3-11 Disadvantages of Hosted Structures

Administrative Challenges

One frequently cited disadvantage of being hosted by another agency is that the MPO is often subject to the host agency rules and procedures. For example, some MPOs noted that restrictive personnel policies, including salary levels, may hinder the MPO's ability to attract and retain staff. One Midwestern MPO stated that "the salary structure at the local agency challenges the MPO's ability to attract qualified candidates to MPO positions." A midsized southwestern MPO noted, "host agency pay and benefits are often not competitive with market rates, and the MPO is unable to adjust."

The host agency may also dictate policies related to travel, budgets, and contracting, and these policies are often incompatible with the MPO's needs and goals. This can make some processes more burdensome and bureaucratic than they might otherwise be. Large, midsized, and small MPOs across the country provided a variety of comments on this issue, some of which are listed below:

- "We are obligated to follow the host agency contracting, budgeting, and human resources policies. Some departments are more responsive than others, and some processes are slow and burdensome, requiring additional staff efforts to conduct daily business."
- "All employees of the host agency are required to live within the boundaries of the host agency… The residency requirement challenges staff knowledge of regional problems, at times, because staff members do not live in other areas."
- "Responses to questions and requests are not as timely as if these administrative functions were in-house."
- "Adds another layer of administration to obtain approvals for almost everything (i.e. purchasing, travel, payroll, budgets, etc.)."
- "The host and MPO have different fiscal years so there is a fair amount of bookkeeping work needed to make budgets work together."

- "Having a host agency requires duplication of effort in terms of having to seek approval from two governing boards regarding procurement and financial approvals, such as establishing and modifying the annual operating budget. Addressing two different fiscal years adds complications as well. The end result is that it is at times extremely difficult to establish the MPO's operating budget and procure goods and services within the timeframe we require it."
- "Falling directly into the City organization makes me less effective as an "Executive". In reality, I am a middle manager who has to justify my budget two levels above me even though it could be approved unanimously by the Policy Committee. If I want to hire an additional planner, I do not have the ability to just go and do it. If I need to make small changes to contracts, I have to go to City Council or the City Manager for approval, which delays project delivery."
- "Our budget is embedded within the City budget, and we are bound to the same personnel policies and rules as other City employees, so we have no control over our own hiring, firing, pay, promotion, etc. even though our funds are not City funds."

Blurring Between MPO and Host Agency Responsibilities, Identities, and Boundaries

Another issue MPOs raised is the blurring between MPO and host agency responsibilities, identities, and boundaries. This confusion can be felt by all stakeholders, including the host agency, the MPO governing board, MPO staff, and the public. In some cases, the MPO and the host agency are known by the same name and logo. For instance, a midsized southeastern MPO noted, "There is a loss of independence for the MPO in a larger agency. The public does not realize the different roles the host agency plays in different aspects of the community." Another southeastern MPO said, "There is a lot of confusion regarding what the MPO does and what the host agency does. People see me as a City employee that should be able to get the mayor to do something, when I really represent the MPO in an information-gathering and reporting capacity."

Exacerbating the problem for some MPOs is overlap in governing board membership and staff. For many hosted MPOs, it can also be difficult for the board and staff to keep track of which capacity they are functioning in at any given time. One midsized northeastern MPO put it this way: "As county employees, it can be difficult to act as an unbiased 'third party' when it comes to MPO matters – balancing the interests and needs of the MPO versus the county."

Lack of MPO Autonomy and Independence

Many MPOs cited either real or perceived lack of MPO autonomy and independence as a key disadvantage of being hosted by another agency. Several MPOs reported that the host "interferes" with MPO policy setting and implementation, either intentionally or by misunderstanding, and some reported that the needs of the host sometimes take precedence over the broader needs of the MPO. In many cases it appears that this issue is a result of the host agency not fully understanding what the appropriate role of the MPO is and how it is designed to operate, but not in all cases. MPOs of all sizes and geographic areas provided comments on this particular challenge, some of which are listed below:

- "The MPO may not get the same level of attention on MPO planning issues as part of a larger organization."
- "The host agency does not recognize the MPO Policy Board as having authority over the transportation planning funds."

- “The MPO Director cannot command decisions without seeking prior host approval. Lack of understanding from the host on what the MPO does, how the funding works, and program requirements.”
- “Lack of knowledge/understanding of MPO function by host agency. The MPO may be viewed as non-essential during budget cutbacks.”
- “The potential for the MPO agenda to be dictated by the host agency is increased.”
- “The host sometimes expects preferential treatment.”
- “Dealing with local politics overshadows our regional objectives.”
- “Host agency is perceived as having more influence on MPO programs.”
- “The host agency wants to control everything.”
- “Bending to their will on projects.”
- “Being hosted by another agency can lead to conflicts when it comes to setting funding priorities if the host agency attempts to influence that process.”

Several MPOs also expressed frustration with their staff working on projects unrelated to the MPO mission. Some reported that there is insufficient staff time to dedicate to MPO projects and that the MPO functions get lost in the overall work effort. One midsized western MPO stated: “There is a perception that the host agency has a greater level of control over the activities of the MPO. There are times when the MPO staff work on local agency activities which takes away from the overall time committed to the MPO.” A small southeastern MPO said, “If you are a planner, then you are still expected to do other planning functions such as review site plans, plats, etc. along with all of your other MPO functions.” One small western MPO put it frankly: “When my boss or the City Manager asks for something, my staff drops everything to take care of them. Sometimes I can’t even control my own employees because of the organizational structure of the MPO!” One MPO reported: “I have to battle frequently to keep our work separate from the City and remind others, including my own boss, what we can and should be doing versus what we are being asked to do.”

Other

Some MPOs offered perspectives that were somewhat unusual or did not fit into the categories above. For instance, a few MPOs reported that the indirect charges are too costly. Additionally, several MPOs reported that they saw no disadvantages to being hosted by another agency.

Advantages of Independent Structures

Several themes emerged regarding the various advantages of having an independent organizational structure. Figure 3-12 below summarizes some of the responses from MPOs on the benefits of being independent. Some of the more prominent themes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Figure 3-12 Advantages of Independent Structures

Political and Administrative Autonomy

The most frequently cited advantage of being independent is political and/or administrative autonomy from a host agency. The term "political autonomy" reflects both the separation of the MPO from any of the host's policy positions and any policy interference by the host in MPO processes. The term "administrative autonomy" is used to describe the MPO's ability to develop its own administrative policies and procedures, such as those related to employee compensation, budgeting, and procurement. Many MPOs reported that being independent allowed them to control their own agenda and make administrative and policy decisions without perceived or real interference. One large western MPO stated, "Independent decision making is a predominant advantage. It removes the potential bias and influence of a host agency." A large southwestern MPO noted, "The main advantage is the MPO is completely impartial because it does not 'report' to a particular entity and no entity controls its finances." A small Midwestern MPO stated that independence "allows the MPO staff to focus completely on issues related to the MPO and not projects for the host agency."

Clarity in Relationships and Chain of Command

A commonly cited advantage of being independent is the clarity in agency relationships and the chain of command. Several MPOs reported that being independent means there is no confusion for the governing board or MPO staff regarding which agency they are taking direction from or whose policies they are implementing. This removes the potential for conflicts of interest, accusations of inconsistency, or contradictory policy directives. One small Midwestern MPO put it this way: "[There is] no need to wear 'two hats' – now I am an MPO, now I am an employee of the host agency. The roles and responsibilities of MPO staff are clearly defined and can be clearly adhered to, without being blurred by potentially conflicting goals…"

Distinct Identity

Several MPOs reported that an advantage of being independent is having a distinct identity separate from other transportation and planning agencies in the region. This distinct identity can foster an entrepreneurial spirit in MPOs and enable them to address issues quickly and creatively. Independence also makes it easier for the public to understand what the MPO is and what its responsibilities are. One large Midwestern MPO stated, "Our board really runs the MPO and we are identified as an independent agency in the region."

Many MPOs reported that this distinct identity and separation from a host agency also enables them to appear and act more impartially and better serve all member jurisdictions. One large Midwestern MPO reported that being independent means "our work can be truly regional in nature." Another MPO stated the MPO is "viewed as an independent, neutral third party that convenes the whole metropolitan area."

Disadvantages of Independent Structures

Respondents to this question cited several disadvantages to being independent from a host agency, including challenges with cash flow, high operational costs, and staff limitations, among others (Figure 3-13). In the previous study completed in 2010, MPOs also reported challenges meeting the local match requirement for federal funds. However, no MPOs reported this issue in the 2016 survey.

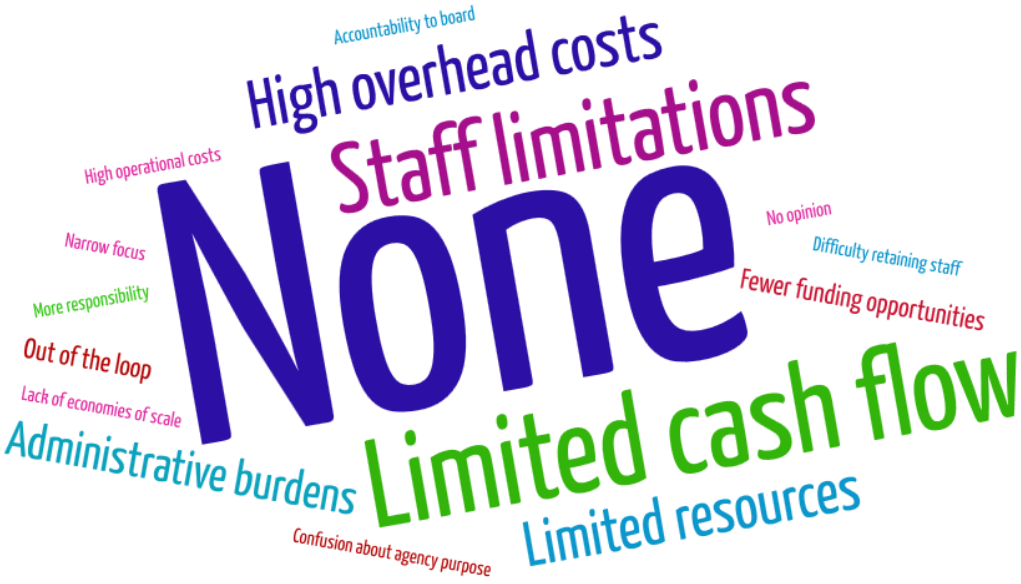

Figure 3-13 Disadvantages of Independent Structures

Challenges with Cash Flow

The most frequently cited disadvantage of being an independent MPO is trouble with cash flow, or what is commonly referred to as "capital float". Most independent MPOs report that they rely heavily on federal transportation planning funds to support agency operations. However, these funds are distributed in the form of a reimbursement for eligible expenses that have already been incurred over the past reporting period (month, quarter, etc.). This creates a "capital float" problem for MPOs that do

not receive financial assistance from another agency to pay for operating costs ahead of the federal reimbursement. Instead, independent MPOs must rely on their own financial resources to cover the short-term capital costs of business operations.

Independent MPOs raise funds to cover their "capital float" and other agency operations through a variety of funding mechanisms, including collecting dues from member jurisdictions and performing contract work for other agencies.

High Operational Costs

High operational costs were frequently cited by MPOs as a disadvantage of being an independent agency. Costs are usually higher for independent MPOs than for hosted MPOs because independent MPOs do not benefit from the economies of scale associated with being part of a larger organization. Whereas hosted MPOs can share resources with the host agency, independent MPOs have to obtain goods and services without assistance.

One midsized Midwestern MPO said that the MPO "[misses] out on some economies of scale related to certain functions (e.g. facility maintenance)." Another MPO reported that the "lack of shared meeting space [makes] rent higher. [The MPO is] unable to share administrative duties, such as accounting, reception, minutes, etc."

Staff Limitations

Several MPOs reported that limitations in staffing capacity are a disadvantage to being independent. This is particularly true for MPOs with smaller staff sizes and that do not have the benefit of sharing staff with a host agency. This requires staff to have a broad skill set to be able to sustain MPO operations. For example, urban planners may be required to perform administrative, public involvement, or Geographic Information Systems (GIS) tasks when the MPO does not have sufficient resources to hire a specialist in those areas. Some of these MPOs may find it beneficial to hire consultants to perform specific tasks that are beyond the capabilities of the MPO staff. One large southeastern MPO reported that being independent "requires a very talented and versatile staff to handle the full range of business support functions." Another respondent stated, "A small MPO like mine can run into problems with staffing and having the ability and expertise on non-planning issues like graphic design, IT support, and fiscal assistance."

Other

Several MPOs provided comments that were somewhat unusual or did not fit into the categories listed above. Many, for example, reported that they saw no disadvantages to being independent. One small mid-Atlantic MPO reported that being independent means there is "less influence to get local funding for projects." A small Midwestern MPO provided this interesting perspective, "we are not always on the ground hearing 'unofficial' news about issues in the area."

Independent MPOs Hosting Other Agencies

There are no laws or rules prohibiting MPOs from hosting other types of agencies. Independent MPOs were asked if they hosted another agency, and 20 out of 88 (23%) responded affirmatively. Survey respondents indicated that the following agencies are hosted by their MPO:

- Transit providers;
- Land use commissions;
- Economic development districts;
- Waste management districts; and
- Water management organizations.

Administrative and Staffing Services at Independent MPOs

Independent MPOs were also asked how administrative and staffing services are provided. A large majority (73 out of 89, or 82%) responded that those services are directly provided by MPO staff members (Table 3-14).

Table 3-14 How Administrative and Staffing Services are Provided to the MPO

How Services are Provided	Number	Percent
Directly provided by MPO staff members	73	82.0%
Contractual arrangement with a public provider	9	10.1%
Other	7	7.9%
Total	**89**	**100.0%**

Changes in MPO Organizational Structures

While the proportions of hosted and independent MPOs remained relatively unchanged since 2010, many MPOs (65 out of 278, or 23%) reported changing their hosting arrangements during the last ten years (Table 3-15).

Table 3-15 Has your MPO undergone a change in organizational structure in the past 10 years?

Change in Organizational Structure in the Last 10 years?	Number	Percent
Yes	65	23%
No	196	71%
My MPO was established within the last 10 years	17	6%
Total	**278**	**100%**

Eleven MPOs became independent, five switched host agencies, and four merged with another MPO (a total of 7%). The vast majority, however, reported that their organizational structure changed in some "other" way (Table 3-16). The majority of these respondents reported they experienced changes in membership, board composition, boundaries, or staffing, mostly due to changes from the 2010 Census. For instance, one large Midwestern MPO reported that "[board membership] was increased from 11 to 14 to account for the expanded urbanized area following the Census". One MPO described a more unusual scenario: "At the request of FHWA, the Plan Commission gave up its authority as the policy board and created a new policy board from a former advisory committee."

Some MPOs used the "other" response to clarify their other selection (the question was select all that apply). For instance, some noted that the change related to less integration with the host. One Midwestern MPO said, "The host agency used to be a part of the approval process for MPO business. The change eliminated that approval and placed final approval responsibility with the Policy Board." A small MPO in the Pacific Northwest offered another unique example: "The MPO became an independent agency when the host agency was dissolved."

Table 3-16 Changes in MPO Organizational Structure in the Past 10 Years

Change in Organizational Structure	Number	Percent
The MPO merged with another MPO	4	5.8%
The MPO became independent	11	15.9%
The MPO became hosted	1	1.4%
The MPO separated from another MPO	2	2.9%
The MPO switched host agencies	5	7.2%
Other	46	66.7%
Total	**69**	**100.0%**

MPO Boundaries

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

There is not a one-to-one ratio of MPOs to UZAs in the United States. The 497 UZAs identified following the 2010 Census have been organized under 409 MPOs. However, the arrangement of UZAs within MPOs is even more complex. At the time this survey was conducted (early 2016), there were five possible situations for MPOs to cover UZAs, and all possibilities were encountered as part of this research. An MPO could:

a) Cover the entirety of only one UZA.
b) Cover the entirety of two or more UZAs.
c) Cover the entirety of one UZA, and cover only part of another UZA.
d) Cover only part of one UZA.
e) Cover only part of one UZA and part of another UZA.[14]

According to the survey, the average MPO has 1.21 whole UZAs and 0.42 partial UZAs within its planning area boundary. The number of whole and partial UZAs within each MPO is summarized in Table 3-17. Although having only one whole UZA is the most common response, having more than one whole UZA is encountered at about a quarter of MPOs in the United States. Twenty-six percent of MPOs reported sharing a UZA with a neighboring MPO.

Table 3-17 Number of Whole and Partial Urbanized Areas in the MPO Planning Area

Number	Whole UZAs		Partial UZAs	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Zero	20	7.8%	189	73.5%
One	188	73.2%	41	16.0%
Two	29	11.3%	16	6.2%
Three	14	5.4%	8	3.1%
Four	6	2.3%	3	1.2%
Sum	**257**	**100.0%**	**257**	**100.0%**

Another measure of the scale of the MPO planning area is how many counties and states it contains. Among MPOs responding to the survey, 119 of 275 MPOs (43.2%) reported being multi-county within a single state (Table 3-18). The survey also found that 34 of 275 MPOs (12.4%) reported being multi-state (Figure 3-14). Most multi-state MPOs lie in two states. However, a handful of tri-state MPOs are currently in operation. For instance, the Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council in Sioux City, Iowa extends into Nebraska and South Dakota.

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

Table 3-18 MPO Boundary Status Regarding Counties and States

MPO Boundary Status		Number	Percent
Single-county	With only whole UZA(s)	95	34.5%
	With at least a partial UZA	27	9.8%
Multi-county	With only whole UZA(s)	90	32.7%
	With at least a partial UZA	29	10.5%
Multi-state	With only whole UZA(s)	30	10.9%
	With at least a partial UZA	4	1.5%
Sum		**275**	**100%**

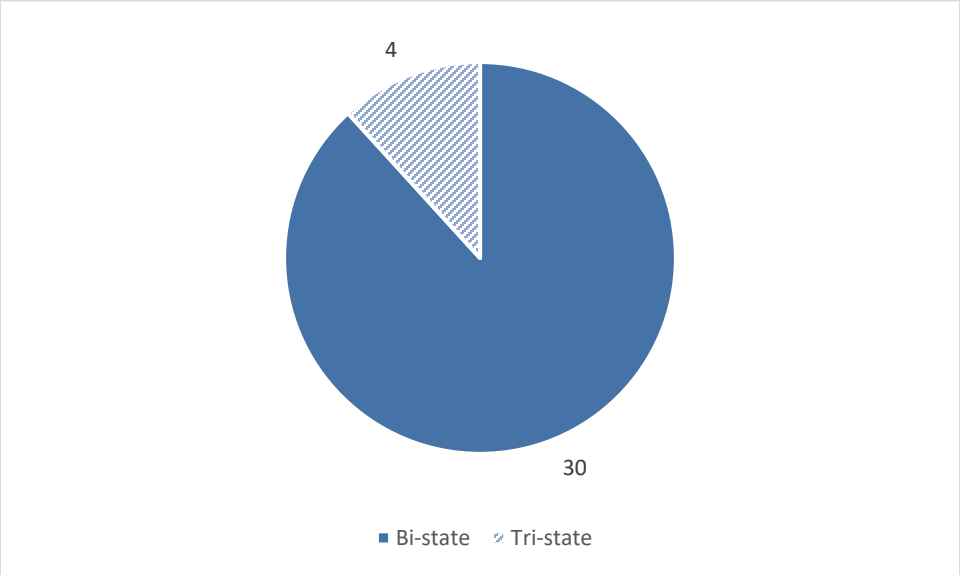

Figure 3-14 Bi-State and Tri-State MPOs

Chapter 4: Employment, Employees, and Specialization

All MPOs employ staff to perform tasks for the MPO board. MPOs participating in the survey were asked several questions related to staff size as well as staff specializations, tasks, and the terms of employment.

Respondents were asked how many full-time and part-time employees work at the MPO. Survey respondents were instructed to consider employees to be part-time if they worked a fraction of their time for the host agency in a non-MPO function and the balance of their time for the MPO. Extrapolating the survey responses to this question, it is estimated that approximately 4,200 people are on MPO payrolls nationwide.[15] About 920 work for non-TMAs, which are the country's smallest metropolitan areas with populations below 200,000 people.

MPOs have an average of 8.4 full-time employees. However, this figure is not representative of most MPOs in the United States. The average was skewed upward by several high outliers in the 2016 dataset. The median number of full-time MPOs employees was 4. That having been said, the 8.4 average in the 2016 survey is a decrease from the average reported in 2010, which was 11.7 full-time employees. The 2016 survey (and this question) had a greater response rate from small and mid-size MPOs than the 2010 survey, and this may have contributed to the lower 2016 average.

More than half of all MPOs responding to the survey (62%) supplement their full-time workforce with one or more part-time employees. The mean number of part-time employees is 2.2, but this figure is also skewed by high outliers. The median number of part-time employees is one. Table 4-1 summarizes the number of employees for the entire sample.

Table 4-1 MPO Staff Size Measures of Central Tendency

Statistic	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total Employees
Mean	8.37	2.17	10.54
Median	4	1	6
Mode	2	0	3
Maximum	105	55	105
3rd Quartile	9	2	12
1st Quartile	2	0	3
Minimum	0	0	1

For the remainder of this chapter, MPO staff sizes are discussed in terms of total employees—meaning the combined number of full-time and part-time positions. The number of employees is not necessarily

[15] This figure was calculated using the mean staff sizes for each of the five population categories shown in Table 4-2. The mean for each category was multiplied by the number of MPOs in the United States eligible to take the survey. Each population class was totaled, reaching a figure of 4,202.

equal to the number of full-time equivalent positions. Total employees means a head-count of people who work at the MPO in permanent positions, regardless of the number of hours worked.

The mean number of total employees at an MPO responding to the survey is 10.5. Again, this figure is not representative of the majority of MPOs, as indicated by the median of six employees. The difference between these two statistics comes from a minority of agencies with very large staff sizes. The largest MPO in the survey has 105 employees. Meanwhile, six MPOs have only one employee. Three agencies reported having only two part-time employees.

The median and quartiles should be given greater consideration than the mean to better understand the typical MPO size. The median staff size is six. Half of MPOs have a staff size ranging between three and twelve. The bottom quarter of MPOs have staff sizes smaller than three and the top quarter of MPOs have staff sizes greater than twelve.

MPO staff size is strongly correlated with the MPO population (r = +0.726). Meanwhile, the size of the MPO staff is moderately to strongly correlated with the square mileage of the MPO's planning area (r = +0.679). There is substantial cross-correlation between square mileage and population, meaning that these two variables influence each other and together influence staff size. Correlation analyses with other variables did not yield consequential or reliable information.[16]

Table 4-2 summarizes the number of employees found in each of the five MPO population classes. The largest MPOs (1 million or more) by far have the largest staff sizes. This population class holds all of the high outliers in the dataset.[17] These MPOs are able to hire more employees because they often receive higher contributions of local funds, a greater formula share of FTA 5303 transit planning funds and/or federal transportation planning funds (PL), funding from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program, and direct urban allocation funds from the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program.

Table 4-2 MPO Employees by Planning Area Population Size

Population in Planning Area	Full-Time Employees (mean)	Total Employees (mean)	Total Employees (median)	Maximum Total Employees	Minimum Total Employees
Less than 100,000	1.9	3.4	3	8	1
100,000 to less than 200,000	4.1	5.5	5	20	1
200,000 to less than 500,000	7.3	9.8	8	46	3
500,000 to less than 1 million	11.3	13.4	12.5	28	4
1 million or more	31.7	36.4	25.5	105	9
All MPOs	8.4	10.5	3	105	1

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

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

Using nationwide averages, an MPO can be expected to have one employee per 50,567 people in the MPO planning area. This is slightly smaller than in 2010, but in keeping given the larger number of small and mid-sized MPOs that responded to the 2016 survey. Another metric for evaluation of the MPOs' staff size is the square mileage of the planning area. MPOs average one employee per 89 square miles.

Staff Specialties

In most cases, the professional staff at a smaller MPO must be generalists out of budgetary necessity. Conversely, MPOs in larger and more complex metropolitan areas typically require staff with more specialized planning expertise. Respondents were asked to indicate if any staff member(s) spent more than half of his or her time in a specialized planning area. No attempt was made to calculate the number of positions or number of full-time equivalents being dedicated to this specialization. The results are summarized in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3 Specializations of MPO Staff

Specialization	Percent of MPOs with this Specialty on Staff	Median Staff Size of MPOs with this Specialization
GIS	43.2%	10
Bicycle and Pedestrian	35.0%	10
Transit	34.6%	8
Travel Demand Modeling	25.7%	14
Public Involvement	24.5%	11
Operations and Management	23.3%	7.5
Intergovernmental Relations	19.5%	12
Safety	16.7%	13
Freight	12.8%	20
Transportation Disadvantaged	10.9%	13
Air Quality	9.7%	15.5
Socio-cultural Impacts	5.1%	22.5
Other	6.6%	9

The most common specialty among MPO staff is Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, followed by bicycle and pedestrian planning and transit planning, which are found at over thirty percent of MPOs. Other fairly common specialties include travel demand modeling, public involvement, and traffic operations and management.

The median figures as a whole are closely clustered around 8 to 14 employees. This suggests that MPOs reach a critical mass of employees around this level and are able to assign specialized activities to their employees once the size of the MPO staff grows to be within this range. Using the metrics developed earlier in this report, the average MPO reaches eight employees when there are about 310,000 people or 1,300 square miles in the MPO planning area. MPOs smaller than eight employees are certainly capable of dedicating an employee to a specialty, but managers of smaller agencies face more employee time constraints than managers with a larger staff.

Staff Time Spent on Involvement, Committees and Administration

MPO staff do more than prepare the planning and programming documents required by law. They also perform a wide variety of other activities including handling general agency administration, managing committees, and conducting public involvement. Respondents were asked to give an estimate of how much staff time is spent on these types of activities.

Public Involvement and Education includes a variety of methods of reaching out and engaging the public in the activities and decision-making processes of the MPO. Traditionally, public involvement by MPOs has involved formal hearings, public meetings and document review opportunities. In recent decades, involvement techniques have become more sophisticated and expansive and now include a wide range of techniques including proactive workshops, online polling, interactive websites, and other active engagement efforts often through various social media platforms. Survey respondents indicate that they spend an average of 19.8 percent of their total staff time on public involvement activities, and more overall staff time is spent on public involvement as the population served in the metropolitan area increases. MPOs with less than 100,000 people in the metropolitan planning area devote a mean of 17.8 percent of their total staff time on public involvement activities, while MPOs with over one million in population spend 22.9 percent of staff time on these efforts. Independent MPOs spend slightly more time (22.7%) compared to hosted MPOs (18.5%).

Committee Management includes the time spent preparing for, working with, and documenting the activities of the MPO's governing board and advisory committees. Every MPO has a governing board, and each meeting requires preparation of an agenda package, presentation preparation, time in meeting, and transcription of minutes. Similar levels of effort go into the management of advisory committees. The mean percentage of staff time devoted to committee management is 21.7 percent. Independent MPOs spend slightly more time (24.4%) compared to hosted MPOs (20.5%).

General Administration refers to the tasks related to operating an organization and are not unique to an MPO. General administrative tasks may include staff management, procurement, office management, and contracting. For all MPOs participating in the survey, the mean percentage of time spent on general administration is 22.9 percent. There is a correlation between general administration and staff size. The smallest of MPOs (less than 3 employees) spend 28.5 percent of staff time on general administration, while the largest (more than 20 employees) spend only 15.1 percent.

Employee Benefits

Like most employers, MPOs offer fringe benefits to attract and retain employees. However, the ability to offer other benefits can be resource limited. Table 4-4 shows the percentage of MPOs that offer certain types of employee benefits. MPOs often, as public agencies, have the option to participate in benefit programs offered by host agencies, member local governments, or even the state.

Table 4-4 Fringe Benefits Offered by MPOs

Benefit	Less than 3 Employees	4 to 9 Employees	10 to 20 Employees	More than 20 Employees	All MPOs
Health Insurance	94%	99%	100%	100%	98%
Retirement Plan	97%	98%	100%	100%	98%
Other Insurance[18]	85%	92%	98%	100%	92%
Life Insurance	80%	94%	91%	100%	90%
Disability Insurance	72%	85%	91%	100%	84%
Flexible Spending Accounts	72%	67%	74%	92%	72%
Professional Dues	60%	65%	81%	83%	69%
Continuing Education Expenses	34%	44%	65%	71%	49%
Tuition	35%	30%	51%	75%	40%
Free/Discounted Transit	5%	13%	46%	67%	24%
Free Parking	9%	19%	33%	33%	21%
Carpool Incentives	3%	3%	14%	29%	8%
Child Care	6%	7%	5%	8%	6%

MPOs offer an array of policies to attract and retain workers. Health, life, disability, and other[18] insurances are available to employees at the vast majority of MPOs. Flexible spending accounts, which offer employees a method to spend pre-tax money on health care and dependent care, are offered by nearly three-quarters of MPOs.

MPOs often provide tuition and dues benefits so employees can enhance their skills and network with peers, which benefits the MPO in various ways. Nearly two-thirds of all MPOs pay for employee professional dues, while just less than half provide tuition reimbursement.

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

Table 4-5 Procurement of Health Insurance Plan

Procurement Method	Percent
The MPO's host agency provides insurance	70.31%
The MPO contracts with a local or state government that is not the host	12.50%
The MPO contracts directly with an insurance provider	11.33%
Other	3.91%
The MPO does not provide insurance	1.95%

[18] The survey defined "Other Insurance" as group or employee-paid insurance such as dental, vision, elder care, or any other insurance type.

Chapter 5: MPO Funding and Work Programs

Metropolitan Planning Organizations require operating funds to perform the 3-C transportation planning and programming process required by federal law. Funds are received from federal, state, and local levels of government, along with occasional non-profit or private sector sources. Operating funds pay the salaries and benefits of professional staff and support the costs of operating an office, such as rent, supplies, and equipment. MPOs also value flexible funds to pay for discretionary goods and services, such as government relations, employee training, and refreshments.

For this section, respondents were asked a series of questions about the sources and expenditures of operating funds, the nature of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), use of consultants, revenue estimation, and pass-through funds.

Federal Funding Sources

The primary source of MPO operating funds comes from the Metropolitan Planning set-aside described in 23 USC §104(b)(5), commonly referred to as "PL" funds. The pool of PL funds available nationwide under the FAST Act ranges from $329 million in Fiscal Year 2016 to $359 million in Fiscal Year 2020. Each state's share of PL funds is based on their current year base apportionment plus National Highway Freight Program (NHFP) funding multiplied by the proportion of their FY 2009 PL funding to their total Fiscal Year 2009 apportionment of federal transportation funds. These funds are in turn distributed to individual MPOs based on a predetermined formula agreed upon by the state and MPOs in that state. Each state has a different formula for distributing PL funds, but at least some PL funds must be distributed to each MPO. All MPOs are required by federal regulation to receive PL funds. In the survey, however, only 99.2 percent reported receiving PL money. It is not clear why the response was below 100 percent, but may be attributed to poor knowledge of funding schemes or state naming conventions. Table 5-1 below shows the various MPO funding sources and the percentage of MPOs in the survey that reported receiving them.

Table 5-1 MPO Funding Sources

Funding Sources	Number	Percent
Federal Planning (PL) funds	259	99.2%
Contributions from member local governments	193	73.9%
Federal 5305(d) Transit Planning funds	176	67.4%
State-supplied funds	166	63.6%
Federal Surface Transportation Program - Urban Allocation	73	28.0%
Competitive grants	49	18.8%
Federal Congestion Management and Air Quality	33	12.6%
Fees for service	26	10.0%
Other	62	23.8%

Most MPOs also have access to Metropolitan Transit Planning funds, which are described in 49 USC §5305(d). Commonly known as "Section 5305" funds, this money is also distributed to state DOTs based on a formula, which varies from state to state. The purpose of 5305 money is to support transit planning in metropolitan areas. The survey indicated that 67 percent of MPOs receive Section 5305 funds. States have the option of combining 5305 and PL funds into a single funding stream, which may explain why 33 percent of respondents reported not receiving 5305 funds. The pool of federal transit planning funds available nationwide under that FAST Act ranges from just under $129 million in Fiscal Year 2016 to just over $142 million in 2020.

The MPO may pass funds through to another agency to support transportation planning tasks. For instance, many MPOs pass 5305 funds through to the local transit provider to conduct transit related planning activities. PL and 5305 money is also sometimes made available for planning projects at other agencies like toll authorities, member local governments, or local nonprofits that oversee a portion of the transportation system.

Money from both programs may be stored year-over-year in the MPO's reserve fund. For instance, at smaller MPOs, several years' worth of PL and 5305 funds may be required to conduct a major planning project, such as building a travel demand model or drafting the metropolitan transportation plan.

MPOs receive funds from other federal programs as well, including the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program- Urban Allocation (STBGP). Funds received under these programs must appear as a task in the UPWP if the funds are being used for planning purposes.

Regions of the country that are designated as "nonattainment" by the Environmental Protection Agency for failing to meet air quality standards under the Clean Air Act are eligible to receive funding through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program.[19] The CMAQ program does not provide funds specifically for planning. Rather, CMAQ money may be programmed for a variety of uses to improve air quality, including project implementation, public education efforts, and MPO planning tasks. Among MPOs in air quality non-attainment or maintenance areas, 23 percent have scheduled planning tasks using CMAQ funds.

The federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) has a special set-aside (23 USC § 133(d)) for metropolitan areas with more than 200,000 people. Referred to in a variety of ways, including "STP" or "direct attributable" funds, this money is distributed directly to MPOs, and is therefore not subject to state funding formula. The purpose of the entire STBGP program is to construct infrastructure. However, MPOs may choose to reserve some of the STBGP urban allocation funds for planning tasks. Among eligible MPOs, 40 percent choose to save some STBGP funds for planning.

The relative proportions of MPO funding sources vary somewhat across population class. While PL funds are the primary funding source for MPOs of all population sizes, Section 5305(d), STBGP-Urban Allocation, and CMAQ are much more prominent sources among larger MPOs. The breakdown of MPO funding sources by population class is shown in Table 5-2.

[19] CMAQ's authorizing statute is found at 23 USC §149

Table 5-2 Distribution of MPO Funding Sources by Population Class

MPO Population	PL	Section 5305(d)	State-supplied	Member Local Govt.	Grants	Fees for Service	STP	CMAQ	Other	Total
Less than 100k	65%	8%	8%	10%	1%	0%	4%	1%	4%	100%
100-200k	65%	10%	7%	11%	1%	0%	2%	0%	2%	100%
200-500k	64%	9%	6%	10%	1%	2%	6%	0%	2%	100%
500-1000k	58%	12%	5%	8%	1%	1%	10%	2%	3%	100%
Over 1 million	48%	13%	6%	7%	4%	1%	12%	5%	5%	100%
Grand Total	62%	10%	7%	10%	1%	1%	6%	1%	3%	100%

State and Local Funding Sources

In addition to federal sources, MPOs receive a substantial amount of operational funding from state and local governments. The survey did not attempt to quantify the amount of state or local funding, since much of the support is offered in the form of in-kind goods or services.[20] All MPOs receive either in-kind or monetary support from their state government, host agency, and/or member local governments.

State governments contribute to MPO planning in at least 36 states.[21] In several cases, only a portion of MPOs in that state reported receiving state planning money. This may indicate that state funding systems favor certain MPOs over others. Among all MPOs, sixty-three percent reported receiving state funding.

Most federal funds (PL, 5305, CMAQ, STBGP) require a 20 percent match; meaning state and/or local governments must supply two dollars for every eight dollars supplied by the federal government. In some states, the match is fulfilled by the state DOT through general revenues or toll-related offsets. In most states, however, each MPO must supply a monetary or in-kind match in order to receive federal assistance. If the match is not met, the MPO is unable to claim the full available amount of federal assistance.

For some MPOs, PL and 5305 transit planning funds (plus required local match) are the only sources of operating funds. As shown in Figure 5-1, 63 percent of MPOs responding to this survey question felt these sources provide enough funding to pay for the tasks required of them by federal law, while 33 percent did not.

[20] In-kind support means the unreimbursed contribution of goods and services. For many MPOs, the host agency provides an array of in-kind support. Even independent MPOs can receive in-kind support. Examples include free office space, equipment, participation in a fringe benefits program, or use of fleet vehicles.

[21] The survey received responses from MPOs in 48 states. MPOs in the following 36 states reported receiving state planning funds: AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, IA, IL, IN, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, ND, NY, OH, OR, PA, SC, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI and WV.

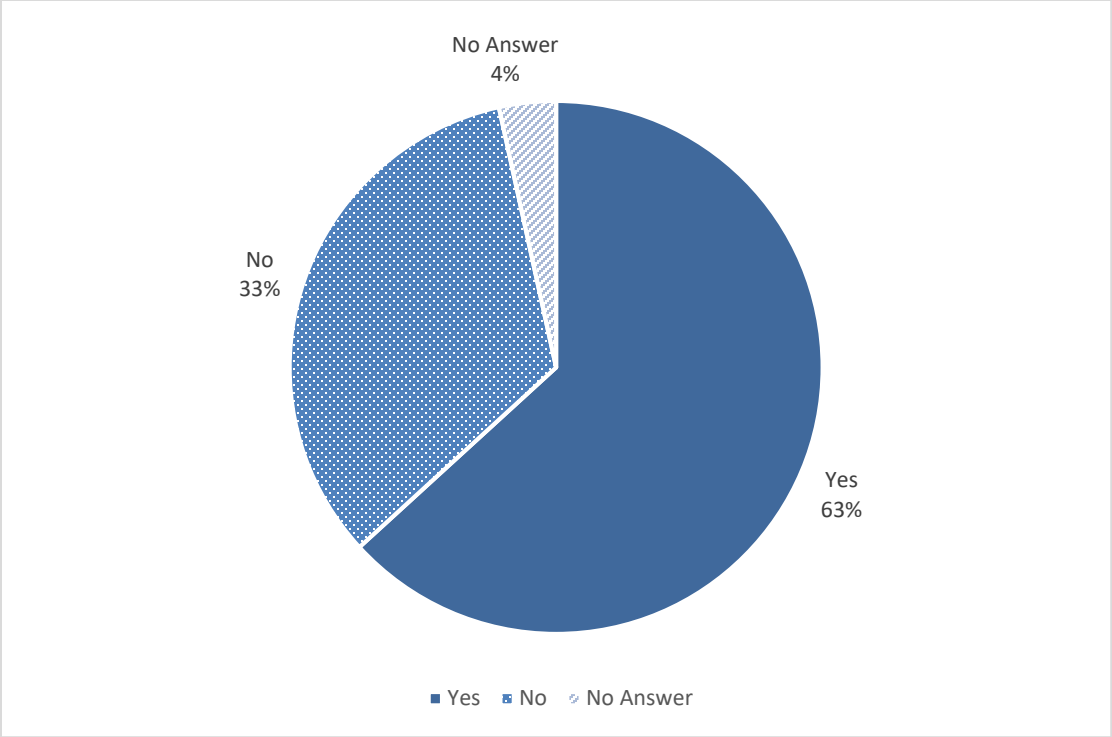

Figure 5-1 Are PL and 5303 funds sufficient to pay for core MPO activities?

Expenditure of Local Funds

193 of the 261 agencies (74%) participating in the survey reported that local funds are necessary to fund the MPO's operations. MPOs reported spending local dollars in a variety of areas (Figure 5-2). The fact that 90 percent of MPOs reported spending local funds on MPO core activities indicates that federal sources are insufficient to cover the costs of 3-C planning. A sizable number of MPOs (64%) spent local money operating their office. Many MPOs also spend local funds on employee training, public relations, and food. "Other" areas reported include MPO staff positions and staff health insurance.

Local funds also support non-MPO core projects or regional leadership activities. Given their regional nature, MPOs often convene the local governments in their planning area and organize activities that extend beyond their core requirements under federal law. Local funds are used for non-core transportation studies at 46 percent of MPOs. Many of these MPOs also conduct non-core studies on behalf of the state government. State-required tasks are funded with local money at 52 percent of MPOs responding to this survey question.

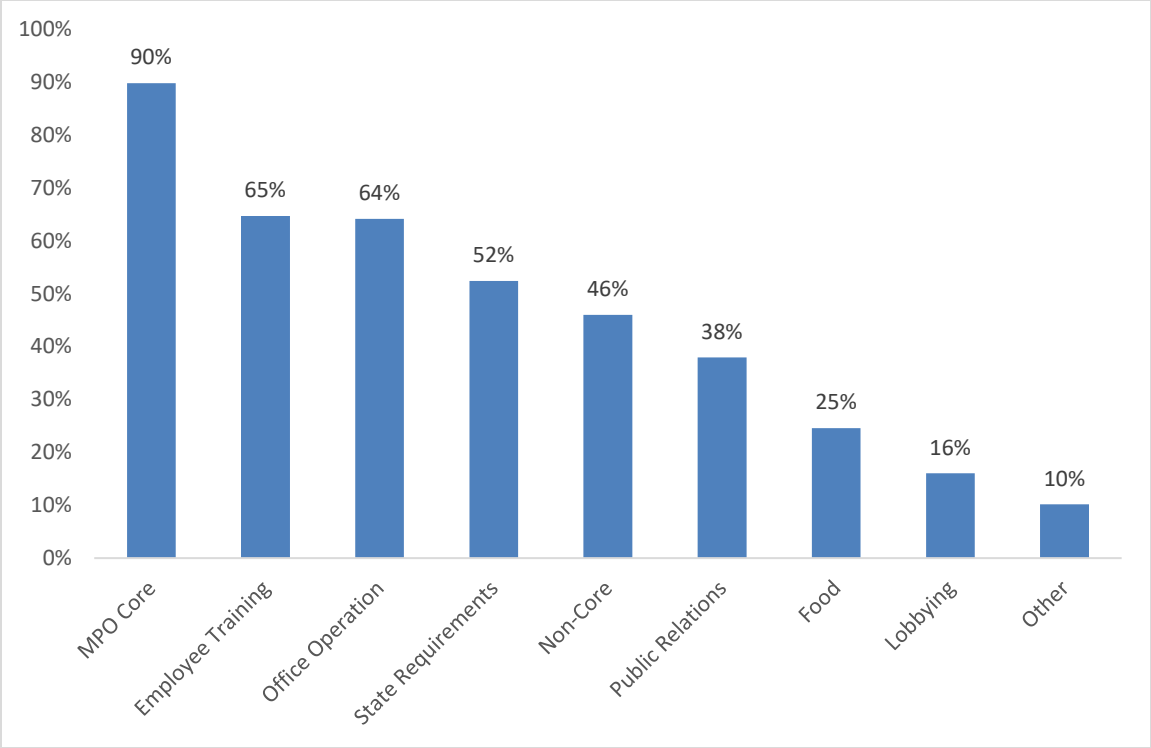

Figure 5-2 Types of Expenditures for Locally-Supplied Funds

Regulations prohibit the use of federal money for certain purposes. For instance, federal funds may not be spent on lobbying, which is often defined as advocating for the passage or defeat of a specific piece of legislation. However, federal money can be used so that MPO staff can perform policy education[22] or improve intergovernmental relations[23]. Of course, there is a fine line between policy education and direct lobbying, and the distinction may be difficult to explain. Some MPOs find it wise to use local money for any activity that borders on lobbying. Sixteen percent of MPOs use local funds for lobbying purposes.

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

[22] Policy education means producing materials for and speaking with the public and policymakers on issues related to transportation. Examples of this type of activity would be producing a document showing the merits of rail transit, or producing literature encouraging drivers to not use mobile phones while driving.
[23] Improving intergovernmental relations may include forming a multi-MPO roundtable, meeting with state legislators, or holding a meeting with representatives from a neighboring local government.

Raising Local Funds

The majority of MPOs responding to the survey (74%) use some mechanism to raise money from local governments. MPOs often collect local funds by charging dues or accepting voluntary donations from member local governments. The most common method of raising local funds appears to be charging local governments in the MPO area a per capita rate for dues. Under this method, each local government is assessed dues based on the proportion of residents living in that jurisdiction relative to the entire MPO planning area population. Fifty-two percent (52%) of MPOs responding to this question in the survey collect local funds in this fashion.

There are two methods for calculating per capita dues as described by MPOs responding to the survey. Under the first method, the MPO determines how much local money is needed, then divides that amount by the proportion of people in each jurisdiction. For example, if an MPO identifies needs of $100,000 per year, a city with 14 percent of the region's population would be charged $14,000. This approach ensures that the identified need in funding is met, but does not necessarily allow for growth in the MPO budget as the area grows in population. The second method of calculating per capita dues is to charge a fixed rate per resident. For example, each local government is charged 8 cents per resident. This method results in budget growth as the area population grows, but does not necessarily result in a budget that fully meets the needs of the MPO.

MPOs may also charge local governments a fixed fee. For example, each of the ten member local governments is charged $10,000 in dues, regardless of the jurisdiction's size. Twenty-five percent (25%) of MPOs responding to this question on the survey use a fixed-fee structure to collect local dues.

Several MPOs responding to this question in the survey indicated that they use a hybrid approach in which a fixed fee amount is charged to each member jurisdiction or agency and then a per capita fee is charged in addition to the fixed fee. Other hybrid variants were described that take into account lane miles, vehicle miles travelled and other measures of transportation usage. A handful of MPOs also account for the share of federal project funding received in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as an additional factor considered in their dues structure. Still others factor in the number of voting members a jurisdiction has on the MPO Governing Board.

MPOs may also collect dues from the local transit agency and other modal agencies. In some areas, transit and other modal agencies are assessed the same amount as local governments, often the same amount as the smallest jurisdiction paying dues. In other areas, transit and modal agencies are charged an agreed upon fixed amount which may not be based on any particular quantitative measure.

Other MPOs are generating revenue through a variety of other creative mechanisms. A number of MPOs reported allocating a share of federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Program – Urban Attributable funds toward planning activities in their UPWP. A few MPOs reported charging local agencies for special studies and other planning projects. At least one MPO reported accepting in-kind services from member jurisdictions in lieu of a financial contribution. Several MPOs indicated that they supplement their UPWP with grant generated funds from both the public and non-profit sectors.

The Unified Planning Work Program

Most MPOs adopt a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP),[24] which is a document that outlines the distribution of transportation planning funds in the MPO area. The UPWP is not mentioned in federal law, but it is mandated through federal regulation. The document must contain "a description of the planning work and resulting products, who will perform the work, time frames for completing the work, the cost of the work, and the source(s) of funds." The UPWP is expected to show all funds in the metropolitan area being expended on planning work, regardless of the funding source and agency expending the funds. For instance, if the local transit agency is conducting a transit planning study, the project and the expenditure of funds must be specified in the UPWP for informational purposes even though the funds are not those of the MPO and the MPO is not conducting the work.

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

Survey respondents were asked four questions about the UPWP: the total dollar amount (Table 5-3), the dollar amount shown for information purposes (funds not controlled by the MPO), the dollar amount controlled by the MPO, and the dollar amount of MPO controlled funds reserved for consultant usage. A total of 143 survey responses related to the UPWP were analyzed.[25]

Table 5-3 Descriptive Statistics of the Total Dollar Amounts in the Current UPWP by Population Class

MPO Population	Mean	Median	Minimum	1st Quartile	3rd Quartile	Maximum
Less than 100k	$397,659	$340,042	$121,364	$215,746	$497,508	$1,017,785
100-200k	$526,828	$453,324	$76,073	$293,797	$606,999	$2,300,000
200-500k	$1,287,656	$998,645	$150,000	$662,679	$1,478,999	$6,500,000
500-1000k	$2,218,474	$2,000,000	$427,500	$1,267,673	$2,977,949	$5,564,691
Over 1 million	$40,708,758	$7,650,570	$1,800,000	$3,505,062	$13,857,697	$935,900,000
All MPOs	**$6,123,828**	**$662,500**	**$76,073**	**$373,975**	**$1,500,000**	**$935,900,000**

Informational Purposes

Many UPWPs outline expenditure of funds for informational purposes. For example, the UPWP may show money being expended by the local public transit agency, the airport, the seaport or a local government. This money cannot be used by the MPO for internal expenses. Generally, informational funds are shown to highlight relevant transportation planning work occurring in the region, which could

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

[25] Several responses to this section of the survey were either incomplete or inconsistent for the purposes of analysis. There could be a number of possible reasons for this including varying understanding among MPO staff of UPWP requirements and terminology, typographical and mathematical errors, and survey question clarity or understanding.

impact the MPO's documents or decisions. Informational money can also be included in the UPWP to meet the MPO's local match requirements for federal planning assistance.

Forty-two percent (60 of the 143 respondents) reported that funds are shown in their UPWP for informational purposes. Of these MPOs, informational funds average 11 percent of the total UPWP (Figure 5-3). Larger MPOs (population over one million) tend to show more informational money in the UPWP than smaller MPOs.

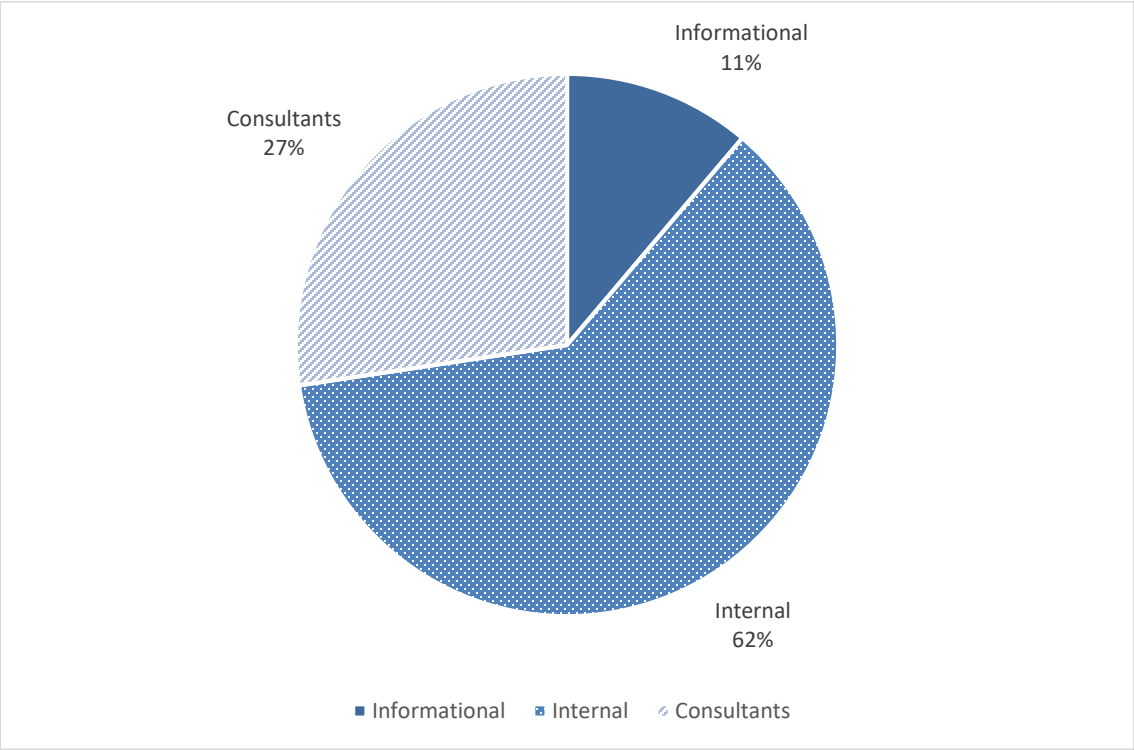

Figure 5-3 Types of Funding in the UPWP

Consultants and Contractors

Respondents were also asked to report how much money in the UPWP was slated for expenditure with outside groups. The majority of the money in this category is spent with consulting firms specializing in urban planning, engineering, public involvement, or other services that support the transportation planning process. Under the definition given in the survey, this category also includes contractors who provide goods and services not related to transportation planning, such as computer support or office maintenance. The average amount spent on consultants is 27 percent. When informational money is eliminated from the calculation, 30 cents of every dollar spent by the MPO goes to contractors. There does not appear to be a trend when the respondents are broken into population or staff size categories.

Consultant Work

Consultants play an important role in the metropolitan transportation planning process. Among the MPOs that responded to this question, 84 percent reported employing consultants. Some MPOs use consultants for *supplemental labor*. Supplemental labor is often necessary due to the cyclical nature of MPO document adoption. MPOs often need to hire consultants at critical points during the planning cycle. A metropolitan transportation plan is completed every 4-5 years, and takes about 18 months to draft. It can therefore be more efficient to hire a consultant during the busy periods of plan drafting than it is to hire a permanent employee.

Other MPOs use consultants as *substitute labor* in lieu of a full-time staff member. In these situations, the MPO will hire a consulting firm on a semi-permanent basis to provide staff services to the MPO. One advantage of a substitute labor arrangement is the ability to deploy different specialties under one contract.

Respondents were asked to specify the purpose for hiring consultants (Figure 5-4). The most commonly reported use for consultants is for special studies, which are studies not a part of the MPO core.[26] Examples include corridor plans, subarea studies, modal plans, freight studies, or safety audits. MPOs also reported using consultants to draft core documents such as the Long-Range Transportation Plan/Metropolitan Transportation Plan and operate the travel demand model. "Other" reported uses include specialized activities such as website development and salary and benefits review for personnel.

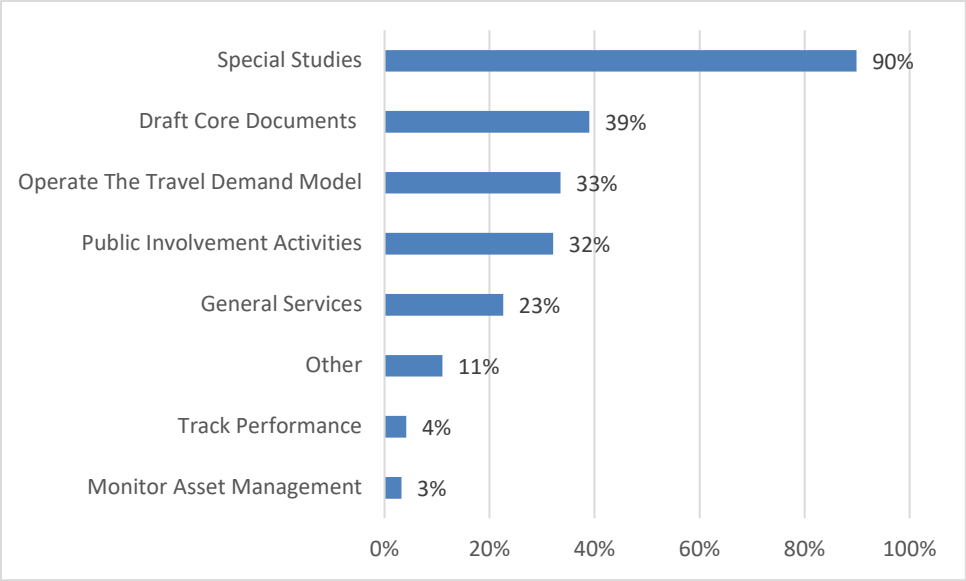

Figure 5-4 Uses of Consultants

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

General services consultants are often retained to perform work on-demand for the MPO for a fixed period of time, usually for a maximum number of hours. The tasks given to the general services consultant may vary in size and complexity. An MPO that employs a general services consultant is likely deploying a substitute labor strategy. General services consultants are retained by approximately 23 percent of survey respondents.

Respondents were asked if any of the most recent editions of MPO core documents were prepared by consultants or entirely in-house. Sixty-eight percent of respondents (253 MPOs) reported using consultant support for the congestion management process and 42 percent of MPOs reported using consultant support to prepare the long-range transportation plan. Almost all respondents reported completing other core MPO documents (i.e. the Transportation Improvement Program, UPWP, and Public Participation Plan) entirely in-house.

Chapter 6: Workforce Issues

All MPOs that participated in the survey employ staff[27] to carry out the 3-C planning and programming process under the direction of the MPO board. MPOs face a variety of workforce issues including employee turnover, compensation, career advancement, competition for specialized labor, and impending retirement of senior staff.

Survey respondents were asked to classify MPO employees according to the definitions provided below:

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

MPO Directors

Almost all MPOs employ a director who interacts with the FHWA Division and FTA Region and is responsible for the MPO's operation and planning products (although not all individuals who fill this type of position have the title "director"). While directors at an independent MPO report directly to the MPO board or a representative of the MPO board (often the Chair of the MPO board), the director at a hosted MPO may report to one or more supervisors in addition to the MPO board

The average tenure of an MPO staff director in his or her current position is 8.8 years. The highest quarter of MPO directors have been in their position for more than thirteen years, while the bottom quarter for fewer than two. There was no relationship between the size of the MPO and the average tenure of the MPO staff director.

[27] One MPO indicated (through comments) that they employ a consulting firm to conduct all the work of the MPO in lieu of directly hiring staff or relying on a host agency to provide staff services. The research team is aware of at least two other MPOs in the country that have used that same staffing arrangement, but those MPOs did not respond to the survey this time.

Many current directors have been in charge of the MPO for a substantial portion of the MPO's existence. The ratio of total years of service of all directors to total years of MPO operation is 0.38. In other words, the average MPO director has been in place for 38 percent of the MPO's existence. Seven percent of MPO directors reported being in charge since the MPO was formed. This is a decrease from the number reported in the previous survey, when 22 percent of MPO directors reported being in charge since the MPO originated.

A substantial number of MPO directors are approaching retirement age (Table 6-1).[28] More than half of MPO directors are expected to retire within the next ten years. With the impending retirement of so many MPO directors, many MPOs may have to rely on MPO managers to fill those positions and assume leadership of the MPO or to look to senior managers from other MPOs to provide new leadership.

Table 6-1 Retirement Horizon of MPO Directors

Retirement Horizon	Number	Percent
Less than 1 year	13	5%
1-2 years	16	6%
2-3 years	17	7%
3-4 years	10	4%
4-5 years	26	10%
5-10 years	47	19%
More than 10 years	104	41%
Unknown	19	8%
Total	**252**	**100%**

There is no requirement in Federal law or regulation that the MPO director be a completely independent manager. At independent MPOs, the director answers only to the MPO board. However, the hierarchy of leadership at hosted MPOs varies widely.

Many directors at hosted MPOs report to at least one supervisor, with some reporting to as many as three. In all cases, the MPO director looks to the MPO board for policy supervision and adoption of the MPO's planning products. However, the MPO board does not always have the authority to hire, fire, promote, or renegotiate the salary of the MPO director. These administrative tasks may rest with a manager at the host agency, the host agency board, or even a single elected official.

The survey asked respondents to identify the individual or group who has the power to hire, fire, promote, and negotiate the salary of the MPO director. The responses from hosted agencies are shown in Table 6-2.

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

Table 6-2 Persons or Groups Making Personnel Decisions for MPO Directors

Response	Number of Hosted MPOs	Percent of Hosted MPOs
The MPO governing board	110	39%
The host agency director	98	35%
The host agency board	39	14%
A host agency employee who is not the host agency director	14	5%
A solitary elected official, such as an elected county executive or mayor	3	1%
Other	18	6%
Total	282	100%

Several survey respondents noted that some other person or entity makes personnel decisions regarding the MPO director. For instance, several MPO directors are supervised by a combination of two or more persons or entities. One MPO noted that its director was selected by the City Manager and approved by the MPO board. Another MPO reported that the MPO Executive Committee Chair had hiring and firing authority over the MPO director.

Many MPO directors (104 of 256 MPOs responding to this question in the survey, or 41%) are simultaneously the director of another agency or the head of another department. Of those 104 directors, 44 (42%) lead the council of governments/regional council (or equivalent), 24 (23%) lead a municipal (or equivalent) department, and 19 (18%) lead a county (or equivalent) department. A handful of MPO directors (7 of 104, or 7%) are also the head of a transit agency or council on aging. Several MPOs (22 of 104, or 21%) reported that the MPO director was also the head of some "other" type of department, including the City/County Planning Commission, the Regional Economic Development District, and the Regional Office of the State Department of Transportation.

Senior Managers

Over 80 percent of MPOs (168 of 209) responding to this question in the survey reported having at least one senior manager. There are 380 senior managers identified in the survey, with an average of 1.8 per MPO. The most common number of senior managers is one. Since the definition of a senior manager is a person who supervises multiple employees, the frequency of senior managers is naturally more common at larger MPOs.

Like MPO directors, a sizable proportion of senior managers are approaching retirement. The multitude of senior managers (as well as MPO directors) nearing retirement age could indicate an impending leadership vacuum at MPOs. Table 6-3 Retirement Horizon of MPO Senior Managers shows the retirement horizon of senior managers responding to this question in the survey.

Table 6-3 Retirement Horizon of MPO Senior Managers

Retirement Horizon	Number	Percent of all Senior Managers
Less than five years	66	17.4%
Five to ten years	103	27.2%
Ten years or more	210	55.4%
Total	379	100%

Professional Employees

Over 96 percent of MPOs (213 of 221) responding to this question in the survey reported having at least one professional employee based on the definition provided. The survey recorded a total of 1,033 professional employees at participating MPOs, with a mean of 4.7 per MPO. Professional employees tend to be in the first five years of employment with the MPO. Table 6-4 shows the distribution of professional employee tenure responding to this question in the survey.

Table 6-4 Professional Employee Tenure with the MPO

Tenure with the MPO	Number	Percent
Less than five years	465	45.4%
Five to ten years	263	25.7%
Ten years or more	297	29.9%
Total	1,025	100%

Several respondents expanded on the types of professional employees retained by the MPO. These include transportation planners, engineers, GIS specialists, travel demand modelers, public involvement specialists, and graphic artists. A handful of MPOs noted that they have a professional employee position that is currently unfunded. One MPO even commented on the difficulty of retaining qualified professional employees: "The recruitment and retention of younger employees past 2-3 years is very rare. We are a training ground and carousel for recent college graduates."

Employee Turnover

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

It appears that the number of positions on MPO staffs, on the whole, is growing. Seventy-three MPOs reported creating a new position over the previous two years (2014 and 2015), while only thirty-two MPOs eliminated a position over the same timeframe (Figure 6-1). Some of the positions that were created include GIS analysts, transportation planners, senior planners, bicycle/pedestrian planners, and public outreach specialists. Positions that were eliminated tended to be because of organizational

restructuring or budget cuts. For instance, one MPO eliminated a GIS position and distributed those tasks amongst the rest of the staff. Another MPO reduced the number of positions from 2.0 FTE to 1.5 FTE, with the difference being absorbed by the host agency. Another MPO eliminated a Safe Routes to School coordinator position due to the elimination of this funding program at the federal level.

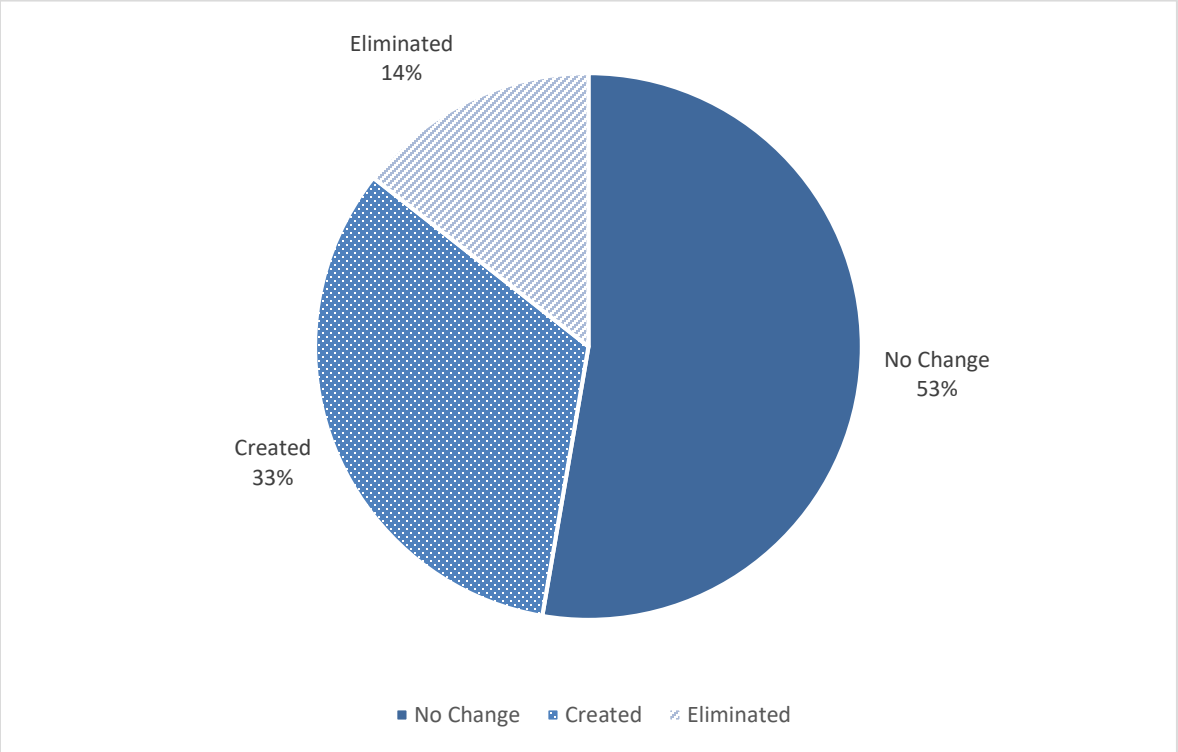

Figure 6-1 Position Creation and Elimination, 2014-2015

MPOs were asked to report the number of people occupying professional jobs that left the MPO for another job over the last two years (2014 and 2015). The number of jobs turned over was annualized (recalculated into one year) for the calculation of the following statistics.

MPOs appear to have fairly stable staff rosters, particularly among larger agencies. The mean number of positions that are vacated at any MPO in any given year is calculated to be 1.15. When compared to the number of jobs available at all MPOs in the study, this can be expressed as a percentage—11.59 percent of MPO jobs can be expected to turn over each year.

Smaller MPOs appear to have more difficulty retaining employees. Table 6-5 shows the average number of employee departures and the average percentage of staff turnover rate. There is a trend for higher staff turnover at smaller MPOs. Large and mid-sized MPOs (10 or more employees) tend to enjoy lower turnover rates.

Table 6-5 Turnover Statistics by MPO Staff Size

Employees at the MPO	Mean Number of Employee Departures Per Year	Percentage Staff Turnover Per Year
More than 20	2.98	6.46%
10 to 20	1.25	9.43%
4 to 9	0.65	11.16%
0 to 3	0.42	18.64%
All MPOs	1.15	11.59%

Employee retention is also better at MPOs with a more populous planning area (Table 6-6). Agencies with population under 500,000 people have experienced double-digit percentage annual staff turnover at nearly 13 percent. Meanwhile, staff turnover at MPOs with over 500,000 people averaged only 8 percent.

Table 6-6 Turnover Statistics by Planning Area Population

Population in Planning Area	Average Number of Employees in this Class	Mean Number of Employee Departures Per Year	Percentage Staff Turnover Per Year
1 million or more	35.3	2.73	8.73%
500,000-1,000,000	13.4	0.91	7.62%
200,000-500,000	9.8	1.05	10.97%
100,000-200,000	5.5	0.62	11.79%
Less than 100,000	3.4	0.47	16.74%
All MPOs	10.5	1.15	11.59%

Where Employees Go

Respondents were asked in this section of the survey to consider the last three employees who left the MPO to pursue alternative employment. Retirements and administrative-type positions were expressly excluded. Two pieces of information were collected about the departed employee(s): 1) the staff specialization of that person; and 2) the type of employer that the departed person worked for immediately after leaving the MPO.

As shown in Table 6-7, the vast majority of departed professionals were urban planners (292 of 452, or 65%). 54 of 452 (12%) belonged to the “other” category, which included positions such as air quality, public involvement, and financial specialists. GIS specialists made up 42 departures, or 10 percent of vacated positions.

Table 6-7 Position Types Vacated

Position Type	Number	Percent
Planner	292	64.6%
Other	54	11.9%
Geographic Information Systems	42	9.3%
Engineer	21	4.6%
Travel demand modeler	18	4.0%
Public involvement	13	2.9%
Intergovernmental/public relations	8	1.8%
Air quality specialist	2	0.4%
Environmental or sociocultural specialist	2	0.4%
Total	452	100%

Respondents were also asked to categorize the new jobs of people who left the MPO. The purpose of this question is to determine which kinds of employers are attracting MPO workers. The results are shown in Table 6-8. About 29 percent of departing MPO employees left for a non-transportation government agency. Roughly the same percent (28%) departed for a transportation-related government agency.

Table 6-8 Destination of Employees Recently Separated from MPOs

Position Type	Number	Percent
Non-transportation government agency	107	28.5%
Transportation-related government agency	103	27.5%
Consulting firm	67	17.9%
Another MPO	57	15.2%
All other employers	41	10.9%
Total	375	100.0%

Engineers appear to be valued highly by consultants, as around half of those professionals are hired by consulting firms after leaving the MPO. Modelers are among the least likely to be hired by a consulting firm, but are the most likely to be hired by another transportation agency. GIS specialists are the most likely to be hired by a non-transportation government agency. These trends are shown in Table 6-9.

Table 6-9 Destination of Departed Employees by Specialty

Type	Non-transportation government agency	Transportation-related government agency	Consulting firm	Another MPO	All other employers	Total
Planner	30%	27%	17%	18%	9%	100%
Other[29]	32%	25%	13%	11%	20%	100%
GIS	38%	21%	23%	5%	13%	100%
Engineer	6%	18%	47%	18%	12%	100%
Modeler	0%	69%	13%	6%	13%	100%
Total	29%	28%	18%	15%	11%	100%

Competitive Pay

Respondents were asked if their MPO is able to be competitive in terms of pay. Overall, respondents feel that MPOs offer competitive pay—171 of 256 MPOs, or 67% of respondents answered "yes", while only 75 (29%) answered "no" (Figure 6-2).

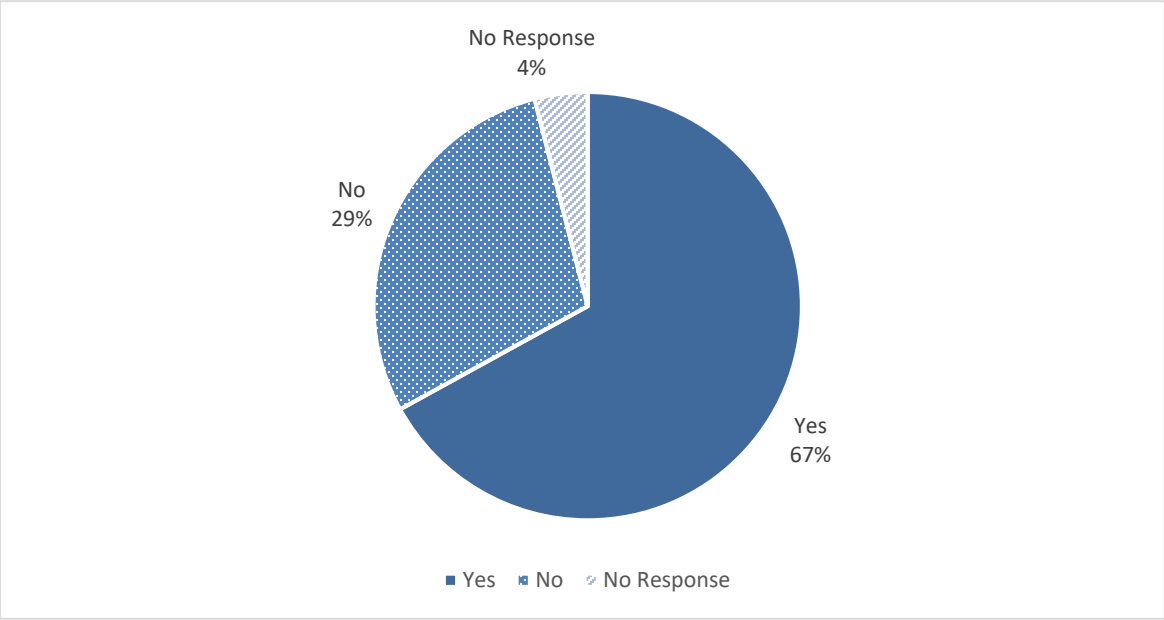

Figure 6-2 Is MPO Pay Competitive?

[29] In addition to the position titles shown in Table 6-9, several other choices were offered as potential responses. Because the frequencies were so small, they were grouped with the "Other" category for analysis purposes. The available responses, along with the number answered were: Public Involvement (10), Intergovernmental/Public Relations (7), Environmental Specialist (1), and Air Quality Specialist (2).

The competitive pay question generated a large amount of commentary. Of the 256 respondents offered this question, 149 wrote a narrative response. Major themes include:

- Some MPOs can be limited by their host agencies' compensation schedules, which can make talented employees difficult to attract and retain.
- MPO salaries tend to be fairly competitive with other public sector agencies, but MPO compensation packages are not comparable with those offered by the private sector.
- Regardless of whether salaries are seen as competitive, most MPOs offer attractive benefits packages.
- Many MPOs conduct regular salary surveys to determine the appropriateness of their existing pay structure. MPOs may collect pay data through their state associations or professional organizations (such as the American Planning Association), while others may rely on job postings from other agencies or UPWPs from comparable-sized MPOs.

Pay Scales

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

Respondents gave a dollar amount for the minimum salary and the maximum salary, though in a few cases the respondents set the minimum and maximum as the same amount to indicate an exact salary. Descriptive statistics of MPO salaries are reported in the tables that follow. The primary factors in any observed variances in wages appear to be based on the size of the MPO planning area and the size of the MPO staff. Additional salary scales are included in Appendix C.

MPO Directors

MPO directors are the highest-paid group of MPO employees. Since there is only one MPO director, many respondents did not report a salary range, but instead reported the actual pay of the MPO director. The highest reported pay (the highest maximum) is $300,000. On average, MPO directors receive an annual salary of $99,174. Table 6-10 shows descriptive statistics of annual salary ranges for MPO directors.

Table 6-10. Descriptive Statistics of Annual Salary Range of MPO Directors

	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Minimum	$12,000	$20,000
1st Quartile	$64,000	$90,000
Median	$77,000	$110,000
3rd Quartile	$96,000	$125,750
Maximum	$290,000	$300,000
Mean	$84,966	$114,026
Standard Deviation	$34,700	$40,612
Count	**237***	**226***

* Sixteen MPOs only reported the lower bound and five MPOs only reported the upper bound of the salary.

A Pearson's r test[30] shows that the maximum salary is moderately to highly correlated to population and staff size, with staff size having the strongest correlation.[31] Salary is not correlated to director tenure or the age of the MPO.

Table 6-11 shows the pay ranges of directors at independent and hosted MPOs. Directors at independent MPOs are paid substantially more money. This disparity is likely due to the fact that some hosted MPO directors are not the head of the host agency, and therefore are not classified in the senior-most pay category.

Table 6-11 MPO Director Pay Ranges by MPO Hosting Status

	Mean Lower Bound	Mean Upper Bound
All MPOs	$84,609	$114,026
Independent	$90,781	$122,866
Hosted	$82,378	$111,019

Pay rates for MPO directors increase with the size of the MPO planning area. Pay tables for MPO directors separated by planning area population are shown in Table 6-12.

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

[31] Population = 0.524 and Staff Size = 0.618

Table 6-12 MPO Director Pay Ranges by MPO Population

Planning Area Population	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	$84,609	$114,026
Less than 100,000	$75,158	$93,612
100,000-200,000	$78,016	$102,070
200,000-500,000	$81,705	$114,780
500,000-1,000,000	$95,333	$131,542
1,000,000 and over	$114,563	$154,656

The strongest predictor of MPO director salary is the size of the MPO staff. Table 6-13 summarizes the pay of directors at MPOs by the number of total employees. Directors with more than twenty employees receive the highest compensation.

Table 6-13 MPO Director Pay Ranges by MPO Staff Size

Staff Size	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	$84,609	$114,026
3 or less	$73,893	$91,523
4 to 9	$80,745	$107,802
10 to 20	$95,473	$131,019
20 or more	$107,609	$150,957

Senior Managers

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

Senior managers earn substantially less than the MPO director, but some top senior managers earn six-figure incomes. Among all MPOs, senior managers earn an average minimum salary of $64,508 and an average maximum of $90,887. As with MPO directors, salaries are higher at MPOs with larger populations, large staff sizes, and an independent staffing structure. Table 6-14 shows the descriptive statistics of the reported values for Senior Managers.

Table 6-14 Descriptive Statistics of Annual Salary Range of Senior Managers

	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Minimum	$21,000	$41,000
1st Quartile	$50,000	$74,750
Median	$60,000	$85,000
3rd Quartile	$75,000	$102,750
Maximum	$180,000	$200,000
Mean	$64,508	$90,887
Standard deviation	$21,304	$26,875
Count	**179***	**168***

* Eleven MPOs only reported the lower bound of the salary.

Professional Employees

Professional employees experience the largest variation in pay. The average minimum professional employee salary is $43,672, while the average maximum salary is $73,018. The maximum salary earned increases at independent MPOs, MPOs in larger areas, and at agencies with more employees. However, the minimum salary hovers around $43,000 regardless of the characteristics exhibited by the MPO. This indicates that salaries for entry-level employees are relatively equal across the country. Table 6-15 shows the descriptive statistics of the annual salary range for the professional employee position. Professional employees in average receive an annual salary of $58,327.

Table 6-15 Descriptive Statistics of Annual Salary Range of Professional Employees

	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Minimum	$15,000	$34,000
1st Quartile	$35,000	$59,750
Median	$43,000	$71,000
3rd Quartile	$50,000	$85,000
Maximum	$100,000	$150,000
Mean	$43,672	$73,018
Standard deviation	$11,163	$19,642
Count	**227***	**220***

* Seven MPOs only reported the lower bound of the salary

Chapter 7: Performance-Based Planning and Programming/Scenario-Planning

Performance-based planning and programming requirements were introduced into federal transportation law by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and continued in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). Scenario planning was also encouraged in those federal acts as a technique for conducting long-range transportation planning. The intent was to compel states, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and transit agencies to enhance the efficiency of transportation investments and support the planning and programming of transportation infrastructure that achieve specific national transportation goals in certain areas including safety, congestion reduction, system reliability and freight movement. Survey respondents were asked to respond to a series of questions related to their use of performance-based planning and programming as well as scenario planning.[32]

Use of Performance Measures and Targets

An overwhelming majority (226 out of 241 respondents, or 94%) of MPOs are transitioning to performance-based planning and programming, as directed by MAP-21. Nearly 90 percent of MPOs have established performance measures for their Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Long-Range Transportation Plan (MTP/LRTP), and approximately 34 percent have established them for their Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Another 20 percent indicated they had established performance measures for both the MTP/LRTP and the TIP.

Figure 7-1 shows how many MPOs are transitioning to performance-based planning and programming as well as how many have established performance measures for their various work products and activities. Because respondents could select more than one answer, Table 7-1 shows the distribution of their responses.

The average population of MPOs that have established performance measures for both the MTP/LRTP and the TIP is over 450,000, and the average planning area was 974 square miles (compared to an overall average of 612,943 and 1,087.85, respectively). Twelve percent have established performance measures for the MTP/LRTP, the TIP, and at least one other type of activity. The average population of these MPOs was roughly 850,000, and the average planning area was approximately 1,360 square miles.

[32] Note: At the time this survey was conducted, final rules for performance-based planning and programming had not yet been published.

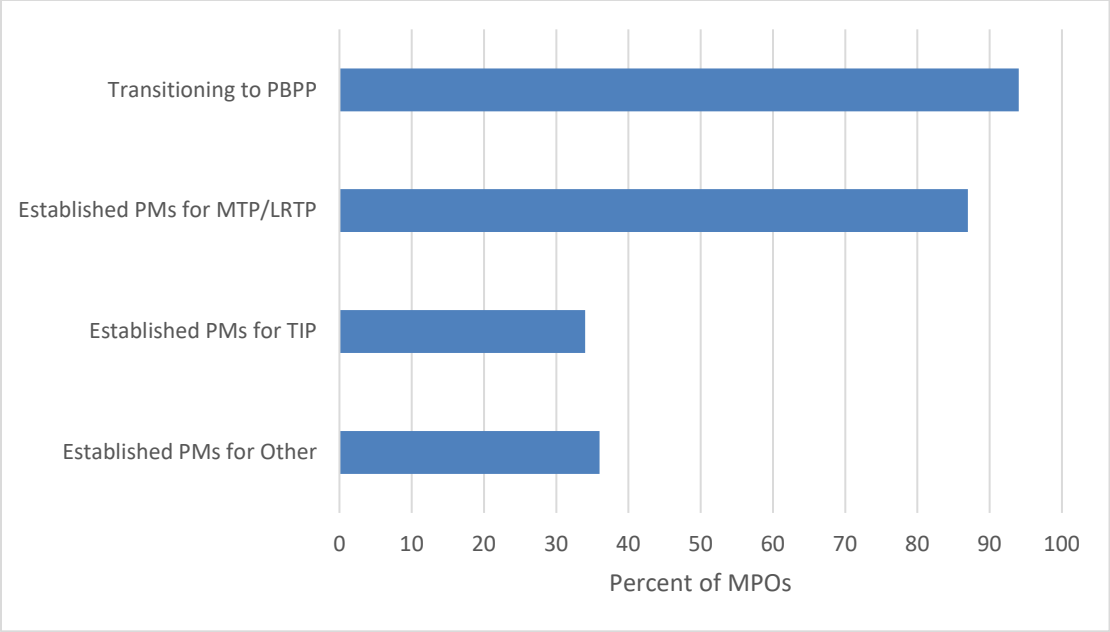

Figure 7-1 MPO Use of Performance-Based Planning and Programming

Table 7-1 Distribution of MPO Usage of Performance Measures

Established PMs for:	Number of MPOs	Percent of MPOs
MTP/LRTP Only	75	43%
MTP/LRTP and TIP	35	20%
MTP/LRTP, TIP, and Other	21	12%
MTP/LRTP and Other	21	12%
TIP only	2	1%
TIP and Other	1	1%
Other Only	20	11%
Total	175	100%

Thirty-six percent of MPOs responding to this question in the survey indicated that they had set performance measures for other planning or programming documents and activities. The most commonly reported "other" item was the Congestion Management Process (CMP). Other common activities mentioned included the Public Participation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and corridor plans (Figure 7-2). One large northeastern MPO cited the number of road safety audits per year as an example of how they use their UPWP to improve overall regional performance. A large southeastern MPO uses performance measurement as a method for prioritizing projects for inclusion in the TIP. Meanwhile, several MPOs are either still in the process of developing performance measures or are awaiting further federal guidance before doing so. For example, one large Midwestern MPO started developing what were perceived to be obvious measures, but is waiting on implementation guidance from USDOT before establishing final measures. Another small MPO developed sample measures, but

noted that a lack of collaboration with the state has hindered the establishment of performance targets.[33]

Figure 7-2 Other Activities For Which MPOs Have Established Performance Measures

The most commonly reported areas for which performance measures and targets have been established in the MTP/LRTP are safety and congestion (Figure 7-3). However, several MPOs have established performance measures and targets in the MTP/LRTP for "other areas" as well, such as environmental sustainability, economic vitality, equity, multimodal options, and system reliability. Some MPOs have also applied performance measures for issues specific to their geographic area. For example, one large western MPO established a performance measure related to growth in forest-fire risk areas. Another large coastal MPO has established performance measures related to vulnerability to storms and sea level rise.

[33] Note: Federal law requires states to establish performance targets within one year following the issuance of final rules by the US Department of Transportation regarding performance measures, and requires MPOs to establish performance targets for their metropolitan planning area 180 days thereafter.

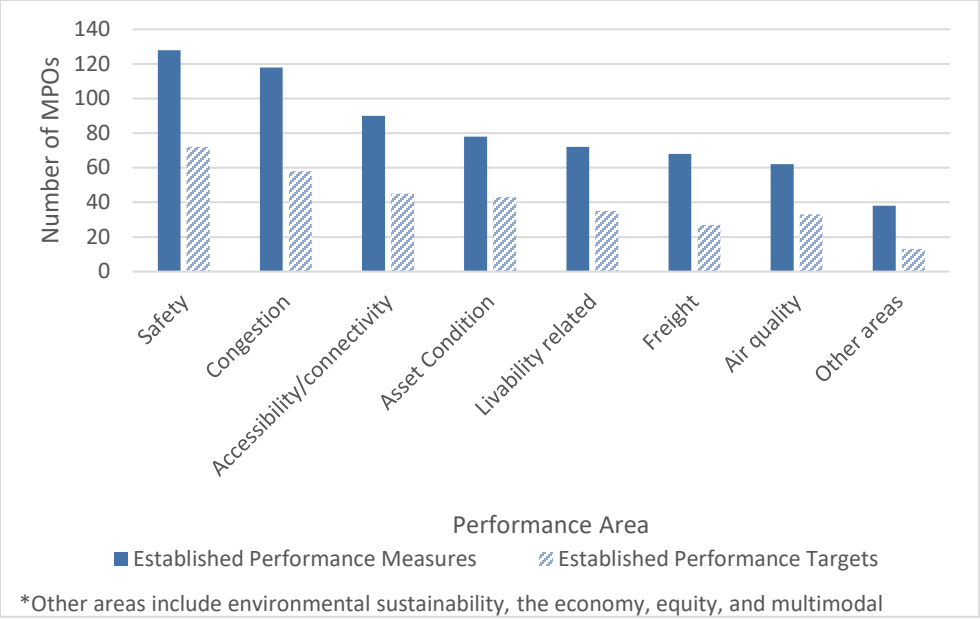

Figure 7-3 Use of Performance Measures and Targets in the MTP/LRTP

Figure 7-4 shows the use of performance measures and targets in the TIP. The most commonly reported areas for which performance measures and targets have been established are safety, congestion, and air quality. Several MPOs also established performance measures for other areas, such as economic vitality.

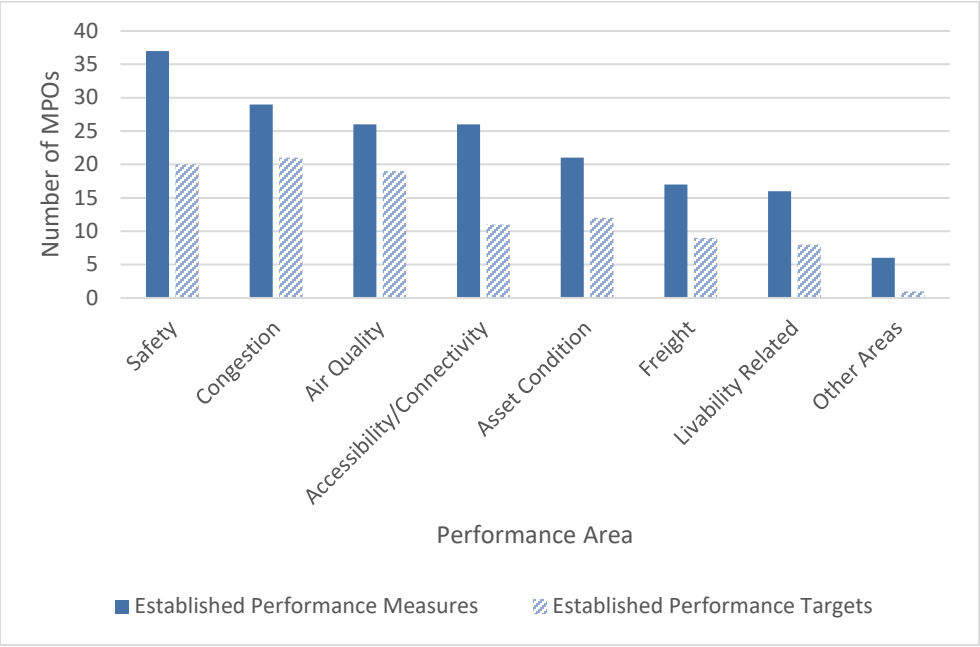

Figure 7-4 Use of Performance Measures and Targets in the TIP

Figure 7-5 shows the use of performance measures and targets in other planning and programming documents and activities. Again, congestion and safety were among the most commonly reported performance areas. Responses falling into the "other" category included economic vitality, multimodal options, and public involvement effectiveness.

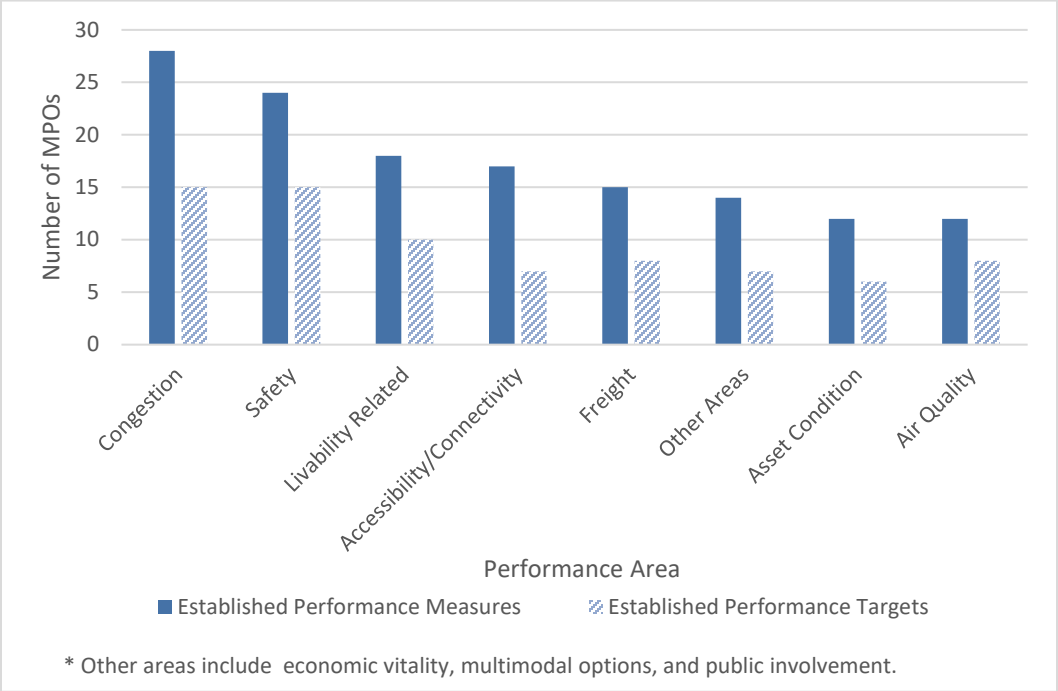

Figure 7-5 Use of Performance Measures and Targets in Other Planning and Programming Documents and Activities

Impacts of Performance-Based Planning and Programming on Staff Workload and Consultant Contracts

Seventeen percent of MPOs (39 out of 226 respondents) have a staff member who spends more than half of their time focusing on performance-based planning and programming (Figure 7-6). Of those 39 MPOs, approximately 47 percent have a population of over one million people, and approximately 52 percent have a planning area larger than 2,500 square miles. Excluding outliers, the number of staff ranged from 2 to 55, and the average number of staff was approximately 12.[34] The average population of MPOs with a staff member spending more than half their time on performance-based planning and programming was over 2.1 million, and the average area was over 3,100 square miles.

[34] This data excludes eight MPOs that reported unusually large staff sizes (those exceeding 55 staff members).

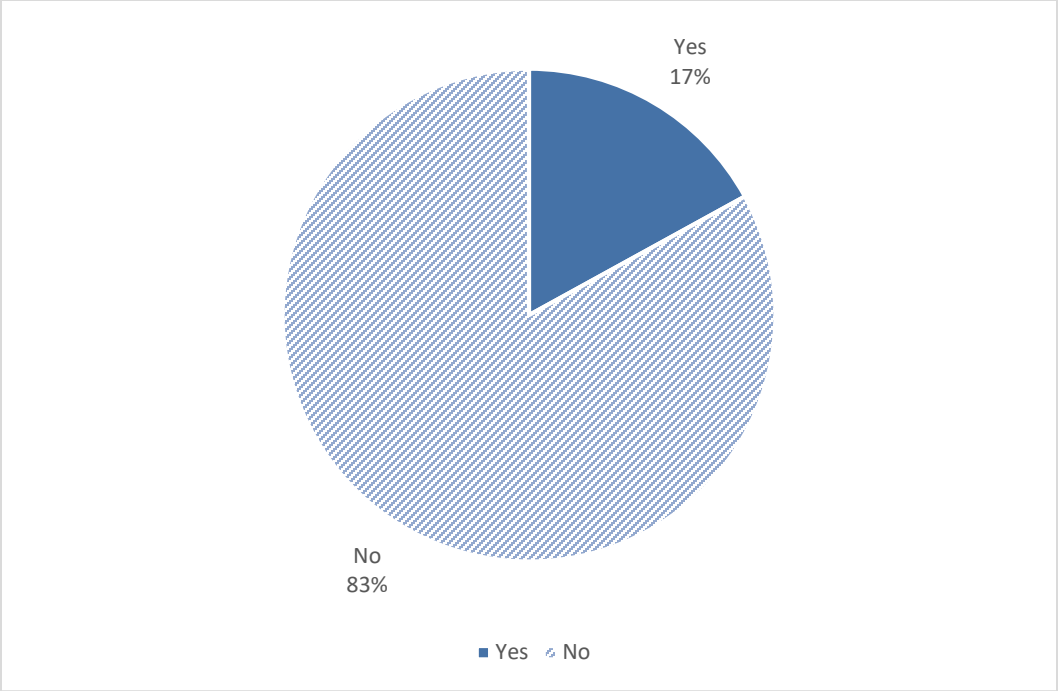

Figure 7-6 Presence of Staff Member Who Spends Over 50% of Their Time on Performance-Based Planning and Programming

Of the 219 MPOs who responded to a question asking about the impacts of performance-based planning and programming on staff workload, 107 (or 49%) reported that it has affected staff workload overall.

Several MPOs noted that it is too soon to determine how performance-based planning affects staff workload, but many anticipate that it will increase staff workload or require reallocation of resources. One mid-sized northeastern MPO stated that it will require additional consultant contracts to meet the requirements. While many MPOs reported an anticipated impact on staff workload, a small number recognized that performance-based planning is a useful technique that may improve the transportation planning process. For example, a mid-sized southeastern MPO noted that although it will affect staff workload and resources, performance-based planning is a worthwhile effort that will improve planning outcomes.

Forty-seven percent of MPOs (104 out of 219) reported that performance-based planning and programming has required reallocation of resources and prioritization of tasks.[35] These MPOs were more likely to be mid-sized. Fifty-five percent had a population between 100,000 and 500,000. One small Midwestern MPO noted that they might need to increase their use of interns to help with the increased workload from performance-based planning and programming requirements.

[35] The responses "the implementation of performance-based planning has increased staff workload overall" and "the implementation of performance-based planning has required reallocation of resources and prioritization of tasks" are not mutually exclusive. Some MPOs selected both responses.

Of the MPOs who reported an increase in staff workload, the vast majority (83 out of 104 respondents, or approximately 80%) stated that the implementation of performance-based planning and programming has increased workload by 20% or less. Twelve MPOs reported an increase of 21% to 30%. Five reported a 30% to 50% increase in staff workload. Only four MPOs reported an increase of more than 50% (Figure 7-7). So, while roughly half of MPOs indicated that staff workload increased, the increase for most was relatively modest.

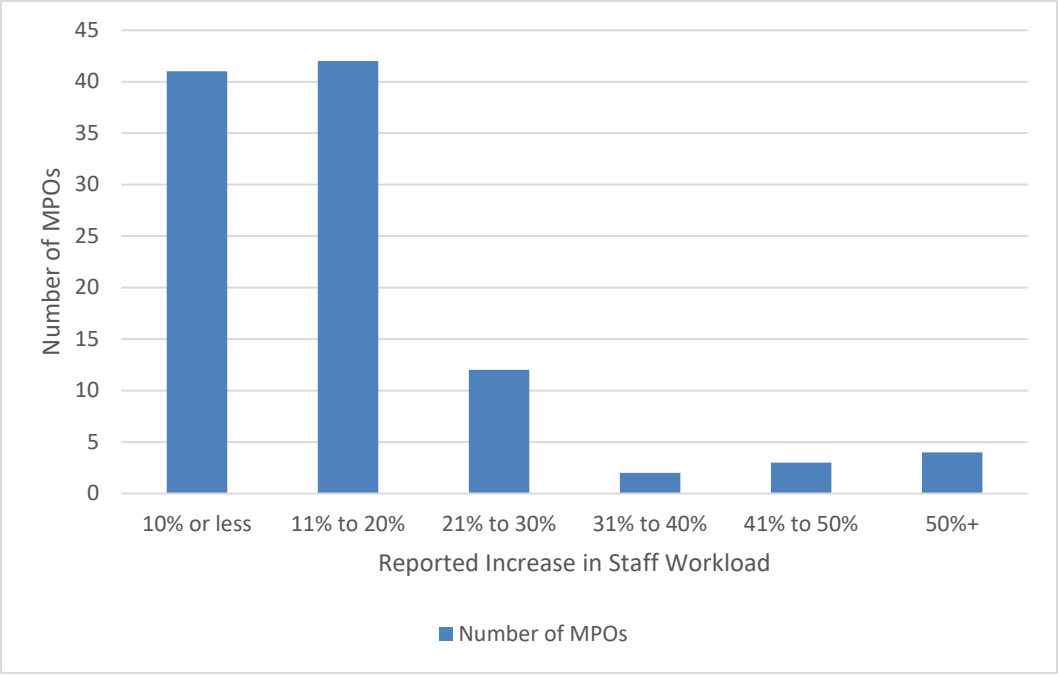

Figure 7-7 Percentage Increase in Staff Workload Due to Implementation of Performance-Based Planning and Programming

Fewer MPOs reported effects on consultant contracts. Fifty-one percent of MPOs (109 out of 212 respondents) stated that performance-based planning and programming had no impact on their consultant contracts whatsoever. Nineteen percent (or 40 out of 212) reported that it has increased the costs of their contracts, and twenty-seven percent (or 58 out of 212) said that it has required reallocation of resources and prioritization of tasks.[36] Several MPOs (31 out of 212, or 15%) had difficulty answering the question, often because they either do not have any consultant contracts or it is simply too early to gauge.

Of 39 MPOs who reported an increase in the cost of consultant contracts, 34 (88%) reported that costs increased by 20% or less. The remaining five MPOs reported increases between 21% and 50% (Figure 7-8).

[36] The responses "it has increased the costs of consultant contracts" and "it has required reallocation of resources and prioritization of tasks" are not mutually exclusive. Several MPOs reported that performance-based planning and programming affected consultant contracts in both ways, while some reported only one effect.

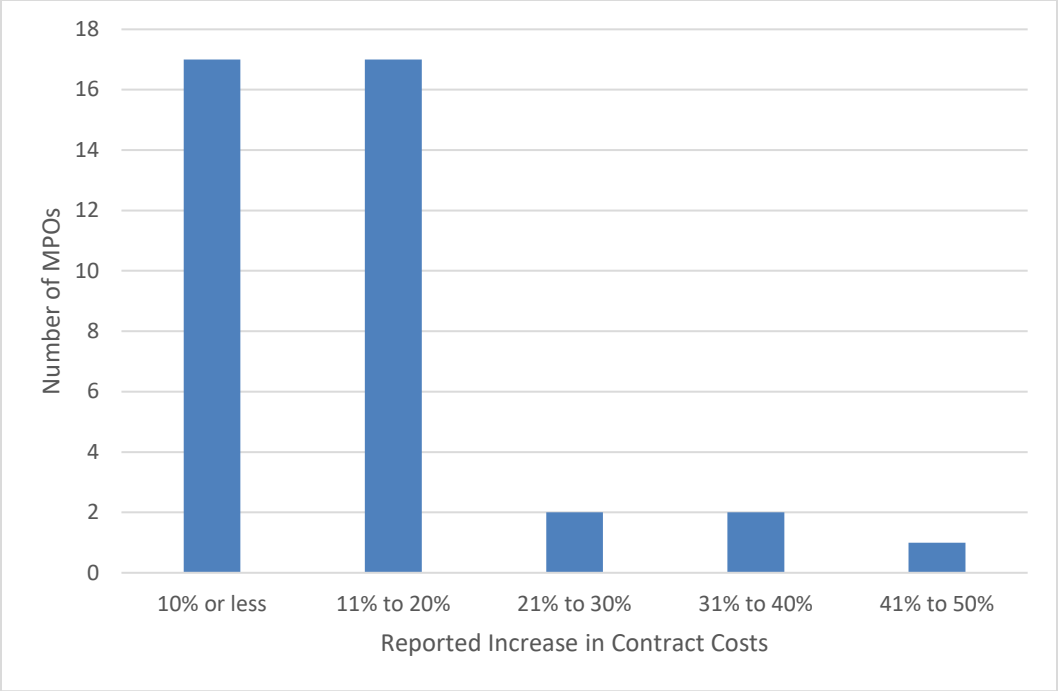

Figure 7-8 Increase in Cost of Consultant Contracts Due to Implementation of Performance-Based Planning and Programming

Use of Scenario Planning

Approximately 58 percent of MPOs (150 out of 259 respondents) used scenario planning in the development of their most recent MTP/LRTP. This was most commonly reported by MPOs with larger populations. The average population of MPOs that used scenario planning is over 650,000, while the average population of those who did not use it is less than 400,000. As illustrated in Figure 7-9, as population increases, so too does the rate of MPOs using scenario planning.

An MPO's air quality attainment status also seemed to be related to the use of scenario planning, as shown in Table 7-2. MPOs that were in attainment or maintenance status were split fairly evenly, with 56 percent of MPOs in attainment status and 51 percent of MPOs in maintenance status reporting using scenario planning in the development of their MTP/LRTP. However, over 70 percent of MPOs in non-attainment (or 31 out of 43 MPOs) that responded to this question reported having used scenario planning to support the development of their most recent MTP/LRTP. This difference does not indicate that air quality attainment status drives the decision to use scenario planning; rather, MPOs employing scenario planning tend to be in nonattainment areas or larger population centers or both.

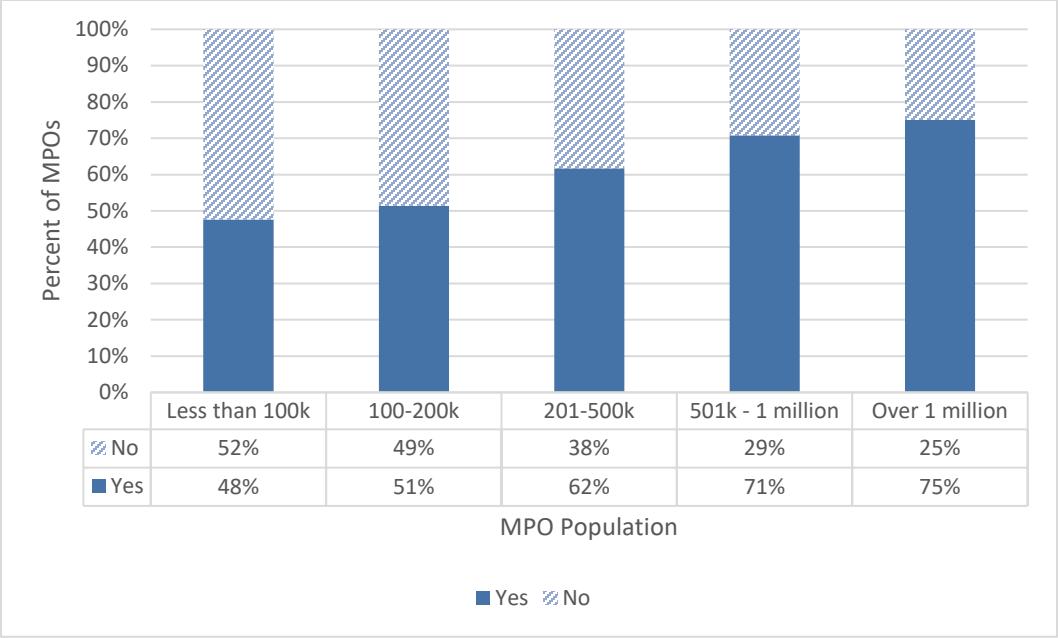

Figure 7-9 Use of Scenario Planning in the Development of the MTP/LRTP Based on Population

Table 7-2 Frequency of Scenario Planning Use in the Development of the MTP/LRTP Based on Air Quality Attainment Status

Use Scenario Planning?	Attainment	Maintenance	Non-Attainment	Grand Total
Yes	96	22	31	149
No	76	21	12	109
Grand Total	172	43	43	258

Impacts of Scenario Planning on MTP/LRTP Preparation and Staff Workload

Only 26 percent of MPOs (37 of 144 respondents) reported that the implementation of scenario planning has had no effect on the preparation of the MTP/LRTP. Forty-three percent (62 of 144 MPOs) have experienced increased costs, and the same percentage reported that they were compelled to reallocate resources and prioritize tasks.[37]

Seventy-nine percent of MPOs (106 out of 135) that reported their costs to conduct scenario planning as part of the development of the MTP/LRTP reported spending $100,000 or less. Roughly 13 percent (18 out of 135) spent between $100,000 and $200,000 on scenario planning, and the remaining eight percent (11 out of 135) spent more than $200,000 (Figure 7-10).

[37] The responses "it has increased the cost to prepare the MTP/LRTP" and "it has required reallocation of resources and prioritization of tasks" are not mutually exclusive. Several MPOs reported that implementation of scenario planning affected MTP/LRTP preparation in both ways, while some reported only one effect.

Forty-three out of sixty MPOs (72%) reported that the implementation of scenario planning has increased the cost to prepare the MTP/LRTP by 20 percent or less. Fifteen MPOs (25%) reported increased costs ranging between 21 percent and 50 percent. Only two MPOs reported cost increases of over 50 percent (Figure 7-11).

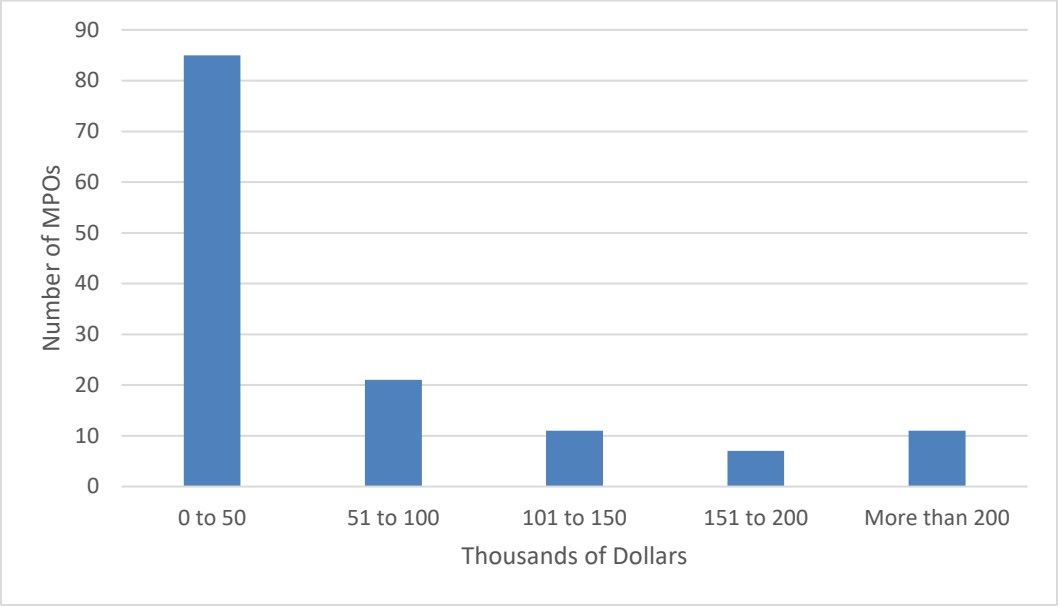

Figure 7-10 Money Spent to Conduct Scenario Planning as Part of MTP/LRTP Development (in thousands of dollars)

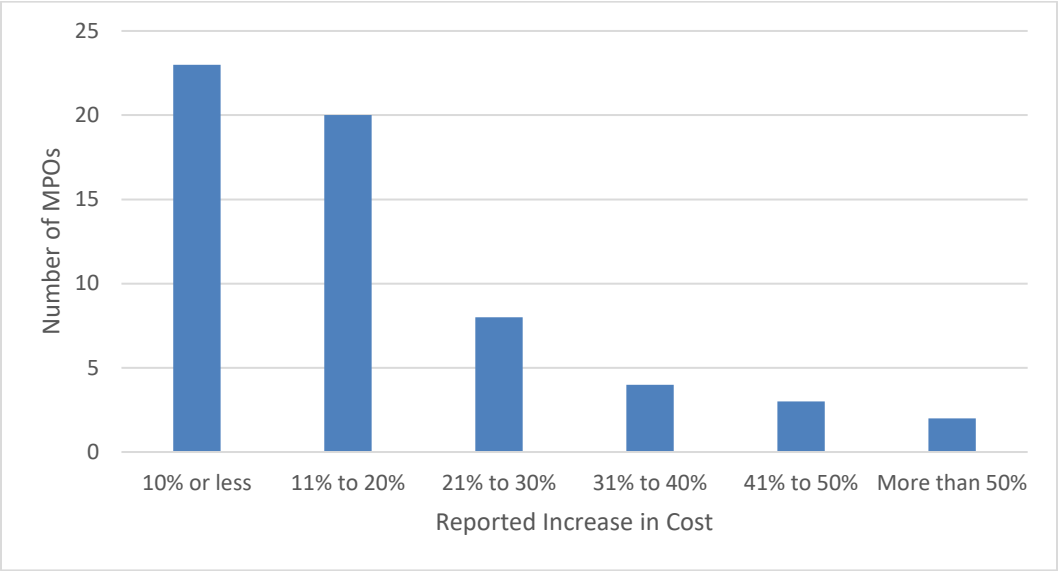

Figure 7-11 Increase in Cost to Prepare MTP/LRTP Due to Implementation of Scenario Planning

Many MPOs provided further insight into their experiences with scenario planning. Several have not yet implemented this planning technique, while others already use scenario planning as their default planning process, often to match the approach of their host agency. These additional insights include:

- One midsized northeastern MPO noted that because the MPO shares staff with the County Planning Agency, scenario planning is the default planning process for long-range planning.
- One large southeastern MPO noted that it performed extensive scenario planning for the 2035 LRTP, but not as much for the 2040 update due to limited funds.
- A large western MPO was unable to perform scenario planning for the most recent MTP/LRTP update, but planned to implement it for the next one.
- A large southeastern MPO performed a modest scenario exercise, but found that the travel demand model produced by the state was too coarse to differentiate the traffic impacts of the various growth scenarios in a meaningful way.
- A large western MPO noted that although it has increased costs and required some reallocation of resources, scenario planning has improved the multimodal transportation and land use planning process in their area.

Only 14 out of 144 MPOs (or roughly 10%) have a staff member who spends more than half of their time on scenario planning. All of these 14 MPOs had a population of over 200,000. While it appears that larger MPOs were more likely to report having a staff member who spends more than half their time on scenario planning, the data sample was too small to draw a reasonable conclusion.

Chapter 8: Case Studies

Other chapters of this report discuss MPOs in aggregate, allowing the reader to understand the typical MPO. However, each MPO functions within a unique political, practical, and historical context. This yields considerable variation from one MPO to another.

This chapter includes six case studies on MPOs. The case studies were selected to highlight a variety of MPO types, interesting staffing structures, or organizational transitions. Attention was paid to geographic and population size diversity. Three case studies are TMAs, while three are not. The selection process attempted to avoid MPOs that have been thoroughly documented in other publications, including the 2010 version of this study.

Information for each case study was obtained through several methods. All six case examples participated in the 2016 survey. The survey taker was approached for a follow-up phone interview and subsequent email questioning. The research team reviewed relevant MPO documents such as the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), bylaws, establishment memoranda, and recent board minutes. Case study subjects had the opportunity to fact-check and comment on the final draft. Case study research work was completed in early 2017.

The case studies included in this chapter are:

1) Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO)

2) Midland Area Transportation Study (MATS)

3) Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

4) Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation System

5) Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC)

6) Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (Metro)

Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO)

MPO Name	Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO)
Principal City	Norfolk, VA
Population in Planning Area	1,619,202
Number of Staff	18 (9 additional shared staff)
UPWP Value	$16.8 million
Board Members	24 voting / 27 non-voting
Planning Area	2,658 square miles
Hosting Type	Leaning Independent
Website	www.hrtpo.org

Major themes: Becoming an independent MPO, governing board composition, branding

Over the past ten years, the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) has executed a move towards greater independence, reimagined its governing board, and rebranded itself to connect better with the community. Hampton Roads is the name of the body of water at the center of the Tidewater region of southeastern Virginia (urban area population 1,619,202). Major municipalities in the area include Norfolk, Virginia Beach, and Chesapeake. The region is home to several major military installations, and is a significant port of entry for maritime freight.

All of the Commonwealth of Virginia was divided into Planning District Commissions (PDCs) beginning in the late 1960s.[38] PDCs are charged with land use planning, mapping/data collection, and economic development planning, among other tasks agreed upon by member local governments. Since PDCs were already in operation prior to the creation of MPOs by the 1973 Federal Aid Highway Act, many Virginia MPOs were hosted at the local PDC. Such was the case for the MPO in the Norfolk region where

[38] For a primer on Virginia Planning District Commissions, visit http://www.vapdc.org/?page=IntrotoPDCs

metropolitan planning was accredited to the Southeastern Virginia PDC. This agency merged with a neighbor, the Peninsula PDC, in 1991 to form the Hampton Roads PDC.

A PDC—or similar agency—can be a good choice to host an MPO. PDCs are regional in nature, the governing board of PDCs is composed of local elected officials, and the infusion of state funds helps meet the requirement for non-federal match. To avoid any potential conflicts with statutory and regulatory requirements, the agreement and actions in forming the MPO must be carefully crafted to clarify the role of each agency.

In 2007, the Hampton Roads PDC underwent a routine quadrennial review by the Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration (FHWA/FTA). Quadrennial reviews seek to ensure that the MPO is meeting or exceeding its legal obligations and professional practice standards. The results of the 2007 quadrennial review found that the MPO function was not in compliance with federal statute regarding decision-making authority, board independence, and opportunity for public participation. Several processes of the PDC were called into question by the review. The PDC Executive Committee conducted MPO business during a sub-section of the regular PDC Board meeting. This system did not guarantee the Executive Committee was composed of elected officials. Further, this system limited opportunities for public involvement on MPO issues. The quadrennial review also raised civil rights issues due to large portions of the MPO planning area not having a vote on the Executive Committee. FHWA and FTA issued corrective actions in the quadrennial review report, which had to be corrected to avoid loss of federal planning funds.[39]

Figure 8-1 Hampton Roads TPO

The 2007 quadrennial review's findings gave the region's leaders cause to reevaluate and dramatically change the MPO's organizational structure. Over the 2008 to 2009 period, the MPO would transform from a *Dual-Purpose Hosted MPO* into a *Leaning Independent MPO*. The MPO functions were spun off from the PDC into an independent decision-making body with a new governing board. The MPO and PDC signed a series of memoranda of understanding (MOU) regarding the provision of services to the new agency.

[39] The concerns raised in the 2008 quadrennial review had surfaced before. In the 2001 review, FHWA/FTA had issued recommendations for improved MPO decision-making processes and transparency. These were only recommendations and had no negative consequences attached.

The first step in remedying the corrective actions from FHWA/FTA was to establish a reform committee to review and recommend structural changes. The reform committee was chaired by the Mayor of the City of Newport News, and included representatives from multiple local governments, Virginia DOT, local transit properties, and FHWA. In less than a year, this committee returned a set of actions to:

- Establish a new corporate entity
- Spin off staff to be independent of the PDC for supervisory and policy purposes
- Establish a new, independent governing board

The reform committee oversaw the development of a new metropolitan planning agreement.[40] The agreement articulated the vision for an independent agency, including creation of the first HRTPO bylaws and outlining the composition of the new board. Crucially, the newly independent agency had the freedom to enter into contractual agreements with its former host (the PDC).[41]

A major component of the independence movement was a rebranding effort. Previously, the MPO functions were indistinguishable from the other activities of the Hampton Roads PDC. In order to accomplish this, the MPO adopted the moniker Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO). Including the word 'transportation' was viewed as an easy way to demonstrate the focus of the organization. The average citizen and the media can clearly understand that the HRTPO should be their point of contact for transportation concerns. Further, the HRTPO created a distinct logo and color scheme for all documents and their newly-created website. Staff of the newly-created HRTPO spent significant time speaking to community members and stakeholders to explain the new agency and its mission. Today, HRTPO enjoys good name recognition among the general public and the media. The remainder of this case study uses the term TPO in lieu of MPO.

The HRTPO Board has 24 voting members, drawn from municipalities, counties,[42] state legislators, major public transportation properties, and the Virginia DOT (Figure 8-2). Alternate members are appointed for all seats, except those reserved for legislators.

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[40] The 2008 MPA, which remains in effect, can be viewed here: http://www.hrtpo.org/uploads/docs/1%20-%20Metropolitan%20Planning%20Agreement.pdf

[41] The Hampton Roads PDC continues to operate. It takes on the government tasks accredited to PDCs by Virginia law.

[42] In Virginia, counties and cities are equal levels of government and have the same roles and responsibilities under Virginia law. A city is not located within a county.

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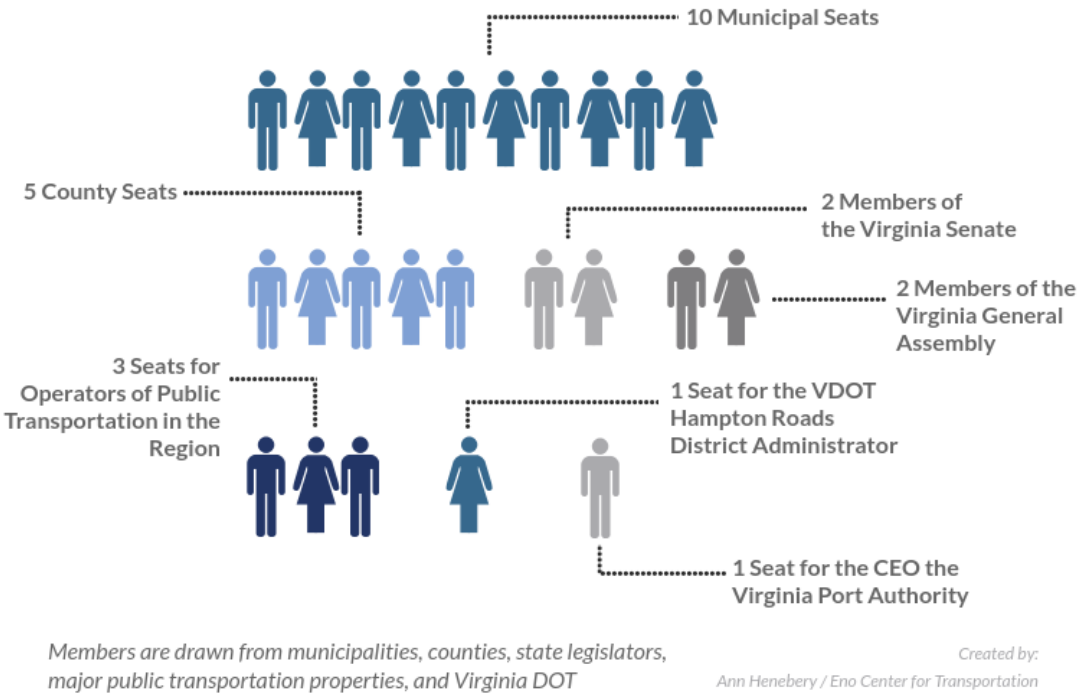

Figure 8-2 Hampton Roads TPO Board Structure

Each seat has one vote, regardless of the population of the jurisdiction. Members include:

- Ten municipal seats, occupied by the chief elected officers of each (Mayor or City Council President)
- Five county seats, occupied by the chief elected officer (Board of Supervisors Chair)
- Two Members of the Virginia Senate, chosen by the chair of the President of the Senate
- Two Members of the Virginia General Assembly, chosen by the chair of the Rules Committee
- Three seats for operators of public transportation in the region. These seats are occupied by professional staff (usually the CEO)
- One seat for the Virginia Department of Transportation Hampton Roads District Administrator
- One seat for the CEO of the Virginia Port Authority

The legislative seats were added a year after the new TPO Board was created. Although there is no requirement to do so, all legislative appointees have hailed from the Hampton Roads region. Staff views the inclusion of legislators as crucial to improving the TPO's visibility with the state and closing the communication gap that had previously stymied collaboration. Several HRTPO priority projects have been approved by the legislature since dedicated seats were created. Further, the HRTPO's project prioritization tool was adopted statewide in 2009, in part due to the legislators actively promoting its utility.

The HRTPO's Board has a large number (27) of nonvoting members and official liaisons. Each local government appoints a non-elected official—generally the city or county manager—to nonvoting seats on the HRTPO Board. This has added collaborative benefit because city/county managers also serve on the HRPDC Board. Other nonvoting members include the FHWA Division Administrator, FTA Region Administrator, the Director of the Virginia Department of Aviation, the Executive Directors of two local airports, the Governor's appointee to the Hampton Roads District seat on the Commonwealth Transportation Board, the Chair of the Citizen Transportation Advisory Committee, and the Chair of the Freight Transportation Advisory Committee. Three senior military officers act as liaisons for military installations in the region.

The HRTPO Board is free to enter into contractual arrangements to support the agency's operations. The HRTPO looked to the HRPDC to provide a number of services. Three memoranda of understanding (MOU) were signed between the two agencies. However, these arrangements are voluntary and can be cancelled. Therefore the HRTPO is independent, but 'leans' heavily on a different agency for operational needs. The MOUs include:

1) *Fiscal Agent* – The PDC acts as the fiscal agent for the TPO, with the PDC Director as the nominal head of both organizations. A TPO Director was hired, and that person reports to the TPO Board for all planning activities. However, business processes remain under the control of the PDC Director, who also retains personnel management duties of the TPO Director.

2) *Staff* – Fifteen original transportation staff were transferred from the PDC to the TPO. Transportation staff report to the TPO Board. However, paychecks and HR services are provided by the PDC. Health insurance and retirement plans are provided for a fee by the PDC.

3) *Office Operation* – Office operation is funded jointly by the PDC and TPO. The two agencies are located in the same building (the "Regional Building"). Shared staff includes HR, IT, building maintenance, and a joint Chief Financial Officer.

The MOU involved significant negotiation and attention to detail. The arrangements have provided a stable backdrop for the TPO to exercise independent decision-making authority and increase its visibility around the region and the state. Sharing of staff, facilities, and resources has saved significant costs for both the TPO and PDC.

Lessons Learned

1. Branding is important for public and stakeholder recognition. Separate websites, consistent color schemes, and messaging drive home the independent nature of the MPO.
2. Memoranda of understanding are a useful tool for an independent MPO to obtain business services from allied public bodies.
3. Some business items like HR, insurance, IT, and rent can be shared to reduce overhead costs for all parties.
4. Inclusion of state legislators can help improve the MPO's statewide visibility, advance important projects, and enhance collaboration with the state DOT.

Midland Area Transportation Study (MATS)

MPO Name	Midland Area Transportation Study (MATS)
Principal City	Midland, MI
Population in Planning Area	59,387
Number of Staff	2
UPWP Value	$321,258
Board Members	27 (20 with voting rights, 7 without)
Planning Area	562 square miles
Hosting Type	Fully Independent
Website	www.midlandmpo.com

Major themes: Small urban area, independent, single-purpose

The Midland Area Transportation Study (MATS) is the MPO serving the Midland, MI region, located in central Michigan about 30 miles northwest of Saginaw. MATS is one of the nation's newest MPOs. When the 2010 Census found the area had grown larger than 50,000 people, the MPO was formed through the efforts of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and local governments. MATS was created in 2012 and formally designated by the governor in January 2013. The new MPO enables the urban area to be eligible to receive federal highway and transit funding.

The term "transportation study" is often associated with older MPOs, and carries the connotation of being temporary. However, the term is found throughout Michigan in names of other MPOs, so MATS

was given this name for consistency. The MATS Board chose to hold all agency operations closely, and MATS is a Fully Independent MPO.

In addition to being a new organization, MATS is unique because of its small staff size. Currently, there are two full time staff members. One person serves as director; their time is generally split evenly between planning and administrative duties as outlined in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). A second staff person works mostly on technical or planning-related tasks, with only some administrative duties. Almost all of MATS' work is done in-house including planning, programming, data collection, public involvement, and stakeholder contact.[43] For the first two and a half years of MATS' existence, all tasks were handled by the MATS director—its sole employee until May 2015.

The MATS decision-making body and governing board is its Policy Committee. The committee consists of 20 voting members from the cities and towns in the urbanized area as well as transportation providers, local road commissions, and MDOT. Some of the seats on the committee are held by local elected officials, but the determination of the representatives is the responsibility of the localities. An additional seven organizations participate in a non-voting manner. These include federal, state, and county officials as well as representatives from two regional airports. Representatives from two nearby MPOs also participate as non-voting members. The active participation of nearby MPOs is viewed as a check for overlap on issues that potentially matter to both MPOs. The Policy Committee composition has remained unchanged since the MPO was first established in 2012. There is no weighted voting. Each member gets one vote and officers (chair, vice-chair, secretary) are appointed to one-year terms with no term limit. Initially, there was a level of distrust about the purpose and activities of a new MPO. Some members saw the MPO as a federal intrusion into local issues. Others feared a small handful of jurisdictions would dominate MATS' activities. As the MPO began meeting and working, the level of suspicion decreased.

[43] Local agencies provide some of the required data collection. A consultant was recently hired to take on a county-wide public transportation study.

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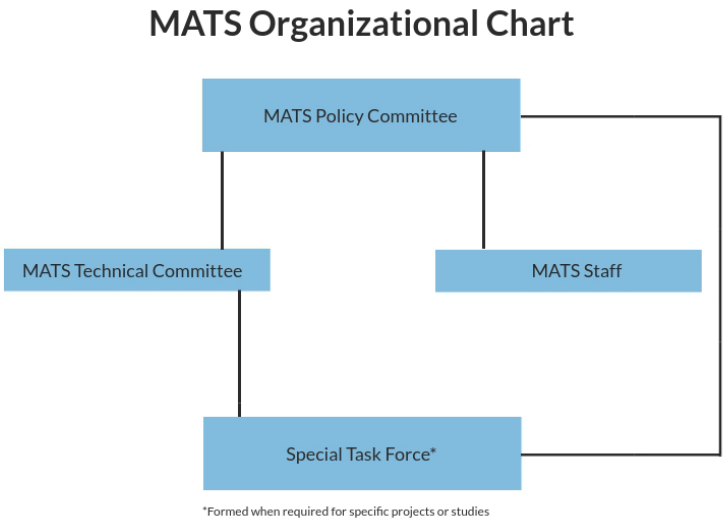

Figure 8-3 MATS Organizational Chart

Three small transit agencies are voting members of MATS' Policy Committee: Midland Dial-A-Ride Transportation, Midland County Connection, and the Bay Metro Transit Authority. Some of the funding allocated to MATS is passed through to Midland Dial-A-Ride Transportation to conduct transit planning activities.

The Policy Committee is advised by a Technical Committee made up of 13 members (Figure 8-3). The Technical Committee is composed of career staff and reviews the MPO's planning, engineering, and related details and provides recommendations to the Policy Committee. Both committees meet once each month in open sessions that were held back-to-back for the first 4 years. This meeting format was chosen because of overlap of members who serve on both the Technical Committee and the Policy Committee. As of January 2017, the Policy Committee meets on the first Tuesday of the month and Technical Committee on the third Wednesday of the month. The change in meeting schedule was effected in order to streamline and simplify the planning process, give members more time to review technical items and reduce duplication of agenda items.

From the beginning, the Policy Committee endeavored to keep MATS as small and focused as possible. Today, MATS remains a single-purpose agency in that it only focuses on 3-C transportation planning and programming activities. The Midland region is in attainment for air quality and therefore does not need staff to conduct air quality modeling. The Michigan DOT is responsible for the development and maintenance of travel demand models within urban areas that are non-TMA (over 200,000 in population). MDOT provides whatever travel demand modeling services or scenarios are requested by the small MPOs across the state.

When MATS was established, it chose to be located in the Midland County building. This location afforded a relatively central location as well as the use of county conference rooms for all meetings. It also provided a "neutral" space since the county government is not a voting member of the MPO (the Midland County Road Commission, however, is a member). In fact, the primary reason state and local

officials did not set up MATS with a hosted model was because the decision makers did not want one agency to have more real or perceived influence than other agencies in the region.

Given the small size of the staff, conference room facilities were an important consideration in office selection. The City of Midland's offices are in an adjacent building which also helps with coordination between the MPO and the city. Since MATS is co-located in the county building, the MPO is occasionally able to take advantage of geographic information systems work done by county staff through a contract as part of the rent service agreement. Information technology and basic office equipment and services are provided through the county under the same agreement. The MPO has its own computers, copier, plotter, and other small equipment.

The 20% local match required for federal planning (PL) funding is generally split between the Midland County Road Commission and the City of Midland. Small contributions occasionally come from other member jurisdictions. The 20% local match for federal transit planning (FTA 5303) funding is split between the Midland County Road Commission and Midland Dial-A-Ride Transportation. The local contributions to MATS serve as a financial bridge for current expenses until reimbursements are received from the federal government. In 2013, one local government member provided a start-up loan to allow MATS to start operations (payroll, etc.) and buy computer and other office equipment. That loan was repaid in full in 2014.

Contained within MATS' Bylaws and Rules of Procedures is a helpful guide outlining the difference between amendments and administrative changes concerning the transportation improvement program (TIP). For example, the guide notes that carrying a project from one approved TIP to another is generally considered an administrative change while adding or deleting projects is an amendment. Changing the source of federal aid is considered an administrative change, but adding federal funds to a previously non-federally funded project is an amendment. MATS' director is given the authority to make administrative changes while amendments require governing board approval. This clear guideline reduces political interference and speeds routine changes.

The major advantage of being an independent MPO is that staff are perceived to be both impartial and objective. Outside influences from city and town governments, real or perceived, are kept to a minimum. Being a single-purpose agency, the staff and boards do not have to wear multiple hats. An important disadvantage of being an independent agency is the lack of administrative support for activities like human resources. Determining staff employment packages and health coverage, for example, had to be done from scratch. Ultimately, health benefits were provided through a salary adjustment that enabled employee(s) to obtain individual insurance from the Michigan health care exchange. Setting up group health coverage for MATS was not possible due to the size of the agency.

A key challenge for MATS is to find time to do more public outreach to the community. Given the small size and relatively short history of the agency, there is little recognition among the general population of what MATS is and what it does. Therefore, the agency will be looking to hire a consultant in the coming year to aid them with a branding effort to assist with their public profile.

Lessons Learned

1. Starting up a new MPO is a challenging endeavor. While issues can seem straightforward, things can get complicated quickly. For example, MATS expected to be able to provide health coverage for employees under the umbrella of a member jurisdiction. However, the member jurisdiction's bylaws barred such an arrangement.
2. It is important to have space for public and private meetings, but also to select a neutral geographic location.
3. An agency with a very small staff needs to manage expectations about what they can achieve. Standard administrative and planning duties afford little extra time for important activities such as community outreach. Resources for consultants to support staff should be identified.
4. It is also incumbent upon small agencies to build working partnerships with other organizations. In MATS' case, this includes modeling help from the state, planning assistance from transit agencies, and GIS/IT support from the county government.
5. Having adjacent MPOs serving in a non-voting manner on the governing body affords the possibility for better coordination and collaboration, as appropriate.

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

MPO Name	Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
Principal City	Burlington, VT
Population in Planning Area	156,567
Number of Staff	18
UPWP Value	$5,000,000
Board Members	29 (19 for MPO documents)
Planning Area	616 square miles
Hosting Type	All-in-One
Website	www.ccrpcvt.org/

Major themes: Merger, grant making, multidisciplinary long range planning

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) is the MPO serving the Burlington, Vermont region. The Burlington region became an urbanized area in the 1980 Census, and the MPO was established in 1983. A general-purpose regional planning council (the Chittenden Regional Planning Commission) had been in operation prior to this date. The Chittenden County RPC and the MPO serving Burlington, Vermont have a long and complex history. At various times the two agencies have been co-located, operated independently, and today they are merged into one agency.

From the MPO's inception through 1999, the RPC and MPO acted as a Component MPO (Figure 8-4).[44] There was a single staff in one office, but the RPC and MPO were separate legal entities overseen by two separate boards. There was also a rural transportation planning organization for the non-urbanized area towns in Chittenden County. In 1999, the MPO expanded its boundary to be coterminous with Chittenden County. This boundary change was made, in part, to allow the MPO to perform non-federal

[44] For more information on types of MPO hosting relationships, see Administrative Structures of MPOs.
Note: All logos and graphics provided by Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission and Eno Center for Transportation with permission to use in this report.

transportation planning tasks.[45] This boundary change also drove the MPO to become a freestanding independent MPO, because there was sufficient cash available to support an independent agency. The staff separated, an MPO CEO was hired, and the two agencies established separate offices. However, this arrangement did not last long—in 2003 the still-independent agencies moved in together. Discussions continued about merging completely, including a failed effort in 2004 that attempted to create an umbrella board overtop both the RPC and MPO.

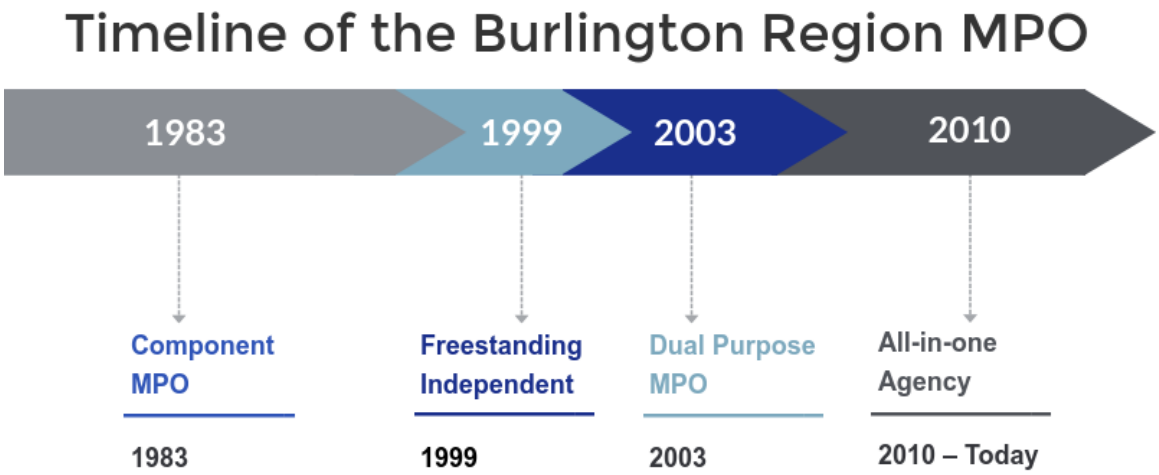

Figure 8-4 Timeline of Burlington Region MPO

The RPC and the MPO continued to be independent, but co-located, until a merger process began in 2010. The merger was spurred by a non-binding act by the Vermont Legislature. The merger was largely a functional consideration, as most parties believed the combined agencies could function better as a merged entity speaking with one voice with regard to policy. There was also a belief that there would be a cost savings with less overhead. The MPO did not actively support this legislation, but did not oppose it either. Limited funds to support the merger were secured as part of an EPA/HUD/DOT Sustainable Communities Initiative Grant awarded in 2010. The SCI grant required the two agencies to work together closely on the project, and also provided a limited amount of money ($10,000) to cover the cost of consolidating and rebranding the two agencies. The merger was otherwise performed with staff time devoted to the effort.

[45] Vermont is one of several states that require long-range transportation plans to be completed for rural or nonmetropolitan areas of the state. Throughout the country, some nonmetropolitan planning is performed by standalone agencies, while in other cases the task is accredited to another agency, such as an MPO, RPC, or county government. Nonmetropolitan planning agencies are sometimes known as "Regional Transportation Planning Organizations" or "Rural Transportation Planning Organizations," and federal funds can be used to support this work. Vermont does not use any specific nomenclature, but does make state planning funds available.

While the RPC and MPO merger began in 2010, some groundwork had already been laid before the formal merger process began. The planning boundary of the RPC and the MPO were very similar, due to the MPO expansion in 1999. During an aborted merger in 2004, the human resources processes, fringe benefit systems, and employee handbooks had been brought into alignment—although the MPO and RPC continued to operate their own systems.

After an office relocation in 2009, both staffs were physically located in the same office and had been deliberately mixed together to promote collaboration. Further, the MPO had been contracting some specialized tasks (GIS, land use planning) out to the RPC for several years. There was little duplication in staff expertise. Each agency had nine positions, and the merged agency began operation with 18 positions. For most staff, the merger had little impact on their work place, terms of employment, or work portfolio. Employees were engaged in the merger process through a year-long set of meetings with senior executives and board members. Previous relevant work experience at senior leadership levels also contributed to a smooth merger. The MPO CEO had worked at a regional planning commission; while the RPC CEO had previously held an executive position at an MPO.

Costs to operate the merged agency have been slightly lower—managers estimate "tens of thousands" of dollars cheaper each year. The greatest cost savings comes from maintaining only one set of business systems, such as payroll and accounting. Only one independent audit is necessary. Some types of insurance costs are lower, because only one entity is being insured and/or having more employees places the agency in a stronger bargaining position. In sum, the cost savings are beneficial, but are not significant enough to be the sole change driver.

The most significant changes brought about by the merger were to the Board and its committees. Prior to the merger, the MPO and RPC had separate boards, but there were a handful of board members who served on both. In the 2004 merger attempt, the effort focused on merging the staff, but retaining separate boards. After analyzing this previous experience, a strategic decision was made to merge both boards and reconstitute as a single board under the Regional Planning Commission with updated bylaws.[46] This had the added benefit of reducing the demand on local governments for representatives down to two appointees (a member and an alternate). It also encouraged more of those representatives to be elected officials.

The resulting (and current) Board has a number of characteristics that allow it flexibility to effectively govern the tasks of the merged agency. The total number of board seats is 29. The full board votes on matters related to traditional RPC tasks and general agency governance. Each seat has one vote. Board membership is based on staggered two-year terms, with no limit on the number of terms. The appointing body can withdraw its members at any time. Officers are limited to a single 2-year term. The Board is composed of four types of seats:

[46] CCRPC bylaws: http://www.ccrpcvt.org/about-us/commission/bylaws/

- Eighteen local governments receive a single seat. Local governments appoint a Board member and an alternate. Local governments are strongly urged to appoint current or former elected officials to the CCRPC. Appointees serve 2-year staggered terms.
- One seat afforded to the Vermont Agency on Transportation.
- Five Board members represent "interest area" seats reserved for agriculture, socioeconomic/housing, industrial/business, and conservation/environmental. These interest area members are selected by the board for a 2-year term, and represent the entire region.
- Five non-voting "transportation seats" are allocated to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Chittenden County Transit Authority, the Burlington International Airport, and a rotating seat for freight rail operators. The organizations nominate the person to occupy the seat.

Board actions on MPO items are grouped into a defined block on each Board meeting agenda. The voting membership is different for the MPO than for the RPC and a proportional voting system applies to MPO actions. Most notably, the interest area members lose their eligibility to vote. Only the Vermont Agency on Transportation and the local government seats retain the right to vote, totaling 19 members. Each seat is guaranteed one vote, but the four largest municipalities are afforded extra votes (up to four) based on the share of population located in that jurisdiction.

The bulk of the technical work of the CCRPC takes place below the Board, at the committee level. During the merger, significant negotiation and forethought were devoted to the structure and establishment of committees. CCRPC maintains an Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Board Development (governance) Committee, Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee, Transportation Advisory Committee, Long Range Planning Committee, and another committee unrelated to MPO activities. The Executive, Finance, and Board Development Committees are composed of only Board members. The other committees all have at least one board member, but are predominantly made up of other local government appointees from public works and planning departments.

The Long Range Planning Committee has primary jurisdiction over transportation and non-transportation plans. Because a single committee considers all aspects of long range planning, CCRPC has moved to a single long range plan document that consists of the federal metropolitan transportation plan, land use planning, a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy,[47] and a number of other topical areas required by Vermont statute. Conversion to an all-in-one plan was a result of the 2010 HUD/EPA/DOT Sustainable Communities Initiative grant.

MPO activities are handled by the Transportation Advisory Committee, which serves a function analogous to a technical advisory committee at other MPOs. It is composed of career-service transportation and public works staff from member local governments. The role of this committee is to provide regular oversight of the development of metropolitan planning products, and make recommendations to the full Board. The UPWP Committee reviews and makes recommendations to the

[47] This type of plan is supported by the US Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration

Board regarding technical assistance projects requested by local governments to utilize the resources of the CCRPC.

Since Burlington is the only urbanized area in Vermont, the Chittenden County RPC receives Vermont's entire share of federal (PL) funds. This is because the federal MPO statute guarantees each state one half of one percent (0.5%) of the PL funds pool. Chittenden County RPC is in a position to use this pool of funds to conduct other types of technical assistance and planning activities in addition to required MPO activities. CCRPC member local governments can apply for these funds through an RFP process. Local governments propose transportation and other planning tasks to the RPC each year. About 50 requests per year are received, and the RPC is able to fund 80% of those projects. In many cases, RPC staff perform the work, but in other cases, a consultant is hired by the CCRPC to complete the project. Examples of local planning and technical assistance include:

- Safety studies and road safety audits
- Traffic counts and signalization studies
- Signage inventory
- Bicycle/pedestrian plans
- Project development
- Corridor studies
- Updates to existing local transportation plans

Lessons Learned

1. It is important that lead staff support any merger effort. Without the support of the CEOs, this merger would not have been possible.
2. Having a reason to merge beyond cost savings is important for a successful merger.
3. Consider working with legislature(s) to authorize administrative structural change.
4. Merger or co-location may not yield a windfall of financial benefits. However, the planning efficacy of the organization may be dramatically increased.
5. Design a board and committee structure that is responsive to the political situation and allows for creativity.
6. If funds are available, the MPO can be a significant planning resource for local governments.

Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation System

MPO Name	Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation System
Principal City	Kittery, ME
Population in Planning Area	48,680[48]
Number of Staff	2
UPWP Value	$205,000 per year
Board Members	11
Planning Area	219 square miles
Hosting Type	Component MPO
Website	smrpc.org/index.php/programs/transportation/kacts-mpo

Major themes: Bi-state and multi-MPO coordination, grant applications, MPO policy committee

Northern New England is marked by compact urbanized areas, several of which cross state lines. The New Hampshire-Maine border features two of them in close proximity:[49] the Portsmouth Urban Area (population 88,200) and the Dover-Rochester Urban Area (population 88,087). Both of these urbanized areas have their core in New Hampshire, but three major bridges cross the Piscataqua River into Maine, allowing urban development to cross the state boundary. New Hampshire has elected to create an MPO

[48] KACTS represents the Maine portion of two urbanized areas that cross the Maine-New Hampshire border. The total population residing in both urbanized areas is 176,287, with the majority of the urbanized area population residing on the New Hampshire side of the border. This explains why KACTS represents a population smaller than the federal MPO statutory threshold of 50,000 people.

[49] The two urbanized area boundaries lie within 2 miles of each other. However, the presence of an airport and a river provide a geographic gap large enough for distinct urbanized areas to be identified.

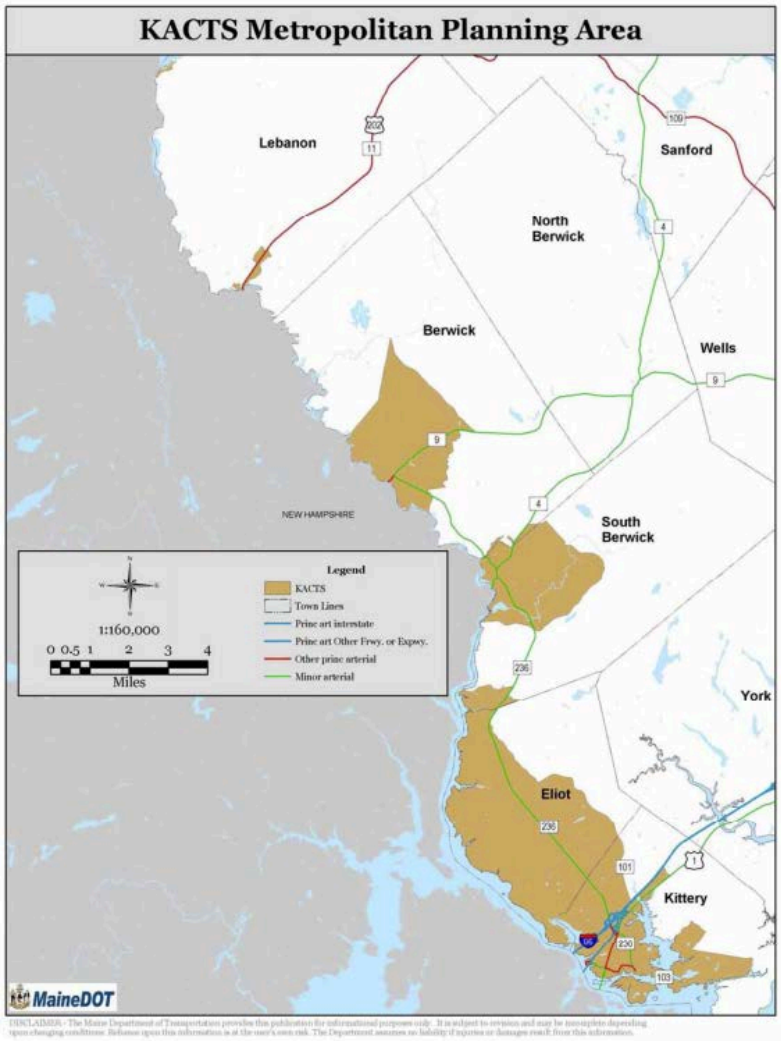

Figure 8-5 KACTS Metropolitan Planning Area

for each urbanized area on their side of the border.[50] Maine has elected to create one MPO—the Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation System (KACTS) to cover the remainder of the urbanized areas (Figure 8-5).

Most of Maine's four MPOs are hosted by general purpose regional planning agencies, such as planning and development commissions (PDCs). Three MPOs use the name "Comprehensive Transportation System," a nomenclature that predates the creation of MPOs and has become part of Maine transportation parlance. KACTS is hosted by the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC), which has comprehensive regional planning responsibilities for 39 communities across three counties (including local transportation elements).

The SMPDC was already in operation when urban areas were designated after the 1980 Census. The 3-C metropolitan planning area within Maine includes only six municipalities (out of 39 in the SMPDC region). The planning area boundary is coterminous with the municipal boundary that is covered by one of the urban areas. The enclosed map shows the extent of the KACTS metropolitan planning area. There are four distinct patches of land in the urbanized area that are within the planning area. In addition, the SMPDC boundary includes a small portion of the Portland, ME urban area (not shown in this map). However, 3-C planning is performed by the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System, using a small amount of funding contributed by KACTS' UPWP.

The complex arrangement of MPOs requires a high level of coordination. Most of the coordination is informal and staff-led, including quarterly in-person update meetings. In addition to the voluntary staff-

[50] The NH MPOs are the Stafford Regional Planning Commission and the Rockingham Planning Commission.

level coordination, there are also some formal coordination methods. Examples of KACTS working with its neighbors include:

- *TIP Modifications and Amendments*. Coordination of Transportation Improvement Program and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (TIPs/STIP) amendments and modifications are a driver for intense coordination. Corridors that cross the boundary—including three federal-aid bridges—require near-simultaneous amendments or modifications to the relevant TIPs when the projects or funding sources change. KACTS has taken the step of compiling definitions of a 'modification' versus an 'amendment.'
- *Traffic Incident Management.* KACTS staff coordinates the regional Traffic Incident Management Committee with its New Hampshire MPO counterparts and staff from the New Hampshire DOT and Maine DOT. This Committee oversees traffic operations in the area, including incident response. This Committee meets bimonthly, and is an outcome of multi-MPO coordination.
- *Board Representation.* The New Hampshire MPOs' staff are nonvoting members of the KACTS Policy Committee, and vice versa. Although attendance has not been perfect, distributing the board packets keeps the relevant parties apprised of what topics are being discussed.

KACTS staff estimate that 5-10% of their time is spent coordinating with nearby MPOs on 3-C activities. If the Traffic Incident Management Committee is included, the figure rises to 25-30%.

Coordination between MPOs (and other stakeholders) has yielded tangible benefits for the region in the form of successful grant applications. In 2010, KACTS was part of a team of stakeholders in the Portland, ME area that won an EPA/HUD/DOT Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) Grant. This $1.6 million grant strengthened regional planning throughout southern Maine, and introduced new planning tools like scenario planning and sector plans. In 2011 and 2014, KACTS joined its New Hampshire MPO neighbors, Maine DOT, and New Hampshire DOT to apply for a USDOT TIGER grant to pay for major reconstruction of two bridges across the Piscataqua River. A $25 million award went to replace the Sarah Mildred Long Bridge (US Route 1 bypass), and paid for approximately 15% of the project cost. Another $20 million was awarded to replace the World War I Memorial Bridge (US Route 1), or 25% of the project cost. Since both bridges cross state boundaries, they are co-owned by both New Hampshire and Maine making funding and financing complicated. Remedying problematic funding situations is a goal of the TIGER program. Not every grant application is a winner, however. KACTS joined with New Hampshire DOT and the Maine Turnpike Authority to apply for ITS equipment for I-95, but this application was unsuccessful.

The SMPDC, the KACTS host agency, is governed by a 90+ member General Assembly that meets once per year. At this meeting, the agency's budget is approved and an Executive Committee is elected. The Executive Committee meets about 10 times per year, and is a mix of elected officials and municipal staff. The General Assembly and the Executive Committee oversee the operation of the comprehensive planning process, office operation, and personnel decisions.

KACTS's two staff members are subject to the personnel policies of the SMPDC, and are hired/terminated by the SMPDC Executive Director. Approximately 1.5 FTE are required to fulfill the 3-C federal planning and programming roles. Nonmetropolitan planning and oversight of planning grants made to member local governments[51] consumes an additional 0.5 FTE.

The SMPDC General Assembly and Executive Committee do not have approval authority over the 3-C metropolitan planning documents. That role is filled by the MPO Policy Committee. The MPO Policy Committee approves the federally required long-range transportation plan (LRTP) and transportation improvement program (TIP). Policy Committee actions are not forwarded to the SMPDC Executive Committee for action. The only MPO document of interest to the SMPDC Executive Committee is the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). In 2013, the MPO Policy Committee signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the SMPDC to outline the roles and responsibilities of each group. This strengthened the policy independence of the KACTS.

KACTS is a Component MPO, since the body that adopts 3-C documents is different from the one that governs the host agency. The two staff members dedicated to transportation are employees of SMPDC, and report to that body for supervisory, budget, and other administrative purposes. Although this has never been a source of conflict, it puts MPO staff in the position of essentially reporting to two supervisors.

The MPO Policy Committee is distinct from the SMPDC Executive Committee, but there are frequently people who sit on both. The MOU came about because of an individual who served on both bodies who sought more clarity on the role of each. The 11-member MPO Policy Committee is composed of:[52]

- Two members each from the Towns of York and Kittery;
- One seat each for the Towns of Eliot, Berwick, and South Berwick;
- A seat for a staff member (usually the Executive Director) of SMPDC;
- One seat for Maine DOT (New Hampshire DOT does not participate);
- One seat for the Maine Turnpike Authority (voting);
- One rotating seat representing public transportation, currently occupied by York County Community Action (a paratransit provider);
- Four nonvoting members including both New Hampshire MPOs, FHWA, and FTA.

[51] These projects are completed by consultants.
[52] Voting is not weighted. Each vote counts the same. However, note that the larger towns are given more seats, and thus have more influence.
Note: All logos and maps provided by Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation System and Maine DOT with permission to use in this report.

Lessons Learned

1. Maintaining good relationships is essential. The MPO must sometimes stand between two competing parties.
2. A bi-state MPO is not necessary to perform 3-C planning. This is particularly true in complicated geographic and politically separated areas like the one running along the New Hampshire-Maine border.
3. Build a good relationship with the host agency. It can be helpful to be a part of a larger agency that does multifaceted planning.

Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC)

MPO Name	Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC)
Principal City	Las Vegas, NV
Population in Planning Area	1,951,300
Number of Staff	13
UPWP Value	$3,023,966
Board Members	8
Planning Area	8,089 square miles
Hosting Type	Component MPO
Website	www.rtcsnv.com

Major themes: Co-location, regional visioning, transit planning

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC) is a unique agency in the Las Vegas metropolitan area in that it is responsible for surface transportation planning and services.[53] RTC is a multi-purpose agency serving not just as the MPO, but also as the region's transit operator and traffic management center. The RTC also runs a special visioning effort in the region called Southern Nevada Strong.[54]

[53] Arterial roads are considered state highways and are the responsibility of the state department of transportation.

[54] This was the RTC's first foray into non-transportation planning and began with a federal Sustainable Communities Initiative grant and includes housing, economic development, and education components in addition to transportation.

The RTC was named the MPO for the region in 1981 and became the region's only transit operator in 1983. The agency provides approximately 170,000 transit trips every day and is the 18th largest bus agency in the country. The RTC is a strong and visible regional entity largely because of its significant transit services (Figure 8-6). There are approximately 300 public employees across the entire RTC—all bus operations are contracted out.

There are 13 employees in the MPO division, including the director and an administrative assistant. The remaining 11 MPO staff are further divided into two functional groups: there are six people in the planning and programming group and five in the GIS/data/modeling group.[55] Information technology (IT) services and support is shared agency-wide and although the vast majority of IT staff time is spent on transit planning and operations, the large team is available to the MPO as-needed. A government affairs and marketing team, as well as back office staff, provide other support to the MPO staff.

At many MPOs, the bulk of transit planning is delegated to the transit properties in the region. RTC is the sole transit property in the Las Vegas region. The MPO planning division takes the lead on long range transit planning, in consultation with transit staff. A standalone transit plan document is prepared, providing information for the MPO's long range transportation plan (LRTP). The transit plan currently under development has a 2040 horizon year, which is identical to the LRTP. This process enables minor modifications to be made to the transit plan without triggering MPO LRTP modifications.

The RTC receives local sales tax revenue that is applied toward roadway projects. In this way, the RTC functions as a pass-through agency to local governments. The RTC does occasionally provide project development, design, and construction for projects. In most circumstances, the RTC will have responsibility for construction of projects with a primary transit element, such as a bus rapid transit line. There are also instances of RTC taking the lead on construction of a non-transit-oriented roadway project. Most recently, RTC led the construction of the Boulder City Bypass highway project on behalf of the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) and the City.

Figure 8-6 RTC Transit

RTC has been able to leverage its regional purview into success winning discretionary grants. Maximizing coordination across functions has enabled RTC to prove the efficacy of proposed projects and the ability to deliver them in a timely manner. The best example of this is RTC's success winning federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants .[56]

The governing body for the RTC is the Board of Commissioners. State statute sets the

[55] Four additional individuals support Southern Nevada Strong and are considered MPO staff.
[56] The RTC has been awarded three TIGER grants since its inception.

composition of the board: eight officials appointed by the localities and the director of NDOT. The local government seats are occupied by elected officials, such as the mayor or a member of the city or county commission. Two seats are apportioned to Clark County (the only county included in the region). Two seats are apportioned to the largest incorporated city (currently Las Vegas). The remaining municipalities in the region receive one seat each. The RTC Board of Commissioners would expand if a new municipality were chartered. Votes are not weighted. The Board oversees all agency divisions including the MPO and transit functions. However the NDOT director votes only on MPO actions. MPO, transit, and other agency governance agenda items for board approval appear on the agenda of any single meeting of the board, but the agenda items are grouped and the functional area of RTC is clearly noted.

The clear and primary advantage of having all the surface transportation functions in the region collocated is efficiencies of scale. This allows the agency to save hard costs in terms of employees, benefits, and rent and to better coordinate across sectors. It also enables the RTC to be creative when it comes to assembling funding for planning efforts, including combining local transit funding, federal transit planning funds, planning (PL), and local government dues.

The agency also benefits from RTC's visibility with the state legislature and executive branch. Taken together, the planning, transit, construction, and regional land use functions make RTC a major player in the state. If these roles were fractured into different agencies, RTC staff believes that the agency would not have the statewide clout it currently enjoys. By acting as one unified voice, it can reflect regional priorities more clearly than if the functions were housed under separate agencies. The unified nature of the RTC also minimizes intra-regional conflicts.

The RTC benefits from having only one level of bureaucracy. While the MPO and transit staff are separate divisions, they work closely together and oversight is provided by a single board. As one example, there is a single staff group handling Title IV or Environmental Justice complaints and the associated reporting requirements. This same efficiency also helps with such things National Transit Database reporting, public affairs, and financial audits.

The primary disadvantage to the unified MPO/transit property is that the most visible part of the organization is the transit operation. The Board clearly understands and recognizes the differences between the two functions and there is no bias toward transit from the governing body. However, the public tends to know RTC as the bus company only. Public involvement can become blurred. For example, when soliciting public comments on the LRTP, the agency often gets a number of extraneous comments about the bus operation and little useful input on the plan document.

Note: All logos and images provided by Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada with permission to use in this report.

Lessons Learned

1. In a unified agency, it is important for the MPO function to remain highly regarded and visible to agency management and the governing board.
2. A strong, unified agency can provide significant benefits when seeking federal and state support. This includes applying for discretionary federal grants that encourage and award regional collaboration.
3. The efficiencies gained from combined functions can be leveraged to increase agency visibility and positive regard at the state level.
4. The MPO can help drive the conversation on other functions by establishing proactive planning documents for tasks like public transit.
5. A unified agency can result in confusion by the public and obscure the MPO function.

Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (Metro)

MPO Name	Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (Metro)
Principal City	Portland, OR
Population in Planning Area	1,499,844
Number of Staff	12 MPO FTE (1,600 total staff)
UPWP Value	$15.8 million
Board Members	7 agency Councilors / 17 MPO Committee Members
Planning Area	487 square miles
Hosting Type	Component MPO
Website	www.oregonmetro.gov

Major themes: Advisory committees, local funding, interregional relationships

The Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System—better known as Portland Metro—is one of the most unique MPO hosts in the United States. Metro is a regional government with a directly elected Metro Council that governs regional issues for the roughly 80 percent of the greater Portland-Vancouver urban area that falls within Oregon. An adjacent MPO (the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council or SWRTC) covers the remainder of the urban area that falls within the State of Washington, including the City of Vancouver. This direct election of regional representatives is very rare in the United States. Metro was established in 1979 through a regional referendum. The Oregon Statute that allowed Metro's creation is similar to home rule statutes in other states. Planning functions of Metro include transportation, land use and green space in a three county area in the northwest corner

of Oregon. Metro also has several general-purpose government operational functions traditionally reserved for municipalities, including:

- Waste management, including recycling and hazardous materials disposal
- Operation of the Oregon Convention Center and Expo Center
- Operation and Management of Arts Centers throughout greater Portland
- Operation of the Portland Zoo
- Cemetery planning and management

Upon its creation, Metro absorbed the responsibilities of the former Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Transportation Study.[58] Metro also assumed responsibility for managing land use within its urban growth boundary (UGB), which was designated by state law in 1973[59] and encompasses the 24 cities that fall within the Oregon portion of the greater Portland-Vancouver region. Today, Metro's transportation planning program is closely coordinated with the SWRTC transportation planning program. These MPOs have overlapping board membership; share travel demand models and forecast data; and closely collaborate on broader planning issues of mutual interest through a special Bi-State Committee.

Metro has 1,600 total employees, the vast majority of whom are operational staff for the activities shown above. About 30 staff members work in planning. Planning staff are multidisciplinary, and often work on both transportation and non-transportation projects. Completing federally-mandated metropolitan transportation tasks requires approximately 12 full-time equivalent staff. However, no staff are completely dedicated to 3-C planning. Employees are assigned a rotating portfolio of work that can depend on the long range planning cycle, special studies, and other agency priorities. About 6% of Metro's budget goes toward transportation planning tasks.

Metro has multiple non-federal funding sources in addition to federal grants: property tax bond levies, excise taxes on construction, state grants, and "enterprise activities" (fees collected for services at Metro-operated facilities). The variety of funding sources allows Metro to bring local dollars to the table and reach a 50 percent local match—far in excess of the required 20 percent share. Further, Metro regularly flexes its Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STP) suballocated funds to support planning efforts and regional programs that go beyond the federally required documents. The metropolitan planning program benefits from the large in-house capacity of Metro as an organization. For example, several administrative employees support work not related to planning, such as communications, HR, IT, board support, and marketing. Much of Metro's work is done by in-house staff and very rarely contracts out planning activities.

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[58] The Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Transportation Study had been in operation since the early 1960s.
[59] http://www.oregonmetro.gov/urban-growth-boundary
Note: All logos and graphic provided by Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System and Eno Center for Transportation with permission to use in this report.

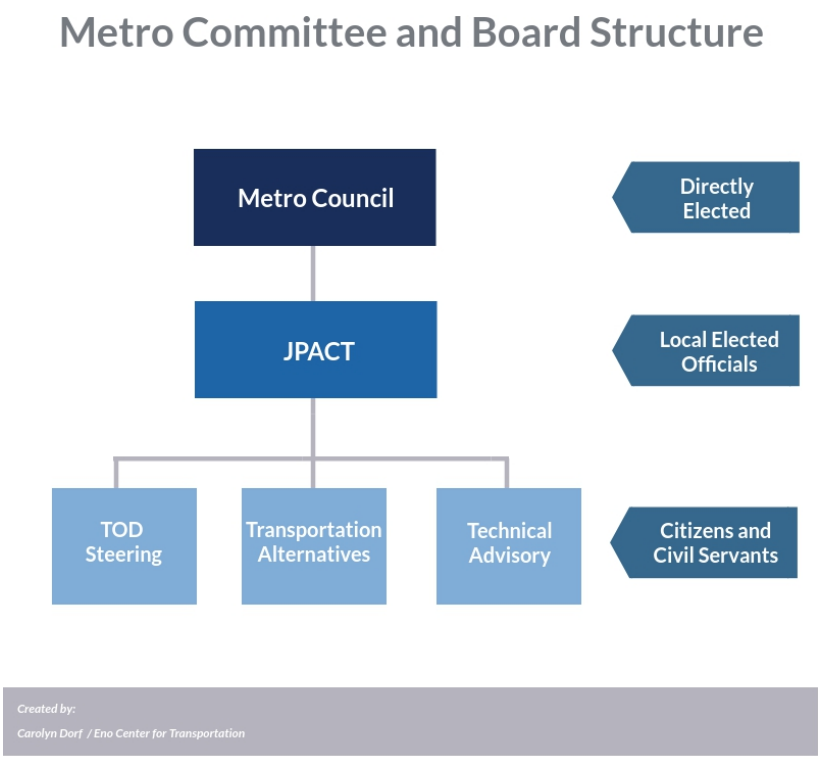

Figure 8-7 Metro Board and Committee Structure

Metro is governed by a board of directly elected councilors (Figure 8-7). This regional election system is one of the few of its kind in the country. There are six single-member districts and a separately-elected council president. The Council President sets Metro's policy agenda and appoints members of most committees, commissions, and boards. Each councilor, including the Council President, has an equal vote. The Council is the ultimate authority on virtually all issues[60] related to Metro activities.

The Metro Council's unique governance structure does not align directly with federal law on MPO governance, because federal law is silent on the eligibility of regionally elected officials. To ensure that metropolitan planning is in compliance, Metro has established a powerful advisory committee that has oversight over metropolitan transportation planning activities. Dubbed the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT),[61] this body oversees and approves 3-C planning documents, the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and the transportation portion of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) State Implementation Plan. JPACT also takes the lead on transportation policy matters, interaction with Oregon DOT, Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) prioritization, and state-funded programs. The JPACT meets monthly. All JPACT action items are referred to the Metro Council, which formally adopts plans and policies. In practice, the Metro Council rarely overturns or amends the JPACT's recommendations. To ensure coordination between JPACT and the Council, a member of the Council serves as the non-voting chair of JPACT.

Unlike most advisory committees, the JPACT's membership is composed of individuals qualified for MPO membership under federal statute. This composition removes all doubt about whether the 3-C process has oversight that meets local control requirements under federal law. Further, the JPACT's membership

[60] The Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) has oversight of the metropolitan planning budget.

[61] Information on the Committee, including a roster, can be viewed at: http://www.oregonmetro.gov/regional-leadership/metro-advisory-committees/joint-policy-advisory-committee-transportation

extends into Washington State, which is not represented on the Metro Council. A breakdown of the JPACT's 17 voting members is as follows:[62]

- Three county commissioners (Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties in Oregon)
- Three seats reserved for small and mid-sized municipalities. One seat is reserved for each county. The municipalities in that county select one mayor to occupy the seat
- A seat for the City of Portland, OR commissioner
- A seat for the Oregon Department of Transportation
- A seat for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- A seat for an elected official from the City of Vancouver, WA[63]
- A seat for an elected official from Clark County, WA
- A seat for the Washington State Department of Transportation
- A seat for the TriMet, the local public transportation operator
- A seat for the Port of Portland
- Three members of the Metro Council, one of whom acts as the chair of JPACT. The Councilors are appointed by the Metro Council Chair.

Metro maintains several other committees that influence transportation. Unlike JPACT, these committees have a composition and roles similar to committees found at other MPOs. Citizens and civil servants are appointed to the advisory committees by the Metro Council President and the single-district Councilors. Among these are the Metro Policy Advisory Committee (MPACT), a land use policy board that is the counterpart to JPACT; transportation and land use technical advisory committees that advise both JPACT and MPACT; the Public Engagement Review Committee; and the Transit Oriented Development Steering Committee.

Metro also plays a lead role in coordinating with nearby MPOs. Metro is a member of the Oregon MPO Consortium (OMPOC),[64] which provides a forum for all MPOs in the state. This group is a voluntary association that provides a platform for discussion on topics of mutual interest. The stated goals of the Consortium include: a) improving the connection between land use and transportation investment; b) coordinating interregional planning efforts; c) working with Oregon state government; and d) fostering innovation. Through Metro's involvement in the Consortium, it has been able to address structural issues surrounding its commuter shed and Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). In 2016, the OMPOC membership agreed to contribute federal planning dues to provide staffing for OMPOC to ensure its continued growth as a forum and tool for advancing MPO policy concerns and coordination in Oregon.

[62] Each seat also has an alternate member.
[63] The Metro Board Members from Washington State are included because the urban area extends over the state boundary.
[64] For more information on the consortium, visit: http://www.ompoc.org

Portland is well known for its prohibition on development outside of its UGB.[65] Tight land development coupled with job growth in the center city has led to suburban and exurban development in a ring outside of the UGB. Metro is working with neighboring MPOs to equitably divide state infrastructure investment between the communities inside and outside the UGB. Further, Metro is planning for the possibility that the ring of exurban communities may cross the MPO threshold of 50,000 people by the 2020 Census. If this occurs, Oregon will need to consider how to cover this area with a 3-C metropolitan planning process.

Lessons Learned

1. Citizen advisory committees, including subject-area committees, can play an important role in MPO operation. The governing board should delegate sufficient authority to the committees so they can feel empowered to act.
2. State-level associations and multi-MPO partnerships can help with long term visioning, modeling, and public policy issues.
3. MPOs can play an important role in planning for the interaction between land use and transportation. MPOs that are hosted by an agency with land use oversight are in a particularly strong position to consider land use impacts of transportation investment.

[65] Metro's charter prohibits expansion beyond the three original counties, and thus is unable to regulate development in these exurban communities.

Appendix A: MPO Background and History

Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are regional agencies charged under 23 USC § 134 to plan and program transportation infrastructure in urban areas with more than 50,000 people. MPOs are established for urbanized areas (UZAs), which are defined by the Census Bureau after each decennial Census.[66] All of the land area inside a UZA—along with all land area projected to become urbanized in the next twenty years—must be included in the planning area of an MPO. As of 2009, 409 MPOs have been designated for 497 UZAs in the United States.

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

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

Some MPOs are required to perform additional tasks under federal law. MPOs in urbanized areas with 200,000 people or more must complete a Congestion Management Process (CMP) and may optionally complete a Congestion Management Plan.[67] MPOs within areas that do not meet federal air quality standards must perform conformity analyses to accompany their MTP and TIP. Additional duties may be assigned to an MPO by state statute.

MPO History

Although agencies resembling MPOs have existed since the early 1950s, federal law did not mandate them until 1973. The idea of metropolitan-level planning was first introduced into Federal law through the 1962 Federal Aid Highway Act. This Act emphasized transportation planning efforts in areas with 50,000 or more people focusing the road network on urban and suburban travel rather than farm-to-market travel.[68]

The 1973 Federal Aid Highway Act authorized the creation of regional transportation planning agencies in areas with more than 50,000 people. The 1973 Act created groups called "metropolitan transportation agencies" and required a more bottom-up organizational approach than is found in law

[66] Urbanized Areas (UZAs) should not be confused with Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). MSAs are geographically much larger than UZAs, and have no official bearing in MPO law or regulation, except in the analysis of air quality.
[67] Urbanized areas with more than 200,000 people are called "Transportation Management Areas," or TMAs. Multiple MPOs may lie within a single TMA, but these MPOs will have to perform a joint CMP.
[68] Solof, Mark, "NJTPA Issue Report: History of Metropolitan Planning Organizations." Newark, NJ: New Jersey Institute of Technology. 1998. Available from: http://www.njtpa.org/Pub/Report/hist_mpo/documents/MPOhistory1998.pdf

today. Agencies organized after the 1973 Act were required to plan for expenditure on federal-aid highways. Further, metropolitan transportation agency plans had little legal standing with the state DOT.

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

- in-depth rules on MPO formation and establishment of its planning area boundary;
- planning factors that must be addressed by the analysis and programming process;
- a multimodal 20-year metropolitan transportation plan (MTP);
- a transportation improvement program (TIP), containing projects selected from the MTP;
- a federal certification process that takes place on a regular and relatively frequent basis;
- special rules for air quality nonattainment areas;
- special rules and powers for MPOs with more than 200,000 people in the planning area;
- a source of funding for transportation planning; and
- a formula-based program for transit planning.

ISTEA was reauthorized with minor amendments by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 1998, and again in 2005 by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act- a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Changes under TEA-21 and SAFETEA-LU included lengthening the TIP, adding new planning factors, and boosting funding for transportation planning.

MPO practice was heavily influenced by federal regulations issued in 1993 and 2007.[69] The rules contained several features of modern MPO practice. These include additional rules on MPO designation, accounting rules, regulations on expenditure of federal planning funds, consultation requirements, and a mandate to draft a unified planning work program (UPWP) that guides all MPO efforts and monetary expenditures.[70]

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), signed into law in 2012, carried forward the MPO planning and programming requirements established in previous years, and included new requirements for performance-based planning and programming to improve transportation decision making and to ensure more efficient investment of federal transportation funds. This performance-based planning structure was continued under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) in 2015. The FAST Act also included two new federal planning factors that must be addressed in the MPO planning and programming process.

Prior to the 1973 Act, the only MPOs operating were those organized by local governments, and were usually found in some of the largest and most complex metropolitan areas in the country. Not surprisingly, about half of all MPOs were established following the 1973 Act, because this legislation was the first to require MPOs to exist. The second largest group of MPO establishments occurred after the

[69] TEA-21 mandated a rulemaking, but for a variety of reasons this document was not approved before SAFETEA-LU was passed.
[70] MPOs with fewer than 200,000 are permitted by regulation to adopt a "simplified work program," but the rules do not offer any information on how a simplified work program differs from a UPWP.

1980 Census. A provision was added by ISTEA that attempted to curb the formation of multiple MPOs in one urbanized area[71], and the number of new MPOs designated following the 1990 Census and 2000 Census dropped off steeply.

Table A-1 shows the establishment date of MPOs in the survey and all MPOs currently in operation. The establishment date shown may only apply to the latest incarnation of an MPO in that region. MPOs may recognize a newer establishment date due to merger, dissolution, or hosting status change. For example, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council was established in 1982 after the Tri-State Regional Planning Council (RPC) was dissolved into four separate MPOs. The Tri-State RPC had existed for at least a decade prior to this reorganization, but NYMTC considers 1982 to be its establishment year.

Table A-1. Establishment Date of MPOs

Decade of Establishment	Participating MPOs	All MPOs
Pre-1970	36	56
1970s	120	174
1980s	56	83
1990s	20	29
2000s	28	39
2010s	19	28
Total	279	409

[71] 23USC§134(d)(6) states that the governor of the state and any existing MPO must find the transportation system size and complexity warrant more than one MPO.

Appendix B: New MPO Frequently Asked Questions

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

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

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

Regions grow and change over time, as cycles of residents, industries, economies, and cultures ebb and flow. The size and influence of member local governments changes over time. Organizations change too, as careers progress, leaders depart, and technology advances. An effective MPO for a region in 1975 may be obsolete by 2020. A regular examination of organizational structures and staffing is part of a healthy MPO.

Question: Should the MPO be independent or hosted?

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

- Availability of local funds from member governments, such as dues. If local governments can commit to supporting part of the MPO's operation with dues, the agency is more likely to succeed as an independent agency. Dues can be used as the source of capital float. If dues or other local funding mechanisms are limited or not available, the MPO is more likely to thrive as a hosted agency.
- Availability of capital float. The first quarterly federal reimbursement might not be received until 3 to 4 months after the MPO begins operating. A state or local government may be willing to furnish the MPO with enough start-up money to bridge the gap between beginning operations and the first reimbursement. However, dues are the most common way to build capital float. In lieu of dues, a one-time grant, line of credit, GARVEE bonds, or direct tax revenues could also be

employed. If sufficient capital float can be secured, the MPO can survive as an independent agency. Otherwise, the MPO will need to depend on the capital resources of a host agency.

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

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

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

Question: What should the MPO Governing Board composition be?

Answer: Board composition is an important consideration. After initial designation, the MPO board will be responsible for virtually all structural, administrative, and operational decisions. Therefore, it is important to establish a board that is regional in scope, free from conflicts of interest, and able to reach consensus. The survey demonstrated that MPO boards should be sufficiently large, but not unmanageable. A fixed board size should be determined, and seats apportioned to member local governments. The most common method is to apportion seats by population, although other apportionment systems exist, including negotiated solutions. Small local governments can be

represented by a rotating board seat. Seats should be reapportioned—or new ones created if needed—after each Census. The state DOT and modal agencies should be represented in some capacity, including representation by a transit representative. MPOs should generously allocate non-voting seats on the board.

Question: What MPO advisory committees are needed?

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

Question: How large should the MPO staff be?

Answer: The results of the survey show that on average one staff member is hired per 50,500 people in the planning area. At least one professional staff member—generally an urban planner or civil engineer—is a required hire. Often the first engineer or planner will act as the MPO director. As the MPO grows, more internal funding will become available and more staff members can be hired. At least one administrative employee is critical to smooth MPO operation. Administrative employees can remove office operation, board management, document preparation, contracting, and public inquiry tasks from the desks of professional staff. Adding additional administrative or para-professional employees can be cheaper than hiring professional staff, while at the same time relieving time pressure on existing staff members. If the MPO is hosted, administrative employees can sometimes be shared with the host agency.

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

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

Question: Who will hire and supervise the MPO director?

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

Question: What skills are required in an MPO director?

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

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

Answer: Consultants play an important role in MPO planning. Managers must carefully weigh the costs of a consultant versus hiring in-house staff members. Often, one or more full-time employees can be hired in lieu of a consultant contract. Consultants are very useful for specialized work. For example, MPOs building their first travel demand model may want to hire a specialized consultant to build the model and train in-house staff to operate it. Consultants can also be brought in to perform special studies or other work in an area of expertise not available on the MPO staff. Consultants are also hired during busy periods of cyclical work, such as the months leading up to a long-range transportation plan adoption.

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

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

funds. Local match can be met using cash, a soft match of in-kind services, or crediting the value of local planning work. A few state DOTs supply a match on behalf of MPOs through general funds or crediting the value of toll receipts. In some states, the MPOs are able to credit the value of state-supplied or coordinated items like travel demand modeling software or data collection. Dues are a popular way to raise cash for a local match. Many hosted MPOs credit the value of goods and services received from the host toward the required match—things like office rent, supplies, utilities, and employee benefits. Some MPOs credit the cost of supporting planning projects (i.e. corridor studies, traffic counts) performed by member local governments.

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

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

Appendix C: Additional Salary Ranges

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

Table C-1 Senior Manager Pay Ranges by MPO Size

Planning Area Population	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	$64,508	$90,887
Less than 100,000	$57,154	$78,500
100,000-200,000	$54,911	$75,605
200,000-500,000	$60,058	$87,940
500,000-1,000,000	$69,250	$98,261
1,000,000 and over	$87,656	$124,179

Table C-2 Senior Manager Pay Ranges by Staff Size

Staff Size	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	$64,508	$90,887
3 or less	$51,500	$77,550
4 to 9	$58,419	$81,465
10 to 20	$66,811	$95,745
20 or more	$83,083	$124,682

Table C-3 Senior Manager Pay Ranges

	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	$64,508	$90,887
Independent	$74,935	$103,727
Hosted	$58,983	$84,637

Table C-4 Professional Employee Pay Ranges by MPO Size

Planning Area Population	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	$43,672	$73,018
Less than 100,000	$45,227	$65,195
100,000-200,000	$41,540	$64,571
200,000-500,000	$43,508	$72,032
500,000-1,000,000	$41,083	$79,917
1,000,000 and over	$47,970	$97,967

Table C-5 Professional Employee Pay Ranges by Staff Size

Staff Size	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	$43,672	$73,018
3 or less	$41,956	$61,093
4 to 9	$42,969	$69,344
10 to 20	$44,464	$78,873
20 or more	$46,833	$97,696

Table C-6 Professional Employee Pay Ranges by Hosting Status

	Mean Minimum	Mean Maximum
All MPOs	$43,672	$73,018
Independent	$45,362	$80,215
Hosted	$42,956	$70,000

Appendix D: MPO Staffing and Organizational Structures Survey

Welcome to the MPO staffing and organizational structures survey. This project will update the largest and most comprehensive collection of information on MPOs ever assembled. The results of this project will provide MPO directors with valuable information about how their peer organizations are structured and staffed. This project, funded by the Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration (FHWA/FTA), is being conducted by the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) at the University of South Florida. Upon request, surveys can be administered over the phone or in hard copy format. If you have questions, comments, or a request for accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact the CUTR research team at mposurvey@cutr.usf.edu or call us at (813) 974-5746. Please note: if you exit the survey before submitting, your responses will be saved automatically. You may open the survey link at any time to pick up where you left off.

Contact

Who may we contact at your MPO if we have any questions?
First name: _____
Last name: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

Name Change

NC-1 Has your MPO changed its name during the past five years?
❍ Yes
❍ No

[IF Yes to NC-1]
NC-2 What is the MPO's previous name?

_____

[IF Yes to NC-1]
NC-3 Why did the MPO change its name? Please explain.

_____

Board Composition

BC-1 Indicate how many voting governing board seats are allocated to the following: (Please avoid double counting)
___ County commissioners (or equivalent)
___ Countywide elected executive officials
___ Municipal elected officials (or equivalent)

___ Municipal elected executive officials
___ State departments of transportation
___ Public transit authorities
___ Toll or expressway authorities
___ Seaport authorities
___ Aviation authorities
___ Tribal governments
___ Local school districts
___ Colleges or universities
___ Military installations
___ Regional councils/Councils of government
___ Gubernatorial appointees (Not included elsewhere)
___ Private sector representatives
___ MPO advisory committee representative
___ Other

[IF Other in BC-1 is greater than 0]
BC-1-1 You responded that there are "Other" voting seats on the governing board that did not fit into a category. Please describe these seats in the box below.
_____

[IF any choices in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
BC-1-2 Who on your MPO Governing Board represents providers of public transportation, as required in federal law for MPOs in a transportation management area?

- ❑ The MPO is not part of a transportation management area
- ❑ There are no providers of public transportation in the MPO area
- ❑ County commissioners (or equivalent) [IF "County commissioners" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Countywide elected executive officials [IF "Countywide elected executive officials" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Municipal elected officials (or equivalent) [IF "Municipal elected officials" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Municipal elected executive officials [IF "Municipal elected executive officials" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ State departments of transportation [IF "State departments of transportation" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Public transit authorities [IF "Public transit authorities" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Governor or gubernatorial appointees [IF "Governor or gubernatorial appointees" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Toll or expressway authorities [IF "Toll or expressway authorities" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Seaport authorities [IF "Seaport authorities" BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Aviation authorities [IF "Aviation authorities" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Tribal governments [IF "Tribal governments" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Local school districts [IF "Local school districts" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Colleges or universities [IF "Colleges or universities" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Military installations [IF "Military installations" in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]

- ❑ Regional councils/Councils of government [IF “Regional councils/Councils of government” in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Private sector representatives [IF “Private sector representatives” in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ MPO advisory committee representative [IF “MPO advisory committee representative” in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]
- ❑ Other (Please explain) _____ [IF “Other” in BC-1 has at least 1 seat]

BC-2 Are there voting seats on the governing board that rotate among a group of local governments? If yes, please explain.

- ❍ Yes (Please explain) _____
- ❍ No

BC-3 Does each voting member of the governing board have an equal vote? If weighted, please explain.

- ❍ Votes are equal
- ❍ Votes are weighted (Please explain) _____

BC-4 Does your MPO have any non-voting governing board members or advisers (excluding FHWA/FTA)?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

[If No Is Selected, Then Skip To BC-7]

BC-5 Indicate how many non-voting governing board seats are allocated to the following: (Please avoid double counting):

___ County commissioners (or equivalent)
___ Municipal elected officials (or equivalent)
___ School districts
___ Countywide elected executive officials
___ Public transit authorities
___ Toll or expressway authorities
___ Seaport authorities
___ Aviation authorities
___ Tribal governments
___ Colleges or universities
___ Military installations
___ State departments of transportation
___ Regional Council/Council of Governments
___ Gubernatorial appointees (Not included elsewhere)
___ Private sector representatives
___ Other

[IF Other in BC-5 is greater than 0]

BC-6 You responded that there are "Other" non-voting seats on the governing board that did not fit into a category. Please describe these seats in the box below.

_____

BC-7 Does the MPO have any advisory committees or subcommittees, such as:
Please choose ALL that apply:

- ❑ Executive committee
- ❑ Citizen advisory
- ❑ Technical advisory
- ❑ Policy advisory
- ❑ Transportation disadvantaged
- ❑ Land use
- ❑ Bicycle and pedestrian
- ❑ Air quality
- ❑ Congestion management process
- ❑ Non-member local governments
- ❑ Water
- ❑ Transit
- ❑ Historic or cultural resources
- ❑ Corridor management
- ❑ Freight or goods movement
- ❑ Emergency management/Homeland security
- ❑ Asset management/State of good repair
- ❑ Other (Please explain) _____

Board Meetings

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

- ❍ Monthly
- ❍ Bi-monthly
- ❍ Quarterly
- ❍ Bi-annually
- ❍ Other (Please explain) _____

B-2 Where does the MPO governing board meet?

- ❑ A board room used only by the MPO
- ❑ A board room shared with the host agency
- ❑ A board room shared with a member local government
- ❑ A board room shared with another public agency
- ❑ Privately-owned space
- ❑ Other (Please explain) _____

MPO Boundary

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

_____ Whole urbanized area
_____ Partial urbanized area

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

❍ Attainment
❍ Non-attainment
❍ Maintenance

MB-3 Check all that apply regarding the MPO's planning area boundary. If no statements apply, leave the question blank. Please choose ALL that apply:

❑ The MPO is multi-state
❑ The MPO is multi-county
❑ A neighboring MPO encompasses portions of the same urbanized area as my MPO
❑ None of the above

[IF "The MPO is multi-state" in MB-3 is selected]

MB-4 You indicated that your MPO is multi-state. How many states are in the MPO's planning area boundary?

❍ 2
❍ 3
❍ 4
❍ 5

[IF any choices in MB-4 are selected]

MB-5 Please let us know name of those states that cross the MPO's planning area boundary.

	Name
State #1	
State #2	
State #3	
State #4	
State #5	

Hosting

H-1 Is your MPO part of or hosted (i.e. housed) by another agency?

❍ Yes
❍ No

[IF Yes in H-1 is selected]

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

- ❍ Council of Governments/Regional Council (or equivalent)
- ❍ County (or equivalent) government
- ❍ Municipal (or equivalent) government
- ❍ An independent authority [transit agency, toll authority, seaport/airport, etc.]
- ❍ State department of transportation, including district and regional offices
- ❍ University or center of expertise sponsored by a university
- ❍ Other (Please explain) _____

[IF Yes in H-1 is selected]

H-3 Does your MPO share the same name and logo as your host agency?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

[IF Yes in H-1 is selected]

H-4 Does your MPO share the same governing board with your host agency?

- ❍ Yes, it is exactly same as the host agency's governing board
- ❍ Yes, but it is subset of the host agency's governing board
- ❍ No

[IF Yes in H-1 is selected]

H-5 Does your MPO staff perform non-MPO work for your host agency?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

[IF Yes in H-1 is selected]

H-6 Who has hiring/firing authority over your MPO director (or equivalent)?

- ❍ MPO governing board
- ❍ Host agency
- ❍ Combination of MPO governing board and host agency
- ❍ Other (Please explain) _____

[IF Yes in H-1 is selected]

H-7 Is your MPO budget integrated with or kept separate from your host agency's budget?

- ❍ Integrated with budget of host agency
- ❍ Kept separate from budget of host agency
- ❍ Other (Please explain) _____

[IF Yes in H-1 is selected]

H-8 Does the MPO pay an indirect rate to the host agency in exchange for services and goods that the MPO consumes?

❍ Yes
❍ No

[IF Yes in H-8 is selected]

H-9 What does your indirect rate pay for?
Please choose ALL that apply:

❑ Office space
❑ Utilities
❑ Phone
❑ Postage
❑ Shipping (FedEx, UPS)
❑ Office supplies
❑ Computers and IT services
❑ Other office equipment
❑ Fleet vehicles
❑ Procurement and contracting services
❑ Human resources services
❑ Payroll services
❑ Legal services
❑ Administrative support personnel
❑ Employee benefits
❑ Other (Please explain) _____

[IF Yes in H-8 is selected]

H-10 Approximately what percent of the MPO's annual budget is spent paying the indirect rate?

_____ Indirect Rate (%)

[IF Yes in H-1 is selected]

H-11a In your opinion, what are the advantages of being hosted by another agency?

[IF Yes in H-1 is selected]

H-11b In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of being hosted by another agency?

[IF No in H-1 is selected]

H-12 How are administrative and staffing services provided to the MPO?

❍ Directly provided by MPO staff members
❍ Contractual arrangement with a public provider
❍ Contractual arrangement with a private company
❍ Other (Please explain) _____

[IF No in H-1 is selected]

H-13 Does the MPO host another agency? (i.e. the MPO is the fiscal and administrative agent for another organization)

❍ Yes (Please explain) _____

❍ No

[IF No in H-1 is selected]

H-14a In your opinion, what are the advantages of being an independent agency?

[IF No in H-1 is selected]

H-14b In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of being an independent agency?

H-15a Has your MPO undergone a change in organizational structure in the past 10 years?

❍ No

❍ Yes

❍ My MPO was established within the last 10 years

[IF Yes in H-15a is selected]

H-15b Please select change(s) in organizational structure happened in the past 10 years: Please choose ALL that apply:

❑ The MPO merged with another MPO

❑ The MPO separated from another MPO

❑ The MPO switched host agencies

❑ The MPO became hosted

❑ The MPO became independent

❑ Other (Please explain) _____

Office Operation

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

❍ The MPO has adopted its own set of written policies

❍ The policies of the host agency are also used by the MPO

❍ There is no written set of personnel policies

OO-2a Estimate the percentage of overall staff time spent on public involvement and education:

_____

OO-2b Estimate the percentage of overall staff time spent on board and advisory committee management:

_____

OO-2c Estimate the percentage of overall staff time spent on general agency administration:

_____

OO-3 Indicate the number of in-house employees (full- or part-time) who perform the following tasks (Note: This may require double counting):

_____ Graphic design
_____ Geographic information systems operation
_____ Travel demand model operation
_____ Database management
_____ Website and social media
_____ IT, network operation, and computer hardware
_____ Asset management or performance management tracking
_____ Grant writing

Intergovernmental

I-1 Regarding relationships with nearby MPOs, has your MPO done any of the following: Please choose ALL that apply:

- ❑ Developed a joint Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Long Range Transportation Plan
- ❑ Developed a regional transportation plan
- ❑ Performed other joint planning tasks or projects
- ❑ Conducted Planning and Environmental Linkages Activities
- ❑ Developed a joint Congestion Management Process (CMP)
- ❑ Conducted joint air quality planning activities
- ❑ Jointly purchased data, software, hardware, or technical services
- ❑ Met with leadership on a regular basis
- ❑ Signed a memorandum of understanding or an interlocal agreement
- ❑ Conducted joint public involvement activities
- ❑ Other (Please explain) _____

I-1b Regarding relationships with nearby Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPO), has your MPO done any of the following:
Please choose ALL that apply:

- ❑ Developed a joint Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Long Range Transportation Plan
- ❑ Developed a regional transportation plan
- ❑ Performed other joint planning tasks or projects
- ❑ Conducted Planning and Environmental Linkages Activities
- ❑ Developed a joint Congestion Management Process (CMP)
- ❑ Conducted joint air quality planning activities
- ❑ Jointly purchased data, software, hardware, or technical services
- ❑ Met with leadership on a regular basis
- ❑ Signed a memorandum of understanding or an interlocal agreement
- ❑ Conducted joint public involvement activities

❑ Other (Please explain) _____

I-2 Is there a statewide association of MPOs?

❍ Yes
❍ No

[IF "The MPO is multi-state" in MB-3 is NOT selected]

I-3 Does state statute guide MPOs in any of the following areas?
Please choose ALL that apply:

❑ Governing board composition
❑ Advisory committees
❑ Staff requirements
❑ Pay scales and benefits
❑ MPO core products [MTP/LRTP, TIP, CMP or UPWP]
❑ Comprehensive planning or land use planning
❑ Air quality and pollution
❑ Local modal planning [airport, seaport]
❑ Statewide transportation planning
❑ Coordination with nearby MPOs
❑ Purchasing or procurement
❑ Asset management or performance monitoring
❑ No
❑ Other (Please explain) _____

I-5 Does your MPO receive adequate technical support from outside resource agencies?
Please choose ALL that apply:

❑ Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
❑ Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
❑ Other federal agencies (Please explain) _____
❑ State Department of Transportation
❑ Other state agencies (Please explain) _____
❑ Other (Please explain) _____

I-6 What additional technical support would most benefit your MPO? Please explain:

_____

[For any states selected in MB-5, questions I-7 and I-8 will be displayed]

I-7 Does {Selected state in MB-5} statute guide MPOs in any of the following areas?
Please choose ALL that apply:

❑ Governing board composition
❑ Advisory committees
❑ Staff requirements
❑ Pay scales and benefits

- ❑ MPO core products [MTP/LRTP, TIP, CMP or UPWP]
- ❑ Comprehensive planning or land use planning
- ❑ Air quality and pollution
- ❑ Local modal planning [airport, seaport]
- ❑ Statewide transportation planning
- ❑ Coordination with nearby MPOs
- ❑ Purchasing or procurement
- ❑ Asset management or performance monitoring
- ❑ No
- ❑ Other (Please explain) _____

I-8 Is there a statewide association of MPOs in the state of {Selected state in MB-5}?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

U-1a How many years does your current UPWP cover?

- ❍ One year
- ❍ Two years
- ❍ Other (Please explain) _____

U-1b What is the total dollar amount ($), for all purposes, expressed in the MPO's current UPWP?

_____

U-2 What is the total dollar amount ($) of funds shown for informational purposes only in the current UPWP?

_____

U-3 What is the total dollar amount ($) of funds in the current UPWP for the MPO's internal use?

_____

U-4 What is the total value of funds shown in the current UPWP to be expended on MPO work performed under contract, such as with a consulting firm? Note that your response should exclude funds shown for informational purposes only.

_____

Performance-Based Planning and Programming/Scenario Planning

SP-1 MAP-21 introduced performance-based planning and programming requirements for MPOs. Is your MPO transitioning to performance-based planning and programming?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

[IF Yes in SP-1 is selected]

SP-2 Has your MPO established performance measures for: Please choose ALL that apply:

- ❑ Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Long Range Transportation Plan
- ❑ Transportation improvement program
- ❑ Other planning or programming documents or activities (please explain) _____

[IF "Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Long Range Transportation Plan" in SP-2 is selected]

SP-3a For which performance areas has your MPO established performance measures in the MTP/LRTP?

- ❑ Safety
- ❑ Asset condition
- ❑ Congestion
- ❑ Freight
- ❑ Air quality
- ❑ Livability related
- ❑ Accessibility/connectivity
- ❑ Other areas (please explain) _____

[IF at least one choice in SP-3a is selected]

SP-3aa For which of the selected performance areas for the MTP/LRTP has your MPO established performance targets?

- ❑ Safety [IF selected in SP-3a]
- ❑ Asset condition [IF selected in SP-3a]
- ❑ Congestion [IF selected in SP-3a]
- ❑ Freight [IF selected in SP-3a]
- ❑ Air quality [IF selected in SP-3a]
- ❑ Livability related [IF selected in SP-3a]
- ❑ Accessibility/connectivity [IF selected in SP-3a]
- ❑ Other areas [IF selected in SP-3a]

[IF “Transportation Improvement Program” in SP-2 is selected]

SP-3b For which performance areas has your MPO established performance measures in the TIP?

- ❑ Safety
- ❑ Asset condition
- ❑ Congestion
- ❑ Freight
- ❑ Air quality
- ❑ Livability related
- ❑ Accessibility/connectivity
- ❑ Other areas (please explain) _____

[IF at least one choice in SP-3b is selected]

SP-3ba For which of the selected performance areas for the TIP has your MPO established performance targets?

- ❑ Safety [IF selected in SP-3b]
- ❑ Asset condition [IF selected in SP-3b]
- ❑ Congestion [IF selected in SP-3b]
- ❑ Freight [IF selected in SP-3b]
- ❑ Air quality [IF selected in SP-3b]
- ❑ Livability related [IF selected in SP-3b]
- ❑ Accessibility/connectivity [IF selected in SP-3b]
- ❑ Other areas [IF selected in SP-3b]

[IF “Other planning or programming documents or activities” in SP-2 is selected]

SP-3c For which performance areas has your MPO established performance measures in "Other planning or programming documents or activities"?

- ❑ Safety
- ❑ Asset condition
- ❑ Congestion
- ❑ Freight
- ❑ Air quality
- ❑ Livability related
- ❑ Accessibility/connectivity
- ❑ Other areas (please explain) _____

[IF at least one choice in SP-3c is selected]

SP-3ca For which of the selected performance areas for "Other planning or programming documents or activities" has your MPO established performance targets?

- ❑ Safety [IF selected in SP-3c]
- ❑ Asset condition [IF selected in SP-3c]
- ❑ Congestion [IF selected in SP-3c]
- ❑ Freight [IF selected in SP-3c]
- ❑ Air quality [IF selected in SP-3c]
- ❑ Livability related [IF selected in SP-3c]

- ❑ Accessibility/connectivity [IF selected in SP-3c]
- ❑ Other areas [IF selected in SP-3c]

[IF Yes in SP-1 is selected]

SP-4 Does a member(s) of your staff spend more than half of their time focusing on performance-based planning and programming?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

[IF Yes in SP-1 is selected]

SP-5 How has the implementation of performance-based planning affected your staff workload? Please choose ALL that apply:

- ❑ It has increased staff workload overall.
- ❑ It has required reallocation of resources and prioritization of tasks.
- ❑ It has not had any impact.
- ❑ Other (please explain) _____

[IF "It has increased staff workload overall." in SP-5 is selected]

SP-5a By what percentage would you estimate that the implementation of performance-based planning and programming has increased your staff workload?

_____

[IF Yes in SP-1 is selected]

SP-7 How has the implementation of performance-based planning and programming affected your consulting contracts? Please choose ALL that apply:

- ❑ It has increased the costs of consultant contracts.
- ❑ It has required reconsideration and prioritization of tasks.
- ❑ It has not had any impact.
- ❑ Other (please explain) _____

[IF "It has increased the costs of consultant contracts." in SP-7 is selected]

SP-7a By what percentage would you estimate that the implementation of performance-based planning and programming has increased the cost of your consultant contracts?

_____

SP-8 MAP-21 provides guidance for conducting scenario planning in the development of the MTP/LRTP. Does your MPO use or plan to use scenario planning in the development of your MPO MTP/LRTP?

❍ Yes
❍ No

[IF Yes in SP-8 is selected]

SP-9 How much would you estimate your MPO spent or will be spending to conduct scenario planning as part of the development of the MTP/LRTP (in thousands of dollars)?

_____

[IF Yes in SP-8 is selected]

SP-10 How has the implementation of scenario planning affected the preparation of your MTP/LRTP? Please choose ALL that apply:

❑ It has increased the cost to prepare the MTP/LRTP.
❑ It has required reallocation of resources and prioritization of tasks.
❑ It has not had any impact.
❑ Other (please explain) _____

[IF "It has increased the cost to prepare the MTP/LRTP." in SP-10 is selected]

SP-10a By what percentage would you estimate that the implementation of scenario planning has increased the cost to prepare your MTP/LRTP?

_____

[IF Yes in SP-8 is selected]

SP-11 Does a member(s) of your staff spend more than half of their time focusing on scenario planning?

❍ Yes
❍ No

Consultants

C-1a Does the MPO employ consultants?

❍ Yes
❍ No

[IF Yes in C-1a is selected]

C-1b Regarding consultant labor, does the MPO: Please choose ALL that apply:

- ❑ Employ a general services consultant(s)
- ❑ Employ consultants to draft all or some MPO core documents [MTP/LRTP, TIP, CMP or UPWP]
- ❑ Employ consultants for special studies
- ❑ Employ consultants for public involvement activities
- ❑ Employ consultants to operate the travel demand model
- ❑ Employ consultants to track performance
- ❑ Employ consultants to monitor asset management
- ❑ Other (Please explain) _____

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

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

Funding Sources

FS-1a Funds shown in the UPWP and controlled by the MPO come from which of the following sources? Please choose ALL that apply:

- ❑ Federal Planning (PL) funds
- ❑ Federal 5305(d) Transit Planning funds
- ❑ State-supplied funds
- ❑ Contributions from member local governments
- ❑ Competitive grants
- ❑ Fees for service
- ❑ Federal Surface Transportation Program - Urban Allocation
- ❑ Federal Congestion Management and Air Quality
- ❑ Other (Please explain) _____

[IF at least two choices in FS-1a are selected]

FS-1b What percentage of your UPWP (excluding funds shown for informational purposes) comes from the following sources? The sum must equal 100%. (Please note, the choices shown below are based on your selections in the previous question.)

_____ Federal Planning (PL) funds [IF selected in FS-1a]
_____ Federal 5305(d) Transit Planning funds [IF selected in FS-1a]
_____ State-supplied funds [IF selected in FS-1a]
_____ Contributions from member local governments [IF selected in FS-1a]
_____ Competitive grants [IF selected in FS-1a]
_____ Fees for service [IF selected in FS-1a]

_____ Federal Surface Transportation Program - Urban Allocation [IF selected in FS-1a]
_____ Federal Congestion Management and Air Quality [IF selected in FS-1a]
_____ Other [IF selected in FS-1a]

FS-2 Do Federal PL funds and Federal 5305(d) funds cover the full cost of completing the minimum tasks required of MPOs by Federal law (MPO core products)?

❍ Yes
❍ No

[IF "Contributions from member local governments" in FS-1a is selected]
LF-1 How are contributions from member local governments collected? Please choose ALL that apply:

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

[IF "Modal agencies contribute funds to the MPO" in LF-1 is selected]
LF-2 How are modal agencies' contributions determined? Please explain.

_____

[IF "Contributions from member local governments" in FS-1a is selected]
LF-3 How are local funds spent? Please choose ALL that apply:

❑ On MPO core activities
❑ Non-core transportation studies
❑ MPO functions required by the state
❑ Government affairs and lobbying
❑ Public relations and advertising
❑ Employee training, conferences, and education
❑ Office operation [equipment, printing, IT services]
❑ Food
❑ Other (Please explain) _____

Benefits

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

❍ The MPO contracts directly with an insurance provider
❍ The MPO's host agency provides insurance
❍ The MPO contracts with a local or state government that is not the host
❍ The MPO does not provide insurance
❍ Other (Please explain) _____

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

- ❍ The MPO contracts directly with a financial services provider
- ❍ The MPO's host agency provides benefits
- ❍ The MPO contracts or otherwise arranges for retirement benefits with a local or state government that is not the host
- ❍ The MPO does not offer retirement benefits
- ❍ Other (Please explain) _____

BN-3 Which of these other benefits are available to MPO employees? Please choose ALL that apply:

- ❑ Life insurance
- ❑ Long or short term disability
- ❑ Other insurance [dental, vision, long term care]
- ❑ Flexible spending accounts for medical and dependent care
- ❑ Child care facility or subsidy
- ❑ Parking benefits
- ❑ Public transit benefits
- ❑ Carpool/vanpool incentives
- ❑ Tuition reimbursement
- ❑ Professional association dues
- ❑ Continuing education expenses
- ❑ Other (Please explain) _____

Total Employees

TE-1 How many people work for your MPO?

_____ Full Time:

_____ Part Time:

MPO Director

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

_____ Years:

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

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

[IF Yes in MD-2 is selected]

MD-3 You responded that the MPO director is also in charge of another agency. Which of the following agencies does the director lead? Please choose ALL that apply:

- ❑ Council of Governments/Regional Council (or equivalent)
- ❑ County (or equivalent) department
- ❑ Municipal (or equivalent) department
- ❑ Fixed-route transit agency (not part of county of municipal government)
- ❑ Demand-response transit agency (not part of county or municipal government)
- ❑ Area agency/council on aging
- ❑ Environmental, air, or water quality agency (not part of county or municipal government)
- ❑ Other (Please explain) _____

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

- ❑ The MPO governing board
- ❑ A solitary elected official
- ❑ Host agency director
- ❑ A host agency employee who is not the director
- ❑ The host agency board
- ❑ Other (Please explain) _____

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

- ❍ Less than 1 year
- ❍ 1-2 years
- ❍ 2-3 years
- ❍ 3-4 years
- ❍ 4-5 years
- ❍ 5-10 years
- ❍ More than 10 years
- ❍ Unknown

MD-6 What is the annual salary range for the MPO director position (in thousands of dollars)?

_____ Minimum:

_____ Maximum:

Senior Managers

Note: The MPO Director should not be considered a senior manager for the purposes of this survey.

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

_____ Number of senior managers:

[IF number of senior managers in SM-1 is at least 1]
SM-2 To the best of your ability, please estimate how many of those {Number of senior managers entered in SM-1} senior managers are within the following retirement timeframes. Each person should be entered in only one category.
Under five years: _____
Five to ten years: _____
More than ten years away: _____

[IF number of senior managers in SM-1 is at least 1]
SM-3 What is the annual salary range for senior management positions? List the maximum salary (in thousands) for the highest-paying senior management position, and the minimum salary of the lowest-paying senior management position.
Minimum: _____
Maximum: _____

Professional Employees

Note: The Professional Employees category does not include the MPO Director, anyone discussed in the section titled "Senior Managers" or support staff.

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

[IF number of professional employees in P-1 is at least 1]
P-2 What is the annual salary range for professional employees? List the maximum salary (in thousands) for the highest-paying professional position, and the minimum salary of the lowest-paying professional position.
Minimum: _____
Maximum: _____

[IF number of professional employees in P-1 is at least 1]
P-3 In the space below, please comment on any special conditions or unique situations related to professional staff salary that would be of interest to the research team. For example, is there a particular specialty that requires higher compensation than other professional staff?

[IF number of professional employees in P-1 is at least 1]

P-4 Please estimate how many of those {number of professional employees in P-1} professional employees have reached the following tenure benchmarks with the MPO. Each individual should be counted only once. This question asks for tenure with the MPO only. The employee may have been promoted or moved laterally within the organization. Do not include experience at other agencies, including the host agency.

0-5 years: _____

5-10 years: _____

10+ years: _____

Shared Employees

SE-1 Please describe any instance of your MPO sharing an employee with another agency.

_____

Specialties

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

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

Turnover

T-1 Over the past two calendar years (2014-2015), how many employees left the MPO for any reason?

_____ Employees that left the MPO:

T-2 Over the past two calendar years (2014-2015), were any positions created or eliminated? Please choose ALL that apply:

❑ Created _____

❑ Eliminated _____

T-3 Do you feel that the MPO is competitive in terms of compensation? Please explain.

❍ Yes _____

❍ No _____

Departure

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

	Planner	Engineer	Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	Air quality specialist	Travel demand modeler	Environmental or sociocultural specialist	Public involvement	Intergovernmental/ public relations	Other
Person 1	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Person 2	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Person 3	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

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

	Another MPO	Transportation-related government agency	Non-transportation government agency	Consulting firm	All other employers	I don't know
Person 1	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Person 2	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Person 3	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

End

Rev-0 You've reached the end of the survey. Would you like to submit your responses now?

❍ Yes, I've completed the survey.

❍ No, I want to go back and review my responses.