

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS (MPOs)

Definition

An organization established under the 1973 Surface Transportation Act that is a transportation policy-making organization made up of representatives from local government and transportation authorities.

Creation

MPOs are required to be designated for each urbanized area with a population of more than 50,000 individuals by agreement between the Governor and units of general purpose local government that together represent at least 75% of the affected population.

Boundary Requirements

Generally, boundaries are determined by agreement between the metropolitan planning organization and the Governor with certain additional requirements for nonattainment areas (a nonattainment area is any area that does not meet (or that contributes to ambient air quality in a nearby area that does not meet) the national primary or secondary ambient air quality standard for certain pollutants).

Responsibilities

MPOs are required to develop long-range transportation plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs) for their areas. The plans and the TIPs are required to provide for the development and integrated management and operation of transportation systems and facilities. The plans and TIPs shall consider all modes of transportation and shall be continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive.

Long-Range Transportation Plans

An MPO is required to prepare and update a long-range transportation plan every 4 years, if the MPO is designated as a nonattainment area, or every 5 years, unless the MPO elects to update more frequently.

A transportation plan shall:

- (1) Identify transportation facilities that should function as an integrated system;
- (2) Include a discussion of potential environmental mitigation activities and potential areas to carry out these activities;
- (3) Include a financial plan that demonstrates how the adopted transportation plan can be implemented and indicate resources from public and private sources that are reasonably expected to be made available to carry out the plan;

- (4) Include operational and management strategies to improve the performance of existing transportation facilities;
- (5) Include capital investment and others strategies to preserve the existing and projected future transportation infrastructure;
- (6) Include transportation and transit enhancement activities; and
- (7) Coordinate with Clean Air Act Agencies.

Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs)

An MPO is required to develop a TIP for its designated area. The TIP shall include a priority list of proposed federally supported projects and strategies to be carried out within a 4 year period. The TIP shall be updated at least once every 4 years and shall be approved by the MPO and the Governor. The MPO, public transportation agency, and the state shall cooperatively develop estimates of funds that are reasonably expected to be available. The TIP shall include a financial plan that demonstrates how the TIP can be implemented and indicates public and private resources that are reasonably expected to carry out the program. Each project in the TIP shall include sufficient descriptive material to identify the project or phase of the project. The TIP shall include projects within the area that are proposed for certain federal funds. The selection of federally funded projects in metropolitan areas shall be carried out, from the approved TIP, by the State or a public transportation agency in cooperation with the MPO.

Utah MPOs

Currently, there are four MPOs in the state: Wasatch Front Regional Council, Mountainland Association of Governments, Dixie Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Cache Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Source: 23 USC § 134, 42 USC § 7407

Prepared by the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel (April 2007)