TRANSIT AT THE TABLE:

A GUIDE TO PARTICIPATION IN METROPOLITAN DECISIONMAKING

"Transit plays a major role in regional planning, and every MPO should have transit at the table."

Shirley DeLibero, former Houston Metro President and CEO

U.S. Department of Transportation

Federal Transit Administration

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16. Abstract

This report presents the observations, perspectives, and recommendations of a cross-section of transit agencies from large metropolitan areas on how to secure strategic positions in the metropolitan planning process. More importantly, the report can be a guide on how to use those positions to win policy and program support for priority transit services. The challenges to achieving full decision-making partnerships in regional settings, the most effective strategies for addressing these challenges, and the rewards of partnerships are presented by transit industry leaders using their own experiences.

While the primary audience for *Transit at the Table* is transit general managers and transit senior staff, important messages are included for other key stakeholders. Because the overall effectiveness of a Metropolitan Planning Organization rises and falls with the depth of the decision-making partnerships, suggestions and strategies presented in this report represent significant opportunities for improving current practice.

Key findings of the report were also used in preparing a self-assessment checklist for transit operations in assessing their profile and participation in metropolitan planning. The indicators are generic and not exhaustive. As such, the questions should be regarded as only the starting point for subsequent discussion focused on local issues. This checklist is located in Appendix A of the report.

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MTA
Baltimore, Maryland

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MTA
Baltimore, Maryland

Executive Summary

Introduction

The transit industry today has an unprecedented opportunity to meet the access and mobility needs of the metropolitan communities it serves. With passage of landmark transportation reauthorization bills since 1991, Congress and the President provided significantly increased financial support and flexibility to highway and transit programs. This has greatly improved the ability of state and local decisionmakers to assemble the resources needed to implement the most appropriate mix of modal solutions. These pioneering laws also have enabled transit operators to exert greater influence in transportation policy formation and decisionmaking in metropolitan areas, an important means of realizing the benefits of increased program resources and flexibilities.

This report presents the observations, perspectives, and recommendations of a cross-section of transit agencies from large metropolitan areas on how to secure strategic positions in the metropolitan planning process. More importantly, this report can be used as a guide to how to use those positions to win policy and program support for priority transit services. The challenges to achieving full decision-making partnerships in regional settings, the most effective strategies for addressing these challenges, and the rewards of partnerships are presented by transit industry leaders using their own experiences.

Conclusions presented here are based upon in-depth interviews with senior officials from transit operators and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in 25 large, urbanized areas. To ensure broad applicability of findings, the selected locales were chosen to be representative of a wide range of governmental, environmental, and operating settings. A full description of the methodology appears in Appendix B.

Findings

Many of the transit operators interviewed are strategic players in their regions and at their MPOs, where they contribute to decisions affecting economic development and land use, as well as transportation investment priorities. They find opportunities to participate vigorously in, and get impressive policy and program support from, the broad range of MPO activities. However, the incidence and depth of transit interest and involvement in MPO activities is uneven. A number of transit operators report that they are not aware of the potential benefits in broad-based policy support and additional program resources that they could realize and, therefore, do not seek MPO participation. Many of those who participate do so minimally and continue to search for effective ways to capitalize upon that.

Some who seek stronger roles in metropolitan decisionmaking may be overwhelmed by the organizational complexity of MPOs and the detailed and time-consuming nature of the MPO's technical work. This can be particularly troublesome when their attempts to get involved meet resistance.

Transit operators who view themselves only as service providers and do not participate in setting the broader policy agenda for their areas may be missing the best opportunities envisioned by Congress and the President in recent reauthorization bills. Transit operators may be accepting only program funding that is readily available through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), though it may be at levels far short of what they need. While this is happening, discussion of modal priorities and investment needs at the MPO policy level may be taking place without transit representation, thereby perpetuating those resource limitations. Transit operators who become involved in the MPO decision-making processes have more opportunities to seek out innovative funding mechanisms for their high priority projects.

Even some transit operators who actively pursue strategic participation in planning processes encounter challenges. Just as transit agencies range in their level of MPO involvement from "operators only" to strategic partners, the extent to which planning at MPOs is inclusive and open to broader multimodal representation varies. Some MPOs simply administer the

Federally required process, while others are strategic players striving for comprehensive inclusion of all modes. Many transit operators believe that inadequate center city representation and other factors limit their voice in the MPO. In addition, some state departments of transportation (SDOT) hold the transportation planning and programming reins tighter than other SDOTs, who share information and cooperate freely with transit agencies and MPOs. Governors and state legislatures vary widely in the extent to which they encourage transit agencies and MPOs as regional decisionmakers. Local politics may also be an issue, especially where local officials do not support transit.

Finally, many study participants reported that the outcome is only partially in the hands of the transit agency. In fact, the degree to which a "level playing field" actually exists has been the subject of extensive research and commentary. To a large extent, the impact of transit participation may lie collectively in the hands of the MPO, the state DOT, and other planning partners.

On a positive note, this study found that regardless of the local situation, highly successful transit agencies make the most of the opportunities available to them while creating other opportunities at the same time. These transit agencies make an effort to establish a professional rapport with the various personalities as they come together in consensus-based decisionmaking. In the end, it is the interplay of these institutions in their policy, professional, and technical linkages—in each metropolitan area—that determines the level of transit participation in decisionmaking and, ultimately, the quality of services provided.

To meet the growing demands for service improvements in the face of increased competition for traditional revenue sources, operators are pursuing supplemental funding through local taxes, fees, and bond initiatives. Involvement in metropolitan planning may benefit operators both before and after such ventures. MPO endorsement may bolster advance support for the proposal. If the revenue enhancement proposal is approved, transit operators may be able to exert greater influence in regional decisionmaking because they are able to bring new funds to the table.

Audience

While the primary audience for Transit at the Table is transit general managers and transit senior staff, important information is included for other key MPO stakeholders as well. Because the overall effectiveness of an MPO rises and falls with the depth of the decision-making partnerships, the suggestions and strategies presented in this report represent significant opportunities for improving current practices.

Participation at the MPO level can result in many benefits, with some occurring almost immediately and others over the longer term. Ten major benefits identified by study participants and selected strategies for achieving them are provided below.

Finally, share your planning concerns and questions with your FTA Regional and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Division Office partners.

"You have to convince me that wrestling with my MPO is a better use of my time – there are a hundred other things I could be doing"

— General manager of a transit agency

Benefits of Participation and Strategies for Achievement

1. **Influence** the identification of transportation issues, policy formation, and funding priorities—by being an active participant on the MPO Board and/or committees.

2. **Promote transit service** as a regional transportation priority—by collaborating with the business community, citizen groups, local officials, and other MPO partners. This can significantly enhance the prospects of any referenda that may be contemplated, and raise the visibility of transit service in your community.

3. **Establish an image** of transit as indispensable to community well being—by getting involved in broader issues facing your community, such as homeland security, land use and economic development, and environmental protection.

4. **Win support for transit-friendly land use policies**—by promoting land use/economic development/transportation integration, leading to MPO policy support for transit-oriented development.

5. **Win support for your investment needs**—by promoting early, open, and objective consideration of transit in regional corridor studies conducted by, or through, the MPO. This can result in support for your capital improvement needs directly, or as a component of another project, such as bus shelters, park-and-ride facilities, signage, sidewalks, or even a special transit right-of-way, when a highway investment alternative is selected.

6. **Promote multimodal solutions**—by assuming joint sponsorship of studies with state DOTs, especially if the outcome is a shared highway/transit right-of-way or busway.

7. **Get transit on the agenda**—by being involved in MPO committees such as those dealing with policy, air quality, and technical methods.

8. **Strengthen your funding prospects** for your priorities/shape the transportation future—by participating fully in preparation of the long range transportation plan and short range transportation improvement program (TIP).

9. **Secure funding from non-traditional sources** for your priorities—by making a convincing case for your investment needs to other MPO members.

10. **Accelerate delivery of your projects**—by monitoring the status of projects programmed in the TIP to note schedule changes.

"Through the transportation technical committee, we make sure our issues are brought forward, discussed, and supported by the region. For example, committee members sent a letter to our congressional delegation [expressing] agreement among technical staff that Interstate Max is the region's number one priority."

— Fred Hansen, General Manager of Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District (Tri-Met) Portland, Oregon

Fred Hansen
General Manager
Tri-Met Portland

Portland, Oregon

BART
San Francisco, California

Transit Can Be a Strategic Player in Your Region

This chapter sets an important context to begin engaging your agency in the metropolitan decision-making process and describes the many ways you can establish yourself as a proactive leader in your community. By doing so, you can achieve valuable influence in your formal metropolitan planning organization (MPO) deliberations, develop strong productive relationships with your MPO and state department of transportation (SDOT) heads, and establish new fruitful partnerships with citizen and environmental groups, community business leaders, the media, Federal agencies, and local elected officials. A number of transit operators consulted for this study have emerged as real leaders in their regional transportation arena. Their personal relationships and proactive leadership culture have played key roles. The following pages present summaries of many of these operators' experiences in accomplishing this.

Seeking formal roles on your MPO Board and committees and cultivating strong relationships with MPO and SDOT leaders can have significant benefits as demonstrated in Sections I.1 and I.2. Even if you have been frustrated with the decisionmaking in your community, it is worth the effort of getting involved again, drawing from the advice of your counterparts in other places. While many barriers exist that limit transit's meaningful participation in regional decision-making, our research shows that it is often possible to overcome these obstacles and that problematic local situations can change dramatically. You may not find all the answers you need in this report, but you will learn what philosophies and strategies your counterparts have used successfully to make progress.

A surprise finding was the extent of benefits that transit operators report that they derive from relationships with the broad range of stakeholders they encounter at the MPO. In Section I.3, for example, the many and varied ways in which widespread collaboration can promote support from citizens, business, media, and other groups in your region for transportation decisions that benefit transit are documented. Engaging in broader issues—such as Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), air quality, ride sharing, social services transportation, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, urban development or redevelopment, bicycle facilities, security, and special events—can open new opportunities for your transit agency. Documented benefits are described in Section I.4.

Finally, ways in which some of you have created supplemental groups and forums to expand upon your effectiveness in regional decisionmaking and have used the certification review process to enhance transit's acceptance as a full partner in regional transportation policy, plan, and program decisions are highlighted in Sections 1.5 and 1.6 and throughout the report.

I.1 Seek Formal Roles on Metropolitan Planning Organization Boards and Committees

"Having voting membership on the MPO is probably most ideal. I have worked in situations where transit didn't have as much say. I applaud the MPO for what they do. Transit plays a major role, and every MPO should have transit at the table."

— Shirley DeLibero, former President and CEO, Houston Metro

Shirley DeLibero
Former President and CEO
Houston Metro

The ways in which transit operators participate in MPOs vary widely across the country. Some transit agencies have full voting membership on the MPO Board, while others do not. In some cases, local elected officials who sit on the MPO Board also represent transit's interests, and they may rely heavily on the transit operator to provide input and feedback about issues and agenda items considered by the Board. Where does your agency fit in the decision-making process?

MPOs address a multitude of issues and do so at various stages in transportation decisionmaking. From Board decisions on policies and programs, to staff-directed technical studies, to interagency coordinating committees, there are many strategic opportunities to secure a high-profile role for your agency and its mission. With topic interests spanning long range planning, air quality conformity, bicycle and pedestrian issues, among many others, MPOs address a broad agenda of transportation in contemporary life. Topic-focused MPO committees present strategic opportunities for transit operators and other regional stakeholders to actively engage in dialogues on these issues. Many successful transit operators have found that active staff participation at the committee level is an important way to ensure that transit has a voice in the transportation planning process. An important second step, therefore, is to identify the key committees within the MPO and how your organization is, or could be, optimally represented.

While exactly how transit agencies are involved in these efforts differs from place to place, one thing is clear: those operators who are most satisfied and gain the most from MPO involvement have actively, and even aggressively, sought formal and informal roles on their MPO's Board and supporting committees to the maximum degree possible.

Chicago, Illinois

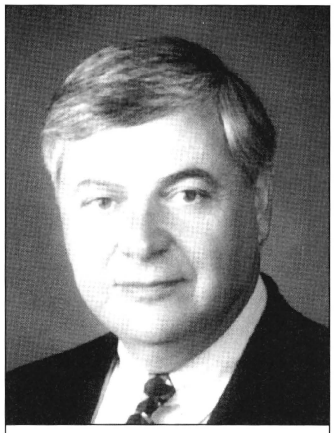
Challenges You May Face

Transit operators report numerous institutional barriers to full and effective participation in MPO processes, including the following:

- MPO membership partial to highway interests;
- Inadequate central city representation on MPO Boards;
- Non-cooperative SDOTs, or SDOTs uninterested in transit programs;
- Multi-state MPOs and the associated organizational complexity;
- MPOs hosted by SDOTs; and
- Decentralization and fragmentation of power in metropolitan areas.

In several areas, transit proponents are advocating partial remedies, such as population-weighted voting and more neutral MPO hosting arrangements.

Transit leaders like Pete Cipolla, General Manager of Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), and Shirley DeLibero formerly of Houston Metro, advocate that transit operators push for the more far-reaching solution of redesignating the MPO Board to provide voting representation for transit on the Board. "Redesignation could help equalize power relationships within MPOs," says Cipolla.



Pete M. Cipolla
General Manager
Santa Clara Valley
Transportation Authority

All healthy partnerships require mutual expectation, action, and support. Thus, another occasional impediment may be the attitude of the transit operator. A few operators do not see themselves as strategic players, or feel there is anything to be gained from participation in the MPO process. Some operators cite inadequate staff capacity to even attend meetings.

Others set their sights and expectations low in terms of the policy and program outcomes they aspire to achieve. The remainder of this section highlights the perspectives and strategies of the agencies that have participated.

A Voting Seat

The organization, membership, voting rights, and committee structure of any MPO is the unique product of Federal requirements, state laws, and inter-local agreements that established the MPO. When an MPO is formed, a Memorandum of Understanding must be executed among participants in the metropolitan planning process, including transit operators, delineating their individual roles and responsibilities within the organization. While voting membership on the MPO Policy Board for transit agencies is not a Federal requirement, many transit operators have worked with their MPO partners to obtain this standing. As a result, they now enjoy full voting privileges on the MPO Board and have used this in realizing broad intergovernmental support for their policies and programs. In St. Louis, the transit operator has long benefited from voting membership. Susan Stauder, a former official with the Bi-State Development Agency (now St. Louis Metro) remarked, "Bi-State has been a voting member forever....Transit has always been at [the] MPO table."

A Seat on the Board in Houston

Since 1979, Houston Metro has held a seat on the Houston-Galveston Area's Transportation Policy Council. Leadership at both the transit agency and the MPO feel that transit's voting participation is highly important and yields great benefits. Houston Metro's former President and CEO, Shirley DeLibero, could not imagine life without MPO voting membership, and she used it! "I sat on the MPO Board and I voted. When I couldn't go, I sent my alternate. Metro is very involved in decisions and voting at the MPO. They vote not only on transit issues,they get to vote on everything," DeLibero remarks. While the MPO Board is obviously a premier forum for presenting transit's interest in regional decisions, transit membership on the Board provides the larger benefit of enhancing regional coordination. "A role on the MPO Board," says DeLibero, "allows Metro to better coordinate with the State DOT, the toll roads department, and the engineers for the county and city. Regionally, coordination is better, so they are not constantly reinventing the wheel or stepping on one another's toes."

Houston MPO Director Alan Clark confirms the importance of Houston Metro's involvement. "I think having a seat on the Policy Board is extremely critical. I think it's a mistake for MPOs not to have transit operators represented," Clark says.

Catherine Debo
General Manager
Madison Metro

Houston Metro also enjoys a voting seat on the MPO Board. It may not be that common, but some operators who lack a seat on the MPO Board have expressed satisfaction with the representation of transit's interests by others at the MPO. Catherine Debo of Metro Transit in Madison, Wisconsin, reports that transit-supportive board members carry the day. "We get what we need. The City has the greatest number of representatives on the MPO of any community. They make a case for transit when it needs to be made," says Debo. This, however, is not automatic and results from long-standing personal and organizational partnerships among the representatives.

In other cases, exclusion from the MPO Board or an important committee is highly problematic for the transit operator. Las Vegas' transit operator reports high satisfaction with MPO Board representation through local elected officials. However, transit lacks voting membership on the high-level MPO Executive Advisory Committee (EAC), the group that reviews, approves, and prioritizes the spending of gas tax money for street and highway projects. According to Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada General Manager Jacob Snow, "EAC isn't interested in managing and operating a bus system by and large – it's seen as a second class form of transport—they're there to get as much roadway money for their area as possible. The structure means it's an uphill battle for transit to compete with roadways for funding...EAC voting membership for transit would be an improvement."

Washington, D.C.

Crash the Party

"We weren't on that Working Group--so we just started showing up."

— Rick Stevens, WMATA

MPO Committees

MPO committees comprised of officials and/or staff from organizational partners in the planning process do much of the underlying work upon which larger decisions are built, including setting performance-based priorities among projects to be included in the Long Range Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). While each MPO has its own committee structure reflecting the needs of the region, many MPOs have a Technical Committee, a Policy Committee, and an Air Quality Committee. Committees vary in how they function and the influence they exert in MPO Board decisionmaking and may have a formal voting process among members, or may work on a consensus basis. Some committees may strongly influence how the MPO Board votes on certain issues and some may play a more information-sharing role.

Whether or not a transit agency has a voting seat on the Board, active participation in MPO committees can amplify a transit operator's voice within the MPO and all of the decisions it makes.

No Committee Left Unturned in Salt Lake City

The Utah Transit Authority (UTA) in Salt Lake City is another transit operator that makes the most of opportunities to participate on the MPO committees, as a complement to its non-voting membership on the Board. UTA has two voting members on the transportation advisory committee, which makes recommendations to the MPO Council. UTA General Manager John Inglish remarked, "We are quite active on the MPO. We work closely with the MPO staff, and we have for many years, working on major studies, long range planning, and more."

Membership on other committees also provides the opportunity to ensure that transit's perspective is represented and understood in much of the underlying planning work and deliberation. UTA participates in subregional technical advisory committees (TAC) as well as committees dealing with aviation, regional growth, and air quality. Work on the committees is often where technical discussions take place among the MPO staff and the staff of member agencies. Many operators describe their involvement in MPO committees by saying, "This is where we all roll up our sleeves."

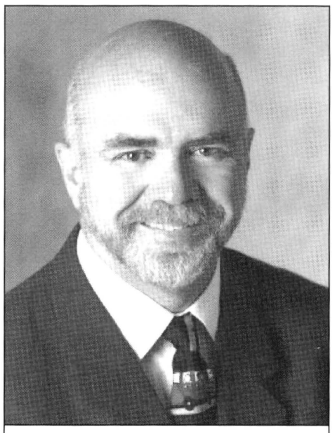
At the Wasatch Front Regional Council, Salt Lake City's MPO, the TAC works over the period of a year to bring forth the region's priorities. The group establishes technical standards to review and prioritize projects for inclusion in the long range plan and TIP. "By actively participating in the committee," said Inglish, "UTA can present projects that are critical to us in a format required by the technical committee, giving those projects credibility in the TAC." At the committee level, the UTA also competes for flexible funds. And so while the MPO Board is a critical place for transit to have representation, active participation at the committee level can supply a strong foundation for the transit agency's position – and its potential projects – within the MPO.

Where transit operators lack a designated seat on the MPO Board, an important committee, or even an informal working group, one strategy to win entrée to the forum is simply to ask or show up. Few transit operators report using this technique, but those who did reaped benefits.

Washington, D.C.: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) showed resolve to participate in the State Technical Working Group, an informal committee that sets the monthly agenda for policy and technical committee meetings at the MPO. "We weren't on that Working Group—so we just started showing up," recalls Rick Stevens,

WMATA Deputy General Manager of Operations. "Although the group is an administrative body in principle," says National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (Washington, D.C. MPO) Director Ron Kirby, "the meetings would drift into technical and policy matters… There was advance information being discussed there, which WMATA wanted to be part of…and they just started showing up…. It's good that they did this, because it has kept them informed about what's happening. To the extent that issues of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) being available for transit are discussed, or we sometimes get into TIP issues, how CMAQ will be spent, TIP amendments, etc., it affects them. Now that flex funding is possible, WMATA needs to be involved because TIP issues affect them. It's important that they be there because they're a big part of what's going on."

Little Rock: Keith Jones, CEO of the Central Arkansas Transit Authority, says a similar approach was used to gain access to decisionmaking in the MPO's technical advisory committee: "Although the TAC is primarily a citizens committee, it has direct involvement in transportation issues and the long range plan, and it provides five positions for technical staff. At first we were not on it, but we wanted on. We became a squeaky wheel for the MPO staff until we were allowed in."



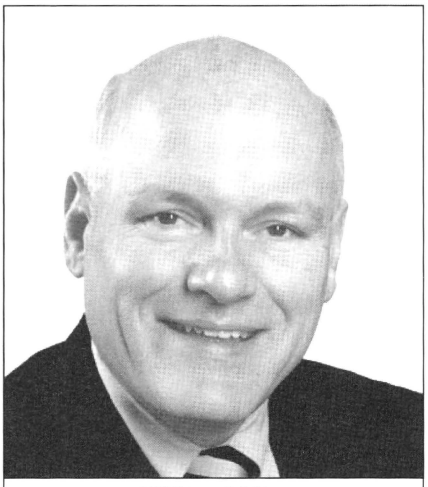
Keith Jones
CEO, Central Arkansas Transit Authority

Make the Most of Board and Committee Time

For some transit operators, it is difficult to find the time needed to devote to MPO activities. As one operator put it, "Transit agencies face the day-to-day responsibility of providing service to the community, and day-to-day operations naturally come first." Nonetheless, time spent at the MPO by the general manager (GM) and the staff of a transit operator is an investment that can lead to big rewards. The following strategies for making the most of Board and committee membership come from discussions with a wide range of transit agencies and MPOs:

- **Attend in person** GMs that personally attend MPO Board meetings have an opportunity to build relationships. Personal attendance can also foster executive-level commitment to decisionmaking, information sharing, and collaboration. In St. Louis, the MPO Board does not allow vote by proxy. East-West Gateway Council of Governments (St. Louis MPO) Director Les Sterman remarks on the impact of personal attendance: "The Board does not allow any proxies—if a Board member wants to cast a vote, you have to be there. When they (MPO members) are all there like that, they develop relationships that wouldn't have happened had they sent staff or a city council person with a particular interest in planning. That leads to a variety of relationships and other activities h appening at a higher profile. It's an historical artifact—from 1965, when the MPO was created. The Board has recognized the importance of their getting together as individuals. They like the opportunity to come together at the table and discuss common issues. They appreciate that opportunity."

San Francisco, California



William Millar
President,
American Public Transit Association

Bill Millar, president of the American Public Transit Association, notes that transit's success at the MPO depends on much more than just having a seat on the Board. "If transit representatives are given seats, they need to participate. The seats won't mean anything if they attend only once a year. Transit has to come whenever the MPO meets, and it has to sit on other committees —administrative, executive, and general programming committees. Transit needs to be an active participant. The benefit of deep involvement in the MPO," says Millar, "will be a cumulative benefit of the relationships built over time as the commission appreciates what transit can bring to the table. It's not only about having rights at the MPO, but also exercising their responsibility."

- **Attend regularly** Whether representing transit on the MPO Board or its committees, consistent attendance by the GM or another high-level staff member helps to establish continuity and credibility. The main benefit of attending regularly is finding opportunities to talk about and include transit in the deliberations more vigorously. Sending a different person every time dilutes the effectiveness of participating and may give the appearance that the transit operator does not value the work or the importance of the MPO. Where a transit operator sends a different staff member each month to cover an MPO committee meeting, the opportunity to develop valuable working relationships with other member agencies, elected officials, and stakeholders is lost. Even when agenda items may not speak directly to transit issues, regular attendance is important. Committees are venues for information sharing; every meeting is a chance to learn what other transportation providers are planning, what opportunities for collaboration exist, and how transit may serve the needs of a variety of agendas.

- **Chair the committee** Serving as chair of an MPO committee may be a particularly effective way to make the most of the valuable time invested in committee functions. For the MPO committees on which your agency serves, how is the committee chair selected? A few operators report that sharing in a rotational assignment as committee chair provides helpful opportunities.

- **Roll up your sleeves** A number of operators note the importance of engaging in technical work at the MPO committee level. Eric Gleason of Seattle's Metro Transit remarks, "Getting in at the technical level to support MPO planning efforts produces a better product for the policy efforts. You could choose not to support the technical effort or to marginally support it and save review and criticism for the product itself, but we prefer to get in at a technical level and influence the product." In Columbus, Ohio, transit's participation in the technical committee has brought "tremendous benefit," says former GM Ron Barnes. "Involvement on committees keeps us plugged in, and the net effect is very positive."

- **Collaborate** While Board and committee positions are a place to advance transit's interests, several operators noted the importance of fostering a collaborative ethos for working with other MPO members. Albany's Capital District Transit Authority (CDTA) staff are active in the Capital District Transportation Committee (Albany MPO), and feel they have influence on transportation decisions. Their ability to work with other regional partners has earned them respect. Says MPO Staff Director John Poorman, "CDTA has always been a strong player in the MPO process and a very collaborative player. Just witness the number of activities in the last 10 years where CDTA has helped frame issues at the MPO table and then been an instrumental implementer."

I.2 Develop MPO/SDOT Relationships and Participate in Metropolitan Planning

"You have to be in the game to win."
"Transit must maximize opportunities to make things work. We start at a disadvantage and have to work toward making our voices heard."

— Fred Hansen, GM, Tri-Met

Based on the study, the levels of personal, active GM participation in MPO processes vary greatly among transit agencies. A few transit leaders rarely attend MPO Policy Board meetings, even though their agency may have an official seat at the table. They may believe that most "real" decisions are made elsewhere, so their participation is of little value. This may be the case; however, as this report will show, there are still good reasons to get involved. Other GMs feel that transit is not a high priority in their MPOs and that they could never achieve any gains, so they elect to bypass the process. Of course, GMs who come up winners know that "you will never win anything if you aren't in the game."

Similarly, while some GMs may choose not to interact with their MPO and SDOT counterpart leaders, others work hard at fostering strong professional and personal relationships. They put aside professional and policy differences and focus on cultivating partnerships, collaborating on issues of common concern, and interacting informally on a wide range of issues, in a variety of decision-making settings.

"Being an effective player has more to do with personalities than institutional issues. That's why there's such a wide range of practices and outcomes from place to place."

—Sharon Dent, former Executive Director, Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART) (Tampa MPO)

Sharon Dent
Former Executive Director
Hillsborough Area Regional
Transit Authority

In reflecting on his days as GM of Pittsburgh's transit agency, American Public Transportation Association (APTA) President Bill Millar sees two types of payoffs. There are formal benefits like the ability to participate, to vote, and to learn the ins and outs of MPO decision making. Informal benefits include helping other members to understand what transit can and cannot do, as well as learning what else is going on in the region. Developing relationships with other MPO participants is a key benefit.

"It's a must to have personal relationships."

— Rick Walsh, former GM, Metro Transit, Seattle

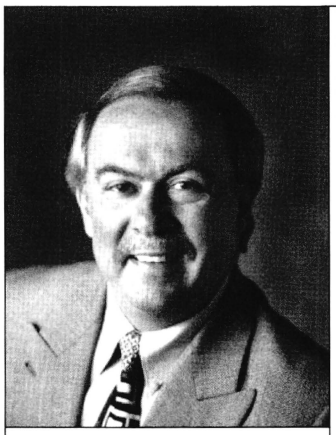
According to Millar, "One of the great benefits of being on the MPO is the camaraderie that was developed with members of the commission. Even other members from outlying counties who didn't think much about transit before came to understand the real issues facing transit and some of the real contributions transit could make. I don't know that I made them raving transit fans, but I made them supportive when they could be. Before that, they would have dismissed transit."

Some MPO directors go out of their way to support transit. Bill Habig, Executive Director of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (Columbus MPO), explains why he and his agency make extra efforts to help their transit agency, Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA). "Other MPOs will go part of the way, but they don't go to the extent we do. Other areas have transit agencies that are well-funded authorities compared to ours. We've seen the need to do this because COTA is so far behind the power curve in terms of being funded." St. Louis MPO Director Les Sterman expresses the same basic sentiments: "Transit is different because there are always money problems. We [the MPO] think we need to work harder on their behalf than for MoDOT, which has formula funding and is funded very well. We've worked more closely with transit than with others."

Transit operators elsewhere might try to convince their MPO directors that they need special help, and MPO directors might consider whether they need to give additional attention to their transit partners if they are under-funded. Barry Barker, Louisville's GM, reports that the MPO has consistently ranked his agency's light rail transit (LRT) project their number one priority, and Sharon Dent notes that "sometimes the MPO prioritizes our LRT higher than my own Board."

"RTD's [Denver's transit agency] involvement with DRCOG [Denver's MPO] is essential and very beneficial. Our relationship is excellent. We are equal partners, enjoy productive give-and-take, and are together on all the main issues. We present a unified front in advocating the metropolitan area's case to CDOT... One of my main responsibilities is to improve and maintain the relationship with DRCOG as much as possible. I work on this in many ways."

— Cal Marsella, RTD GM



Cal Marsella
General Manager
Regional Transportation District

In Salt Lake City, John Inglish, GM of Utah Transit Authority (UTA), says his agency prepares a large amount of data and analyses to advance transit's case in the technical committees. Inglish also advances their issues directly with local elected officials and aggressively cultivates their support (see Section I.4), which helps to secure MPO approvals.

A range of philosophies, motivations, and strategies about MPO participation are expressed below.

Dick White Establishes New Paradigms at Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

"Andre Agassi was right when he said, "image is everything." You must work hard to build a positive image inside your community and then work even harder to maintain it. The general manager must take personal responsibility to do this and to develop an "army of staff foot soldiers" that work on it, as well. At WMATA, we are building the case that Metro matters to the quality of life for all residents of our region, and that the region cannot maintain its health unless the regional transit system is in good health."

— Dick White, WMATA GM

MPO Transportation Director for the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, Ron Kirby, reports that things changed at his MPO with the arrival of WMATA GM Dick White as a voting member of the Policy Board. "Prior to the 1991 ISTEA legislation, WMATA had been an ex-officio member of the MPO Board. However, WMATA used the ISTEA legislation to insist on greater transit participation through voting membership on the MPO and other operators in the Region agreed to have WMATA represent them. Since his arrival at WMATA, Dick White has represented the agency on the MPO and has been an active participant in MPO activities."

In White's own words, having a seat at the table has been extremely beneficial. "Previously, WMATA was represented on the MPO by one of our Board members, who would be wearing the hat of their local government as well as the WMATA hat. I convinced the Board to designate me as the official agency representative on the MPO. This allowed us to be more aggressive in ensuring that WMATA's interests were pursued. In addition, I used other WMATA Board members who were on the MPO, but acting as representatives of their local governments, to help me pursue and champion the WMATA agenda. Also, we helped to organize our natural stakeholders (environmentalists, smart growth champions, etc.) to actively champion the transit agenda. The overall benefits have been that transit issues have been elevated on the MPO agenda, and we intend to keep it that way."

White personally represents his agency and comes to all the key MPO meetings, which Kirby thinks is a good sign. "WMATA's tendency prior to becoming a voting member was to be represented at MPO meetings by mid-level staff. When they became a voting member, the question was who would represent WMATA. At the outset, they had senior staff or a WMATA Board member represent the agency but then Dick White arrived, and he said, 'I'm going to represent the agency.'" Kirby characterized White as a "forward-looking GM, one who deals with the elected officials, the states, and others as opposed to staying back at the shop and checking on trains. He comes regularly to MPO meetings and expresses WMATA's positions."

Kirby's assessment is consistent with Dick White's personal philosophy. "I work hard at establishing and cultivating personal relationships with as many elected officials as possible, and with each of the three state DOTs," White says. "I make sure that we have designated staff to cover as many of the stakeholder groups in the region as is possible." Although White is operating in what may be the most institutionally challenging metropolitan area in the United States, he does not give up. "Due to the enormous complexity of our region, it seems that it is an almost impossible task to cover all the Federal, state, local, and private sector bases and keep WMATA in good standing in their eyes. However, I spend an enormous amount of my time on this, and I require that my senior staff also spend much of their time doing this as well."

According to WMATA Deputy General Manager of Operations Rick Stevens, "Once ISTEA said transit should have representation on MPOs, we were the first ones out of the box...As a result, we've been able to play a stronger role in promoting transit over SOV solutions. Our Board members now understand the MPO process better and are bringing a transit perspective to the MPO. We're a big voice at the table." A May 2003 analysis indicated that close to 60 percent of total regional transportation expenditures would be spent on public transit, with highways receiving close to 40 percent.

Shirley DeLibero: Making a Silk Purse from a Sow's Ear

"I can't imagine not being at the table."

— Shirley DeLibero

Despite formidable obstacles and a local tradition favoring road building and widening, former Houston Metro President and CEO Shirley DeLibero has managed to turn things around for transit in Houston. The region's first rail system has opened for service, and local officials now take transit much more seriously, seeing it as a major piece of the solution to regional traffic congestion.

While DeLibero attributed much of the credit to her staff, local observers believe she had much to do with transit's success. Besides taking full advantage of opportunities to participate—and even creating some new ones (see Section I.4) — DeLibero cites several personal strategies of potential interest to GMs elsewhere.

1. *You need to be a part of [the MPO process] and be persistent. Trying to break the barrier and get involved is not something you can delegate, at least not early on. You have to be there.*

2. *You also have to include the other MPO members. My monthly report [at the MPO policy board meetings] keeps them informed about what's going on. Just being there is not enough.*

3. *You have to be vocal, be honest, and voice an opinion. People appreciate it when you're honest and they see you are not trying to beat them up, but that you have legitimate concerns.*

4. *You need to become personally involved and build those friendships. Pick up the phone, invite them to lunch or something---it's been very helpful to have these personal relationships.*

5. *You have to make an effort. You can't wait for them to come to you—you have to go to them.*

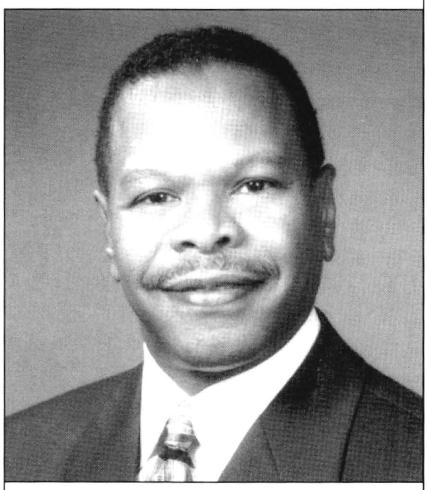
6. *And finally, you should share the credit. For example, we just brought out some hybrid electric buses. We retrofitted them and the MPO helped us get the dollars for this through the state. As a result, we put the MPO logo on the buses as well as ours, as a collaborative effort to clean the air. They appreciated that name recognition, and we got the buses. You need to be inclusive in the things you do.*

Alan Clark, DeLibero's previous MPO counterpart, Director of Transportation Planning for the Houston-Galveston Area Council, reports being "very satisfied" with his relationships with Shirley and Houston Metro.

Dallas, Texas

Ron Barnes Seeks Mobility Manager Role; MPO Participation is a Strategy

In Columbus, former Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) GM Ron Barnes aspired to be a mobility manager for his region, not just a transportation provider. He felt that being a mobility manager opened the door to all kinds of opportunities, and believed his agency had to be involved in the planning process.



Ron Barnes
Former General Manager
Central Ohio Transit Authority

Five years ago, as a new GM, he convened a retreat of community leaders to deliberate what the vision of COTA should be and on the current perception of COTA. The stark response was that "transit is invisible." Seeking to change this perception, Barnes became an active MPO member and initiated involvement in other community activities. He realized that transit needed to be at the front end of the process, not left to solve problems when it was too late. As a result of the planning retreat, Barnes started talking about transit in terms of broader mobility management.

As a voting member of the MPO, Barnes was very active in this forum, and his staff participated in all the key committees. Planning Director Mike Greene reports that this involvement is "...absolutely a benefit. Ron can raise the level of consciousness to make members aware of issues important to COTA. There is also an advantage when decisions are made regarding flexible funds."

Barnes says the benefits of proactive involvement include showing people that transit means more than a bus, and that engaging MPO stakeholders earlier in the planning process can build-in the transit perspective when first considering new developments and planning opportunities. He wanted COTA to be part of any transportation issue being addressed in the community.

Barnes and his MPO counterpart had breakfast monthly to talk about their priorities for the coming month. They had a common network and theme. The fact that the Columbus MPO head, Bill Habig values transit made it easier for Barnes to participate effectively. After Barnes led COTA in creating a vision and mission, he enlisted MPO support to integrate it into the long range plan. Because of their close relationship, Barnes reports that "things that I do are not threatening to him; I'm more of a partner."

Fred Hansen Cites Speaking With One Voice as a Major Benefit

Another transit leader who appreciates the benefits of personal participation in the MPO is Portland's Fred Hansen, GM of Tri-Met.

To ensure transit is a full player, Hansen participates personally and works to build relationships with the other key participants. Personal relationships and credibility can really make a difference. "This is something that I can make happen for transit," he says. On the I-5 Trade Corridor Task Force, for example, Hansen recalls, "there was not a single person I didn't know fairly well before they were appointed to the group. I was able to have the relationships and credibility to make specific points and have the members consider and accommodate our perspectives." MPO (Metropolitan Service District) Planning Director Andy Cotugno agrees. "The Policy Board is the key decision-making body for the MPO. It's where other local public and elected officials gather, and if they are not committed to transit, then the MPO won't do much for transit. It is the key place for the GM to be active, and if the GM is not active, then it shows he doesn't care about the role of transit. Fred is a full voting member of the Policy Board. He is very active and respected and is effective in carrying transit's message."

One of the main benefits of participation, Hansen feels, is the opportunity to work with the other regional partners to hash out issues and speak with one voice. This allows the MPO members to speak to the Region's congressional delegation with one voice and to communicate clear priorities. "We have a regional voice," says Hansen, "This is essential."

Relationships with state DOTs are also very important. Almost all transit operators interviewed felt that the state was, or should be, an important funding source as well as an essential ally in joint endeavors. Several GMs reported good relationships with their SDOT, although this was sometimes qualified.

One operator who characterized the relationship as "excellent" is Paul Skoutelas, the Chief Executive Officer of the Port Authority of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh's primary transit agency. He noted that he and his staff work with the DOT and cultivate relationships at two different levels. First, the Port Authority works with Pennsylvania DOT's district offices to manage the impact on transit service of highway construction activities, including detours and road closures. The Port Authority maintains a second set of relationships with the planning and programming staff at the DOT's Harrisburg headquarters, which oversees the state's transit program and grantmaking. "This relationship is very important," says Skoutelas, "We see them as partners and collaborators. We receive large amounts of state dollars."

I.3 Cultivate Relationships with Additional Partners and Stakeholders

It Takes Two to Tango

Savvy general managers and transit agency staff know it is smart to reach out to key stakeholders beyond MPO and state DOT participants. They understand that by building as many strong relationships and alliances as they can beyond the traditional MPO players, they can increase their influence inside the MPO. If you have not already established a constructive rapport with leaders of the predominant citizen and environmental groups, the business establishment, the media, and Federal agencies in your region, as well as local elected officials, consider the many diverse benefits of such collaboration discussed below.

The type of interaction advocated goes well beyond formal public involvement activities in which many of you already engage. It includes more far-reaching strategies like developing personal relationships, promoting transit at every possible opportunity, and proactively identifying partnering possibilities for joint endeavors.

Often, the obstacles to developing such relationships have to do with perceptions and communications. For example, one transit representative told us they stay away from civic and citizen groups unless they are invited to speak because "instead of helping you, they usually bash you." However, the majority of potential partners mentioned above are natural allies of transit, if carefully nurtured. Participants from outlying areas may represent a special challenge if their area is not served by transit or if they do not view transit as relevant to them. Still, persistent efforts by transit leaders can neutralize hostilities, or even convert foes into occasional supporters, as APTA's Bill Millar explained in Section I.2.

Citizen and Environmental Groups

Even before Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) triggered an increased emphasis on participatory planning, many of you instinctively knew there were enormous benefits in collaborating with citizen and environmental groups and were sponsoring more vigorous public involvement programs than your colleagues at MPOs and state DOTs. You still appear to be in the vanguard of this movement and, as the examples below illustrate, are enjoying many benefits of those efforts.

- **Enhanced legitimacy** Public involvement adds credibility to planning processes and decisionmaking by the very fact of having been participatory. In a sense, the arguments for and against citizen participation are similar to those for democracy. Both can be shortsighted, full of surprises, and a source of delay. Over time, however, they yield decisions and results that better address the needs and concerns of the community and, thus, that are considerably more popular and sustainable.

- **Building support for transit among local elected officials** In several metropolitan areas, citizens have been instrumental in influencing decisionmakers to support transit. San Francisco provides a good example.

Bay Area Citizens Eliminate Transit Funding Shortfall

Citizen and environmental groups in the Bay Area have long been staunch advocates for transit, supporting numerous referenda to increase transit funding. Going one step further several years ago, they actually persuaded the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the Bay Area's MPO, to use more discretionary funding to fully fund the transit capital rehabilitation needs of the existing system—an inspirational illustration of the value of citizen partners.

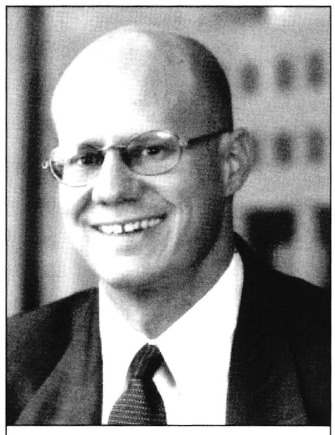
During the 1998 Regional Transportation Plan update, MTC identified major capital funding shortfalls for both transit capital rehabilitation and street and road needs. They approved a recommendation to fund 75 percent of the transit shortfall with discretionary money and, in the same way, to fund a smaller percentage of the shortfall for street and road needs. Environmental and citizen groups responded vigorously that MTC was not going far enough to help transit, demanding that 100 percent of the shortfall be funded. After intense controversy, MTC changed their policy, requiring that the Plan be amended to cover the total transit shortfall within three months. This commitment to fund 100 percent of transit's capital shortfall was retained through the 2001 Plan update and is certain to be a major issue when the Plan is revisited. (Current MPO proposals fund only 25 percent of the transit capital shortfall, which has grown substantially over the past three years due to significantly constrained revenue forecasts, although that does not diminish the significance of the original citizen victory.)

Dorothy Dugger
Deputy General Manager
Bay Area Rapid Transit

Like all transit agencies in the Bay Area, BART is well aware of the value of their citizen group allies. Deputy General Manager Dorothy Dugger observes: "It's very important in this funding environment that elected officials hear from constituents we seek to serve that BART is relevant and valued. Our popularity with the public helps. When the elected officials understand this, it is positive. Some elected officials see that BART's popularity can help carry a new funding program which requires voter approval, so they include us; there has not been a local transportation sales tax initiative that went to ballot that didn't include BART. It's very compelling when we go to the elected officials and have 84 percent popularity with constituents."

Jacob Snow Enhances Transit Credibility Through Public Involvement

On November 5, 2002, voters from Las Vegas and Clark County approved 53 to 47 percent a proposal for the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC) to raise $2.6 billion over the next 25 years to pay for roads, highways, and an expanded transit system through taxes on developers, aviation fuel, and retail sales. In an election year where the majority of such measures failed, this is a noteworthy accomplishment. Transit's increased credibility, largely the result of RTC General Manager Jacob Snow, is perceived as a major factor contributing to the measure's successful outcome.



Jacob Snow
General Manager
Regional Transportation
Commission of Southern Nevada

Snow's strategy of boosting citizen involvement to enhance transit's legitimacy is noted by a local participant: "Jacob has pushed community involvement in these decisions to a much higher level than before. Transit decisions were previously seen as a black box—they were made only within the context of transit operations, not within the broader set of transit needs. Analysis was never well understood or explained... Transit said 'This is what the MPO came up with or what the consultants said.' This frustrated people."

"At the political level, the transit side of things has gained a lot of ground. I think because Jacob Snow has increased community involvement in decisionmaking, lots of responsibility has been shifted from the staff level to a higher level, where it should be. Elected officials and community leadership now drive those decisions. We're getting more effective decisions now about solving transport problems."

- **Increased Support for Implementation** It has been well documented over the past two decades that effective public involvement strengthens the ability of agencies to implement their decisions. Citizen support is especially essential when substantive change is contemplated – a new fixed guideway, more transit-oriented mobility, progressive regional visions of smart growth, more flexible funding directed toward transit, or the political will to implement the tough measures needed

to achieve air quality goals. It is much easier to realize bold new initiatives or to tackle tough political problems when you have solid public backing.

In Columbus, Ohio, "The regional transit agency, COTA, is very good at being a proponent for transit. COTA's director, Ron [Barnes] is on the road all the time speaking to groups about the importance of transit and how it can impact quality-of-life in the region. Several staff members aid him in that process. It's had a positive effect."

— Bill Habig, Executive Director, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (Columbus MPO)

Experience with local financing initiatives, particularly those requiring referenda, also strongly suggests that measures have greater chances for success when preceded by effective participatory planning. By ensuring that community members have a role in developing the transit program, your organization can make sure that community concerns are aired and addressed and can increase the public's interest and stake in actively campaigning for the program's passage. Charlotte provides a clear example.

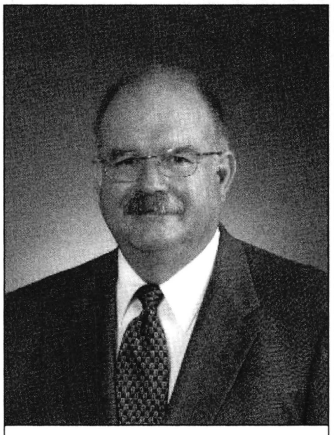
Charlotte Citizens Help Transit Gain $50 Million/Year

Charlotte's 1998 passage of a transit sales tax generating about $50 million/year was a huge victory. It has generated extensive favorable attention in the transit industry. No one thought the initiative would pass on the first try because most transit operators have to go to the voters several times before they succeed. Why was this case different?

Local observers point to strong support from a popular mayor, very robust help from a growth-minded business community, the program's compelling connection with land use, and responsive, widespread public involvement that led to decisive citizen backing.

Tim Gibbs, former transit planning manager for the Charlotte Area Transit System and former MPO coordinator, confirms that extensive public involvement was a key factor in the measure's success. "Citizens were involved from day one. There were a number of public meetings and a successful media campaign to get media on our side. Charlotte's city communications department set up a website for the referendum and led the effort. (Note: this was before the transit agency, Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), was established as a separate body.) An e-mail newsletter frequently informed and energized key business and community groups as well as individual citizens. The public realized the measure would mean taxing themselves, but they saw it as either 'put up' or 'shut up', and that's why it passed."

Charlotte's new GM, Ron Tober, has continued Charlotte's participatory tradition, noting that, "We held over 300 public meetings on planning and service improvements. In some places we have a good reception; in others, a bad one, depending on whether they like what you are doing." Others report that Ron is engaged in local speaking engagements most weeknights. When he has conflicting invitations, he sends top staff to cover all of the events.



Ron Tober
General Manager
Charlotte Area Transit System

- **Improved planning** Good participatory planning produces transportation policies and plans that are more tailored and responsive to community needs. It is the best way to obtain information on community goals, needs, and impacts. Citizens may also identify additional alternatives or even completely new solutions. Seattle Metro, for example, reports that: "We use them (the Citizens Advisory Transit Committee and the Elderly and Handicapped Committee) extensively in the development of service changes, and we form stakeholder groups around capital investments. We always have extensive public involvement efforts for both groups."

A strong, proactive media relations program is usually essential in building public support for transit in the region.

"We deal with the media all the time, by visiting editorial boards of the major newspapers and maintaining close relationships with all the reporters who cover us. We have full-time staff devoted to media relations; we work those issues very hard. We track column inches of press coverage and think about what this would cost in advertising dollars."

— Fred Hansen, General Manager, Tri-Met

The most important ingredients of effective public involvement are to be as open, honest, fair, and responsive as possible in your dealings with citizen and environmental groups. It's also important to be proactive and to put a great deal of effort into the up-front design of your public involvement programs.

"Public participation is critical in all elements of the planning and project development process for major transit and highway projects. The 'easy' part is to get public participation during the public hearings. The 'hard' part is to get public input at the planning stage when the critical decisions on the project are being made."

— Joel Ettinger, Regional Administrator, Region V, FTA

Joel Ettinger
Regional Administrator
Region V,
Federal Transit Administration

Business Groups

The dynamics of business support for transit have not been studied extensively, so little is known about them. Why, for example, did business leaders in Atlanta become staunch supporters of Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) back in the early 1970s while their counterparts in many similar cities in that region remained indifferent at that time? Certainly, demographics and regional vision are major factors, but transit leaders' attention to the business community undoubtedly played a role as well.

Some transit operators have recently begun to reach out to business leaders and developers when planning transit improvements or efforts to nurture transit-oriented development (TOD).

In some cases, a business community skeptical of transit benefits may pose a significant barrier. Some strategies your colleagues have used to overcome this appear at the end of this section. Specific benefits of cultivating relations with and support of business interests include:

- **Assistance with funding** Business may support transit because it feels transit will enhance their city's image as a "world class" city, reduce congestion, and/or improve access to the workplaces for employees. Business leadership is often essential in helping transit agencies win support for new financing initiatives, especially referendums (for example, in Atlanta, Charlotte, Seattle, Portland, and other cities) but also for new taxes and other measures. In Pittsburgh several years ago, for example, business leaders helped to lobby successfully for new supplemental state taxes dedicated to transit. Although the research uncovered no examples of transit agencies that had enlisted business support to increase flexible funding, the previous examples suggest the potential for such a strategy.

  Without the support of the business community, it is often difficult to implement a major transit initiative, especially if new funding sources are involved. When business leaders are not on board, they sometimes lead efforts to defeat these initiatives.

- **Implementation of TOD concepts** Transit agencies in Atlanta, Charlotte, Portland, and a few other regions are avidly courting businesses and developers to secure their participation in TOD, joint development, and related transit supportive land use ventures.

  In Charlotte a local group has organized as the Business Community for Regional Transportation Solutions and is sponsoring forums to examine transit options in five different communities where bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors have been identified. They have looked at each corridor, looked at potential station opportunities, and have also debated BRT versus LRT. Says former Transit Planning Manager Tim Gibbs, "The development community themselves said they want to understand this and to have an open and honest discussion about how to make it work."

Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) Woos Developers And Other Business Interests

Over time, MARTA's relationship with the Atlanta business community has evolved. While the business community has traditionally played a strong role with general transit system support, it now proactively promotes land use and development programs intended to increase ridership. Recognizing that their transit-oriented development (TOD) plans cannot succeed without the help of developers and other business interests, MARTA hired an employee totally dedicated to TOD, and much of the staffer's time is spent engaging the business community.

Atlanta's business community has historically been quite active and unusually generous in supporting transit-related issues. Most recently, the Metro Atlanta Chamber joined with several Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) to release an RFP for transit market research, exploring issues such as how to attract new riders and how to change transit to attract choice riders. Another initiative, the I-285 Transit Corridor Study, is able to move forward into National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) because of a $1.2 million contribution from two CIDs in the area. This special funding filled the last gap in a $6 million study. MARTA is on the steering committee of this MPO-led project, representing a mutually beneficial partnership of three major interests—business, transit, and the MPO.

A sampling of strategies used by transit agencies follows. Each business community is different, of course, and will require approaches tailored to local circumstances to harness the key role business can play and optimize their participation.

1. **Be involved in business groups, in leadership positions if possible.**

   Many of you participate actively in local business groups. The Chamber of Commerce was cited most frequently in this review, but a multitude of other organizations also were named. In Denver, the Regional Transit District's General Manager Cal Marsella participates regularly in all the Chambers of Commerce in his region, as do several WMATA senior officials in their region. In Salt Lake City, the transit agency is invited to participate in the Chamber of Commerce as an ex-officio member and the general manager currently sits on the board of the most important committee; his staff participates in almost all of the other committees.

Numerous Chambers visit successful sister cities once a year to absorb lessons they can apply in their own communities. Many GMs recalled steering Chamber selections toward cities with good transit systems and ensuring that a significant part of the trip focuses on visits with local transit officials and supportive business leaders.

"We want to be a part of any transportation issue being addressed in our community. Here, the Chamber of Commerce has an Infrastructure Committee. Transit was not part of it three years ago. That changed because I have regular meetings with the President of the Chamber and she was involved when we talked about the vision for transit. Now, I'm on that Committee...I asked to be on the Committee. I also asked to be on the Board, but this hasn't happened yet. I think I need to be on the Chamber Board; we are part of business and we want people to think of us that way. We can entice business to our area."

— Ron Barnes, former General Manager, COTA

2. **Make frequent contacts with business leaders and presentations to business groups.**

   Almost all transit operators make presentations to local business groups and try to cultivate personal relationships with at least a few of their leaders. John Inglish believes that, "If you are not perceived well in the business community, you will have political problems." Through frequent interactions, he has also found new opportunities for transit, such as the region's downtown transit/parking validation program, where business either validates the parking for their customers or gives them a token.

3. **When possible, add business leaders to existing boards and committees.**

   Santa Clara County enjoys excellent relations with their local business community, which has assisted in the passage of three local funding measures. Their Citizens Advisory Committee has representatives from the Chamber, as well as from a local labor council and a group of large manufacturers. In Portland, Fred Hansen worked behind the scenes to get the president of their Chamber appointed to the transit agency's board, explaining that: "It's very important to have

business members on transit agency boards because transit people sometimes get classified as 'social engineers' and it's important to have business people who can articulate the business case for transit."

Federal Agencies

Federal agencies have field staff to help you. Most transit operators reported satisfaction with FTA in obtaining grants and interpreting regulations and guidance. In locations where there is no FTA office, several respondents wished FTA could have greater involvement in the MPO planning process.

Therese McMillan, Deputy Director of Policy for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (Bay Area MPO) speculates that: "I think it [the FTA office there] has worked to our advantage... When things are in a gray area and you can have face-to-face meetings, this helps move things along. Transit grantees may have differing opinions on FTA's proximity, but I would guess most people see it as a benefit."

FTA Changes the Rules for Chicago

"The Chicago FTA/FHWA Metropolitan Planning Office has been invaluable to our planning process. Their close proximity makes possible a greater participation with our committees and task forces. Having them active is a tremendous advantage to us. They better understand local issues while providing us with a consistent source of information from the Federal agencies."

— Don Kopec, Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) Deputy Executive Director.

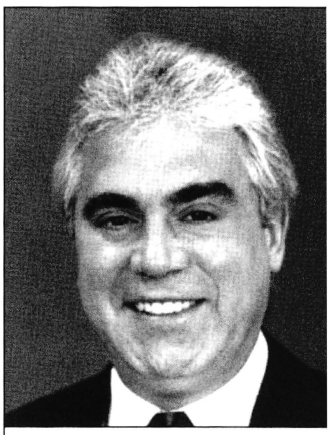
A notable example of FTA assistance is the change of CMAQ eligibility rules regarding station rehabilitation. As discussed in Section III.2, CMAQ is the major source of flexible funding for transit agencies. When the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) embarked on a program of major station rehabilitation, they counted on significant CMAQ funding. To their dismay, FHWA/FTA initially refused to allow major station renovations as an eligible CMAQ expense because they claimed such projects would not increase ridership, one of the program's criterias.

FTA field officials thought station rehabs should be eligible because a vastly improved station with enhanced amenities could attract new riders, especially if several or all the stations along a line were improved. Washington officials plus FHWA disagreed, so FTA field officials gathered nationwide evidence that supported CTA's case. They also worked closely with FHWA and FTA Headquarters officials to change the guidance. Ultimately, they succeeded. Subsequently, a joint FHWA/FTA guidance document was issued allowing sponsors of major station rehabilitation programs to compete for CMAQ if such projects can be shown to increase transit ridership and improve air quality.

The result of the new guidance will provide $20 million in CMAQ funding to pay for major Chicago station renovations in their first year, and local officials can ask for more in subsequent years. This sets a new precedent that could greatly benefit other regions whose transit systems have aging stations (such as New York, Philadelphia, and Boston).

Overall, relationships between transit and FHWA are less developed and more project-dependent, yet there are places where this relationship is a close and advantageous one.

Several transit operators registered dismay about conflicting advice and guidance received by local transit agencies from FHWA and FTA. These conflicts range from divergent revenue forecasting guidance to different methods of estimating capital costs of projects (that would disadvantage transit) to differing perspectives about cost overruns. Consistent guidance and procedures between these two Federal agencies would be widely applauded and appreciated by transit officials.



Barry Barker
Executive Director
Transit Authority of River City

"The lack of a level playing field is a major obstacle. One example is the way FTA and FHWA require cost estimating. In Louisville, there is an LRT on the table with an estimated cost of $751 million. This cost estimate is in year-of-expenditure dollars and includes heavy mitigation costs to satisfy FTA procedures. At the same time, the region is assessing two major highway bridges, estimated at $1.7 billion, but this estimate is in current dollars with no mitigation, in accordance with FHWA procedures, making the cost of the bridges artificially lower in comparison with the LRT because of the differing estimating procedures."

— Barry Barker, Executive Director, TARC

A few transit respondents felt that the transit-friendliness across FHWA offices was uneven, sometimes promoting highway expansion even after regional plans and decisions supported other modes. One GM cited FHWA advocacy for an additional highway lane in available ROW next to an interstate highway that had previously been reserved for LRT. Feeling this was inappropriate intervention, the GM claimed that, "this even got hair up on the backs of people who were pro-road because they didn't like being told by the Feds what to do." Other transit officials reported favorable experiences with FHWA. Little Rock GM Keith Jones, for example, reported that FHWA does a better job of being considerate of transit now than in past years and characterized them as "a potential ally for any transit system."

Finally, the recent decisions of the United States Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit on the Legacy Parkway Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and 114th South Interchange Environmental Assessment (EA) in Utah reinforces the need for more Federal involvement and support in corridor planning than has been characterized in prior relationships. The court cited the lack of Federal oversight in all phases of project development as one of the main reasons both projects received adverse decisions. In the Legacy Parkway Project, for example, the court concluded that the Federal agencies failed to verify the cost estimates in the screening phase of project development. Although these were highway cases, the transit industry is cognizant that close involvement of FTA and FHWA field staff in planning and project development processes with the MPO will continue to be important to avoid future litigation.

Elected and Agency Officials

Elected officials and the public agency managers that report to them are key targets for collaborative relationship building. Clearly, it is in your best interests to cultivate all local elected officials who have decision-making authority over issues that might affect you. Sometimes this may be an uphill battle, but it needs to be joined.

Decentralization of decisionmaking in some regions, particularly larger ones like New York, the Bay Area, and Seattle, has increased the influence of local, parochial politics on regional decision-making processes envisioned to be guided by consideration of objective criteria within a regional context. Real decisionmaking in such places often takes place outside the MPO in other arenas like county commissions. In another region, one respondent complained that their project selection is so "highly political" due to state domination, it is impossible to give any influence to objective evaluation criteria. In several other states, powerful highway construction lobbies are cited as a severe obstacle. In still another state, political party differences among elected officials comprising the MPO and transit board was cited as a barrier to effective cooperation.

"The first barrier is the fact that we don't have enough votes. The process is highway-dominated and there are certain dollar amounts that are established ahead of time. Transit is regularly voted down at the table... We get support, but nothing compared to what is given to roads. The situation is controlled by people who have been in the business 15 to 20 years - their interests are roads. Roads. Roads. Roads."

— A transit GM

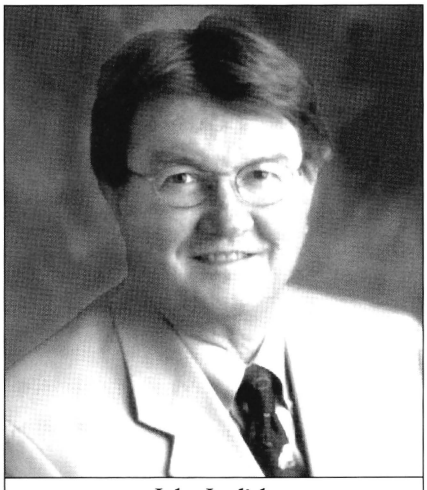
A large number of transit agencies cited local governments outside central cities as a barrier, charging that MPO Boards are often filled with pro-highway interests and MPO committees are filled with highway-supportive public works directors and traffic engineers. This is an especially difficult problem when there is a significant mismatch between your service area boundaries and the coverage of the MPO planning area.

A final observation is that some MPOs operate in an environment that is fairly well insulated from partisan politics, while others must be key political actors, even to the point of actively campaigning for their patrons. A transit manager's independence is determined largely by its institutional location—whether it is part of a local government that is a member of the MPO, or an independent agency with an elected or appointed board.

Regardless of the political setting and climate, it still seems prudent to cultivate good relationships with all local elected and agency officials as much as possible to advance transit in the region.

Transit leaders have identified many successful strategies for dealing with these political realities. Former Seattle Metro Transit GM Rick Walsh worked hard to develop relationships of trust with his local officials. "When we came into a public forum and I told them a number, they trusted it was accurate. This comes from, first, being available to brief them on issues—I did it personally and with staff, and second, usually having personal relationships with one or more people on those bodies," Walsh said.

Salt Lake City's John Inglish engages in the local political process because it helps his agency get projects into the plan for funding. One key strategy is on-site and off-site tours and education:



John Inglish
General Manager
Utah Transit Authority

"We take elected officials to other cities —10 to 15 off-site tours per year. We take 20 to 30 officials to systems in California, Oregon, St. Louis—wherever a system demonstrates something that might help our communities. This has been very effective for us." He also makes an effort to be open and responsive to the concerns of local elected officials and has a staff of governmental relations people who work with them. Inglish sees his agency's role as making the mayor's community more successful, as a partner in trying to solve problems and make a contribution.

"John [Inglish] spends lots of time cultivating local government. He is pretty good at that. He really understands the MPO process and knows who makes those decisions. Utah is a small state. Urban officials in the state legislature make the decision—John has staff that works with them. He knows where the money comes from. He works on getting support for his operation--not just city and county staff and elected officials, but at the state legislative level and the Governor's office too. John's a good old boy at that."

— Will Jefferies, former Director, Wasatch Front Regional Council, Salt Lake City

Sometimes organizational changes can improve relationships. For example, when Jacob Snow began as General Manager of the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, which is the MPO and also houses the transit agency, he worked to establish greater separation and independence between the transit operation and the MPO.

This change lent greater credibility both to transit and the MPO process. Previously, without the firewalls established by Snow, some observers felt transit was using its institutional closeness to the MPO inappropriately to secure transportation funding for transit operations. Public works representatives in particular perceived the MPO as captive to the transit operator. According to a local planning official, "Jacob has made the Transportation Commission a more independent entity...It's more effective now...The separation means that elected officials are more supportive of making sure transit gets a fair allocation of resources. It's the same in the community—they're starting to buy into the fact that transit needs to be part of the transportation solution. [Before,]...you were either pro-streets or -highway or pro-transit, and there was no ability to get to compromise on those issues."

Snow views the local governments that make up the MPO/Transit Board as "probably our most important relationships and most important customers. They are the ones that build or allow right-of-way for transit systems to operate in, and they're also our bosses." To date, Snow has not yet convinced the public works directors and traffic engineers in the MPO committees of the need for transit to be part of the region's future. He advocates greater representation from planners to help balance the playing field.

"...if we could just get a balanced land use, air quality and transportation process, we might really be able to do something. To be optimally effective, we need more input from planners than public works at the MPO...the last thing you want is only traffic engineers making those decisions, you need planners to look at the larger picture."

— Jacob Snow, RTC General Manager, Las Vegas transit agency

Finally, cross-fertilizing top staff between agencies can alleviate friction and provide new opportunities. Senior transit people often come from other agencies and vice versa—and this can be healthy. A good example is Portland GM Fred Hansen, who previously served as Deputy Administrator of U.S. EPA and Director of Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality. His knowledge acquired from those experiences has been quite valuable to Portland. It has enabled him to advance transit in unique ways. In his words, "My role is larger regarding how to deal with congressional issues—it's relevant to road and transit issues. I know many people on the Federal side who are still involved with these decisions."

I.4 Engage in Broader Issues

As extremely busy and beleaguered officials charged with operating and expanding effective transit services, you might ask why in the world you would want to take on additional responsibilities that may seem peripheral to your main mission. There are at least two reasons to do so.

First, becoming engaged can often help you steer policies, programs, and decisions in ways that benefit transit. It gives you opportunities to show other parties at the table how transit can contribute to solving broader regional transportation challenges. For example, in regions struggling to meet air quality standards, some parties at the MPO table may not realize the essential contribution transit can make. Making them fully aware of transit's role can result in increased direct funding, preferential policies, or funding by others of programs that will greatly benefit your transit service.

Second, getting involved in broader issues can establish your GM and agency as leaders in community problem-solving. By assuming a broader role in regional activities, you may develop enhanced credibility and respect from other regional leaders, and that may produce greater influence in future MPO decisionmaking and other political forums, as previously discussed in Section I.2 and below.

An interesting analogy relates to people who work in private sector consulting. Some view themselves solely as technical specialists or managers and claim they have no time to engage in "marketing." The most successful consultants, however, recognize the value of being attuned to the bigger picture and will work hard to anticipate additional client needs with which their firms might assist, even if this involves extra personal efforts to meet commitments. This section encourages you to be proactive "marketers" in non-traditional business areas in addition to everything else you do.

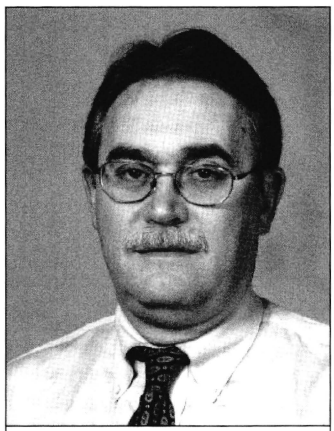
Research on the 25 transit operators interviewed for this report found that opportunities for transit agencies to engage in broader debates—and to win important benefits in the process—included issues such as policy and program development for ITS, air quality, car pooling, HOV strategies, urban development, national (and personal) security, and special events. There are undoubtedly many other fruitful opportunities to expand your agency's role in MPO discussions.

Intelligent Transportation Systems

Recent transportation authorizations have amply funded ITS research and demonstration activities, as well as broadened the eligibility of current programs to include support of ITS. Because ITS is intended to support both highways and transit, there have been many incentives for transit agencies to be fully involved in planning and programming ITS.

For example, the MBTA in Boston reports that it worked to ensure that monies programmed for ITS were not focused on a single modal application. The agency supported flexibility in order to preserve opportunities to pursue ITS projects that benefit transit service.

In Albany, the CDTA stepped in as a strong partner in the project to install a new progressive traffic signal system on New York State Route 5 (NY5), the most heavily traveled transit corridor in the region. The state DOT had been leading this effort to replace signals at over 70 intersections in the corridor and to provide transit signal priority at many of those. However, the DOT was unable to advance the project to engineering as quickly as local officials wished. At the MPO's request, CDTA took over the lead (via contract) and got the project ready for construction, even through 95 percent of the work benefited road users. According to Albany MPO Staff Director John Poorman, "This action increased CDTA's stature at our table because they were not just showing up to advance their own agenda."



Rick Stevens
Deputy General Manager
for Operations
Washington Metropolitan
Area Transit Authority

WMATA participates faithfully in the MPO's ITS Committee, and they are beginning to see some benefits. Deputy General Manager for Operations, Rick Stevens, seems optimistic. "At least we get a word about transit to the table—otherwise they would just do it [ITS] for highways. As it is, we have not done much yet in the way of signal prioritization for transit, but we're beginning to [see progress]."

In Arlington County, WMATA has worked with the County and Arlington Transit to enhance bus service along Columbia Pike. Known as Pike Ride, the service improvements include plans for traffic signal priority to speed buses, as well as provide real-time arrival and departure information. This initiative, as with all Federal-aid projects, was funded through decisions made by the MPO.

In another ITS area, WMATA provided leadership that has established the foundation for a regional electronic fare collection system. In 1999, WMATA's SmarTrip card made Washington, D.C. the first U.S. city to implement a smart card system for its transit service. WMATA has also enabled riders eligible for monthly employee transit benefits to receive their benefits—called Smart Benefits—electronically. To facilitate deployment of the SmarTrip card across agencies in the capital region, WMATA and its regional transit partners won Federal discretionary dollars to develop a Regional Customer Service Center that will perform management, distribution, and transaction reconciliation tasks for the participating agencies. Ultimately, this will link the various fare collection systems into a single reporting and management complex.

Air Quality

Many of you have benefited from CMAQ funding and participate in the air quality committees of your MPO. Surprisingly, one transit representative said he had no interest in air quality issues because they were not "transit-related." Two respondents expressed frustration at not being allowed to participate in state air quality committees, even though they felt they were a major part of the solution. Still, most of you have benefited from the national concern about air quality and their associated programs. For more information about the benefits of CMAQ, see Section III.2.

The Dallas Area Rapid Transit system (DART) is featured in this section because of the benefits they obtained by participating in the implementation of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Clean Cities Program. DOE's Clean Cities Program supports public and private partnerships that deploy alternative-fuel vehicles and build supporting infrastructure. The program is voluntary and works with coalitions of local stakeholders to develop alternative-fuel applications across the United States.

Dallas' Clean Cities Technical Coalition (CCTC) is staffed and administered by the MPO, and the group also advises on funding decisions for CMAQ dollars provided to the region to address air quality issues. The Clean Fuel Policy developed by the North Central Council of Governments (Dallas MPO) uses CMAQ funds to purchase alternative-fuel vehicles. As an active member of the CCTC and a long-time user of natural gas in its fleet, DART has received CMAQ funds through this process to purchase vehicles fueled by natural gas.

DART's participation in the CCTC has also been important for other reasons. First, by attending CCTC meetings, DART representatives learned about the Texas Emissions Reduction Program to reduce heavy-duty diesel emissions. Administered by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the program was unknown to DART before a Clean Cities meeting featured it in a presentation. When the state issued a call for projects, DART received $7.6 million from the program to refit 360 buses with exhaust gas re-circulation equipment. According to local officials, the Emissions Reduction Program "requires that projects have a cost effectiveness of $13,000/ton of NOx reduced. DART got into the program early and was able to meet that dollar threshold."

Second, as a Coalition participant and an operator that has a well-established alternative-fuel fleet, DART is an important resource for other transit operators in the region. Says a local official, "It's important for us that established fleets be a part of the coalition—to advise new fleets."

Ride Sharing and Social Services Transportation

In Denver, the Regional Transit District (RTD) provides supplemental funding to the MPO to operate the regional vanpooling program, and works closely with them to coordinate and improve it. This operational responsibility is a non-traditional role for the MPO, and the program is an enormous success. It generates favorable images for both agencies in the community and greatly enhances the MPO/RTD relationship. There are no turf battles here to spoil the relationships.

RTD also works with and provides funding to several municipal operators for services within Boulder, Littleton, and Denver. These funds are programmed through the MPO's TIP development process, and leverage additional support from non-DOT, health and human service sources. MPO support of the coordination of planning and programming of community-based services sponsored by DOT and non-DOT sources is important for effective resource utilization by all operators.

High Occupancy Vehicle Lane Operation

With the endorsement of Houston-Galveston Area Council (Houston MPO), Houston Metro now operates and maintains HOV lanes on six major freeway corridors serving the eight-county metropolitan area. Built primarily for buses, the HOV system is now also used by vanpools and carpools, helping to reduce traffic and improve air quality. Virtually all of the 100+ mile-HOV system has been constructed on donated TxDOT right-of-way, and Houston Metro shares design and construction costs that relate to Metro's use of the HOV lanes. According to one staff member, "That's a helluva deal."

This joint TxDOT/Houston Metro program is endorsed by all in the region, and has the side benefit of creating strong collaborative relationships between the two agencies. Houston Metro staff views this relationship as an "opportunity to show that we have regional cooperation. We may be atypical because the highway people and transit operator sit at the same table and there's no bloodletting. We have a successful HOV program and opportunities to support each other's projects."

Alan Clark
Director of
Transportation Planning
Houston-Galveston Area Council

"My sense is that there's been a major revolution in TxDOT's support of transit in Houston. In the 80s, TxDOT didn't support transit at all. The state was not hostile. TxDOT simply disregarded mass transit. But the development of HOV lanes changed their thinking. It was the first real opportunity for partnership between transit and the state DOT. The next milestone in this growing partnership has been in the planning for exclusive transit facilities. In a recent major corridor study completed by TxDOT, the state strongly advocated for preservation of right-of-way for exclusive transit use as a key component of their locally preferred alternative. TxDOT is currently constructing "managed lanes" on a major freeway which will allow free access to transit and high occupancy vehicles while charging a fee for users."

— Alan Clark, Director of Transportation Planning, Houston-Galveston Area Council (Houston MPO)

Urban Development

Until recently, many of you did not have much involvement in land use and urban development issues, assuming they were well beyond your control so there was no benefit in attempting to become involved. However, the experiences of Portland, Oregon; a variety of Canadian and European cities; and various cities where major transit capital investments are being planned and implemented demonstrates that increasing numbers of transit agencies are now getting involved and making a difference that greatly benefits their regions. Examples of successful collaboration appear in Section II.3 of this report. Seattle Metro's experience with one project is described here. In a recent round of flex funding negotiations with the MPO, elected officials expressed a desire for projects supporting urban centers. A stakeholder then asked whether this meant projects inside the center or those supporting travel to the center. Transit definitely had an advantage with the former interpretation—projects inside the center—and lobbied the MPO to request their projects. As a result, projects inside the center became a separate category and Seattle Metro Transit received an Urban Center Development Grant of $5.5 million in CMAQ funding, sponsoring physical transit-related improvements in the center. To accomplish this, they put together a broad coalition of interests.

"It was easy for Metro Transit to win approval for their Urban Centers Project because it directly met the grant program's goals. The policy was to have transit that developed urban centers. Metro sought funding to develop a conventional transit center, as a focal point for transit, and it worked with the individual towns. Their efforts were directly supportive of the urban centers policy in the regional plan. This well-crafted plan played into all policy directions in the program. The objectives were to improve access, development, and the economy."

— King Cushman, Director of Transportation Activities, Puget Sound Regional Council (Seattle MPO)

Bicycle Facilities

Seattle Metro Transit has also become more bicycle-friendly through CMAQ funds requested by the Puget Sound Regional Council.

Assistant Director of Metro Transit Ron Posthuma explains why. "It is also true that to win in these processes (negotiations for highway/transit fund flexing), you have to meet others' criteria and find things that you can find allies for inside state DOTs and cities. So transit has had to adjust its priorities to do things that are more broadly acceptable…e.g., a while ago, we got a CMAQ grant to install bike racks on buses. If we had had to pay for bike racks, we probably wouldn't have done it, but with CMAQ, it was OK. Because it's not your own money to start with, you do more innovative things and things that sell in less modally constricted environments. I think this is positive because it gets people out of a narrower view of what should be done to convince a wider group of what's the best use of their dollars. Otherwise, you can get in your own box and never get out."

Security

Since the terrorist events of September 11, 2001, considerable attention has been directed to the potential roles of MPOs in coordinating transportation planning in anticipation of security incidents. Transit agencies might play a leadership role, as illustrated by the WMATA example below. Mort Downey, a

member of the National Academy of Science's Committee on Science and Technology for Countering Terrorism observes, "Dick White saw an enormous leadership/coordination void in the region and just jumped in and filled it." He believes that the District of Columbia and WMATA are now "far ahead of the pack" in preparing a coordinated approach to terrorist attacks.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Provides Security Leadership

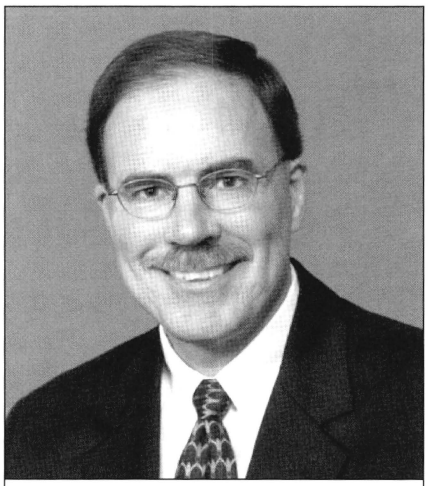
After 9/11, it was clear that better coordination was needed if the Washington Metropolitan Area was to deal more effectively with future terrorist and other disaster events. New policies and procedures were required to address both increased security and evacuation planning.

WMATA's Rick Stevens explains that most of the region's problems stemmed from the extreme fragmentation that characterizes this multi-state area, which also serves as the nation's capital. Until then, major regional players had been operating with blinders on. Stevens provided a sampling of some of the many coordination problems that existed at all levels of government.

- *The District of Columbia was dealing with the street network, but not engaging the states of Maryland and Virginia.*
- *During a major snowstorm, the Virginia DOT opened I-66 (usually an HOV facility) to all traffic, enabling anyone to drive into DC although the District had not yet plowed its streets.*
- *The Department of Defense (DOD), an agency that can commandeer any facility in the region they need in an emergency, had decided to use I-66 as an escape route for people in high levels of government, but had neglected to inform state and local governments of their plans.*
- *WMATA and the smaller transit systems needed better communication and coordination.*
- *Everyone needed to work with the Federal government. As the major employer, for example, releasing all their employees at the same time in an emergency would have disastrous consequences.*

In recognition of the tremendous need for better security and incident-response coordination, the MPO convened meetings of the major participants. Although everyone was at the table, there was no clear sense of immediacy or consensus on direction. The MPO wanted to do an extensive planning exercise, developing future scenarios and plans, but this would have taken a long time. Believing the region could not afford that luxury, WMATA GM Dick White proposed, instead, that they do a debrief—considering lessons learned (right and wrong) — and decide quickly what to do in the future. "Lock us in a room together for a month," he said, "and we'll figure out how to get it together." This caught the attention of many local elected officials, who pushed the MPO to understand the operators' viewpoints and expedite the planning.

In White's own words, "In essence, I challenged the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) [Washington D.C. MPO] to step up and serve as the place where everyone could come together to develop a Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RECP). Initially, COG was unwilling to do so, but I persisted in mobilizing the various functional components of the COG (police, fire/EMS, transportation, public health, etc.), each of which has an organized Task Force in the COG. In particular, we pushed the MPO...to take on the transportation planning coordination activities." White also pushed his approach through another committee comprised of the top appointed staff positions from each of the local governments throughout the metropolitan area.



Richard White
General Manager
Washington Metropolitan Area
Transit Authority

Asked what motivated him to assume regional leadership for security/disaster planning, White offered four reasons:

"My motivation was due to my strong feelings that the most important responsibility WMATA has is to provide for the safety and security of its customers and its employees, and thereby, retaining and hopefully growing their confidence in us. It is also due to my recognition of the unique threats and challenges of operating in the National Capital Region (NCR).

Likewise, it is due to my clear understanding that this complex region must be able to proactively communicate and coordinate across all levels of government to prepare for new threats, and that the regional transit operator is a natural institution to move these processes along.

Finally, it is due to a recognition that our transit system must have strong working relationships with all police, fire, and emergency management agencies in the NCR in order to deter, detect, respond, and recover from threats which were previously unimaginable."

Special Opportunities

From time to time, a special event will occur in a community that may provide opportunities to do things differently or better. (The bigger the event, the better, of course.) The principle here is simply to be alert to such opportunities and try to make the most of them.

The best example found in this study was the Olympic games in Salt Lake City. This event triggered an enormous amount of flexible funding and special grants for transit, and also laid a foundation for strong intergovernmental cooperation, which GM John Inglish hopes will continue. "It's very important that UDOT and the transit authorities work as partners and work together at the highest levels," he advised. "That's not common elsewhere, but it is here." These funding resources, ultimately, flowed through the MPO planning process, which provided an opportunity for increased coordination. The Olympics accelerated the opening and use of the City's new LRT system.

I.5 Create Supplemental Groups to Fill Gaps

"In Cleveland, we have five transit systems. Until recently, we didn't coordinate among ourselves. Even the bike people and the cities coordinated better then we did, and they got more money. Now we're better coordinated and are becoming more aggressive. We're asking for money and getting it"

— Joe Calabrese, GM of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Agency (Cleveland MPO)

In addition to formal MPO Board and committee involvement, some transit agencies have found it useful to form supplemental coordinating groups among peers to enhance regional communication and strategy development. These appear most often to be coordination forums for transit operators in a region, but they sometimes encompass other key agency stakeholders as well. Such forums can greatly assist regional decisionmaking as shown below.

Augmenting the MPO Process - Transit Agency Forums

The benefits of communication and coordination among transit operators serving a region are notable. By sharing common problems and concerns, new solutions and strategies might be found. Also, when transit interests work in concert, they have greater strength.

Seattle Has Three Different Forums for Transit Operators

- *The first is the MPO's Transit Operators Committee, a forum for transit operators to discuss transit issues and make recommendations to the Policy Committee. With meetings held quarterly, GMs attending once a year, and with MPO staff support, the Committee addresses a number of transit funding and operational issues. The group had a significant controversial issue to address in 2002 related to the distribution of FTA Urbanized Area formula funds (Section 5307). There was disagreement with the group's recommendations by one operator, who threatened to appeal. Rather than engage in a potentially difficult and divisive discussion with elected officials about this topic, the group decided to satisfy the appealing operator, thereby preserving their unified control over this pot of money. In calmer times, the group serves primarily as an information-sharing and discussion forum.*

- *Sound Transit, a major operator in the region, coordinates a three-county "Transit Integration Group," comprised of GMs and senior staff, to develop strategies that make the regional system more seamless to users. Largely driven by Sound Transit's program, and covering an area smaller than the MPO's, its primary focus is on the regional fare structure. Other issues addressed by the Group include information–sharing and coordination of operational and labor issues. The members are satisfied with their participation, and the revenue sharing arrangements that have been developed.*

- *Because decisionmaking has become decentralized in the Seattle Region, former Metro Transit GM Rick Walsh feels the real political dialogue and decisions take place for his agency in King County's "Regional Transit Committee," which advises the County Council. Elected officials of the multiple small cities within King County participate in this committee. While this committee operates outside the formal MPO structure, their recommendations are adopted provided they are consistent with regional MPO goals.*

Bay Area Has Partnership Board

The multiple power centers in the San Francisco Region can be very effective when they are brought together to speak with a single voice. However, the Federally structured MPO alone cannot make this happen. Thus, the Bay Area Region has created supplemental organizations to open up additional avenues of participation. One of these is the Partnership Board.

After passage of ISTEA, Larry Dahms, former Director of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, felt that since the region was so large (nine counties) and was generating large new sources of flexible funds at the state, local, and regional levels, a new organization was needed to improve coordination among the growing number of transportation funding and operating agencies. So he initiated creation of the Bay Area Partnership Board. It brought together all the county-level congestion management agencies (CMAs), transit operators, and other regional agencies. MTC recognized that it did not make sense to coordinate Federal, state, and local funds independently of each other; all these funds needed to be evaluated together to leverage them for best results, and the CMAs were the logical place to do much of this coordination under California state law. Therese McMillan, MTC Deputy Director of Policy, notes that, "Larry Dahms, to his credit, recognized we needed a new paradigm for working with locals." The Partnership waned a bit after several years, but has been revived recently as a result of pressure from transit operators like Pete Cipolla. The board now meets more regularly, has renewed attendance by senior executives of the member agencies (including all the major transit providers), and has regained its original high level of influence. The Partnership's recommendations are generally accepted by MTC, which continues to staff it.

Although transit agencies in the Bay area still get much of their money from Federal formula funds, flexible Federal, state, and local funding decisions are determined largely through the Partnership Board. This strong link to all the transportation operating and funding agencies provides a distinct advantage to the MPO process and has increased the influence of the transit agencies. More information regarding the Bay Area Partnership Board can be found at:
http://www.bayareapartnership.org

Augmenting the MPO Process - Diverse Agency Forums

Agency officials also may choose to expand their coordination to venues beyond the MPO committee structure in order to communicate more frequently and/or informally. By not being in a public setting, they can also be more candid in their discussions of tradeoff and compromise. By providing a venue for informal, "unofficial" collaboration, these forums may facilitate early resolution of controversial issues, thereby strengthening the MPO process by freeing the MPO agenda to address broader regional policies.

Sometimes such coordination can be quite informal. Former President Shirley DeLibero of Houston Metro reported she had meetings in her office every two weeks with selected agency heads "just so we know what's on the horizon." Participants included heads of the MPO, flood control agency, Public Works Department, toll roads, and County. She reported numerous benefits resulting from these bi-weekly meetings. A key one was cost savings. Because all the participants were trying to do so many different things, close coordination could identify opportunities for lower-cost solutions like installation of traffic management strategies rather than road widening. Having the MPO head present gives a broader perspective as the region's strategic plan is being developed. The MPO Director typically has already heard from some developers who just want roads and not rail. Now the Director hears transit's side, as well as how effectively highway folks are working on mobility problems with transit people from the highway sector. The group also helped to enhance Houston Metro's credibility—they used the group as a sounding board when they wanted to put out a system plan—their perspective helped them see pitfalls they might have with the community as well as how to best roll-out the plan.

Dallas, Texas

Portland's Agencies Meet Weekly to Collaborate

An informal interagency group called the Transportation Management Advisory Committee (TMAC) has been meeting weekly since its inception. Sometimes characterized affectionately as the "transportation mafia," TMAC was initiated by Tri-Met's Dick Feeney as a group to lobby the Federal government for LRT funding in the 1980s. It was convened by transit operators, but the MPO, SDOT, and local governments were involved from the outset and remain members today.

After the light rail transit (LRT) funding was secured, there was general consensus that the group could perform other useful functions, and they continued meeting. Meetings are held for any and everything relating to Federal transportation legislation, prioritization of local and regional needs, and debate over local and regional priorities for new legislation and appropriations. The decision forum for these priorities is at the MPO table, but this is an ad hoc discussion group that allows for good flow of information among major agency stakeholders. One major function is to consider and develop positions on a wide array of legislative proposals under consideration by Congress or that have been developed by industry organizations like APTA and AASHTO or their committees. These are then fed into the MPO via the MPO TMAC representative.

Chaired by Tri-Met, TMAC is an extremely informal group that does not keep minutes, and simply hashes things out at the staff level and works through issues. It is characterized by Tri-Met GM Fred Hansen as a "no-holds barred kind of effort—they get to rustle stuff through and this allows consensus to be built." Most of the jurisdictions of JPACT (the transportation policy committee of the MPO) are at the table or represented in some fashion. In Hansen's words, "Dick Feeney created it to keep all of us going in the same direction."

I.6 Capitalize on Certification Reviews

"Too often, I've seen transit operators sit on the side and let the planning process occur all around them. Usually, they are not full participants in the Certification Reviews or UPWP development, but they should be."

— A USDOT official familiar with the MPO process

The Certification Process

At least every three years, all MPOs serving areas of 200,000 populations or more must be certified by a Federal review team as being in compliance with all the requirements of the MPO process. The Federal team includes field representatives from FTA and FHWA, plus headquarters staff in some cases. This certification is necessary to maintain the metropolitan area's eligibility for continued Federal highway and transit funding.

What gets certified is the MPO's planning "process," not just the MPO organization. The planning process is a combined effort of the MPO organization, the transit operator(s), and the state DOT, as well as others. Certification examines the extent to which this process is properly established, up to date, and working successfully to meet all Federal requirements.

The Federal requirements are both procedural and substantive. The procedural requirements deal with such issues as proper representation on boards and committees, public involvement, timely production and updating of financially constrained plans and implementation programs, and the use of a unified planning work program to coordinate the planning efforts of all the transit, highway, and other partners who contribute to the overall effort. The substantive elements are the seven planning factors set forth in TEA-21 that should be considered in planning processes. They are: (1) economic vitality of the region, (2) preservation of the existing transportation system, (3) environmental protection, energy conservation, and improved quality of life, (4) efficient system management and operation, (5) increased accessibility and mobility options, (6) enhanced safety and security of the transportation system, and (7) better integration of the transportation modes. Transit has a key role to play in achieving each of these goals.

During certification, the Federal team reviews the work of the MPO in addressing all planning requirements, resulting in a decision on compliance with both the letter and spirit of the law. This review includes: (a) a desk-audit of documents submitted by planning participants, including the transit operator(s), (b) a site visit by the Federal team, which involves an extended meeting with all the main players—including the transit operator(s), as well as a public meeting to receive comments from other agencies, advocacy groups, and the general public, (c) preparation of a draft report for review by the MPO participants—including the transit operator(s), and (d) issuance of the final Federal decision, which is rendered by the top field officials of FTA and FHWA.

The Federal decision may certify the MPO process for the next three years if it is in substantial compliance, certify the process conditionally for a shorter time pending mandatory improvements, or withhold certification. Withholding is very rare, but short-term conditional certifications are relatively common. When compliance with Federal law or regulation is in question, the Federal team attaches deadlines for the MPO to take mandatory corrective actions and monitors progress toward compliance with those directives. More than 100 corrective actions were issued over the period 1996-2000, with many calling for more explicit consideration of transit in the activities and products of planning. The planning issues cited included the long range plan, travel forecasting techniques and supporting data, and compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

In addition to mandatory corrective actions, many certification reviews result in advisory recommendations intended to provide direction and assist MPOs in improving the quality of their work. These represent opportunities for the Federal review team to consider the overall role of transit operators in decisionmaking and promote more transit-friendly practices. Over the period 1996-2000, Federal review teams provided nearly 300 advisory recommendations, several of which were transit-focused, such as:

- *Revise MPO agreements to include new transit operators*
- *Use the UPWP to better coordinate with transit operators*
- *Better integrate the transit plan into the MPO plan*
- *Better coordinate the transit agency and MPO staffs*
- *Better coordinate with other programs such as Access to Jobs, and Special Services Vans*

Transit Operator Participation in the Certification Review

Transit operators are involved with certification to varying degrees. Most are familiar with it, but few see it as a major opportunity for strengthening their roles in MPO activities.

Even the MPOs sometimes do not see much benefit from certification. As St. Louis MPO Executive Director Les Sterman observed, "We have had good reviews generally, but it feels more helpful when Federal agencies are on the scene and participate in the organization rather than coming in cold every three years to do a certification review. I think the Feds have been generally helpful, but certification review probably doesn't have any significance in that process."

Certification reviews are required to take place relatively infrequently, on a triennial cycle, and do not occur in the smaller MPOs (under 200,000 population). Therefore, these reviews may seldom provide quick fixes to urgent issues. However, by knowing the certification review process and planning ahead for it, MPOs and transit agencies can use that format and subjective matter to assess their work as often as they wish, without the presence of a Federal review team. Some transit operators indicated that they would be reluctant to use a certification review, with the Federal team present to raise serious issues for fear that it might hurt the region's eligibility for continued Federal funding or damage cooperation among their peers in the MPO.

Nevertheless, several of you raised issues as you contributed to this study that could be raised in your certification review, such as too little contact with FTA field staff, or having to deal with a highway-oriented MPO or state DOT. The potential benefits of raising these issues during certification follow.

Baltimore, Maryland

Certification Benefit: Contact with FTA Staff

Certification reviews are intense experiences that offer opportunities to raise your visibility with FTA. Especially if your metropolitan area is relatively small and remote from FTA's regional office, this may be one of the best opportunities you'll have to fully explain your situation and needs to a sympathetic listener.

Taking full advantage of this opportunity would include providing insightful and well-written briefing materials in time for the desk review, attending and fully participating in appropriate sessions of the field visit, recommending transit-friendly individuals and groups for the Federal review team to meet with and hear from during the review, and even initiating contact in advance of the review to outline concerns. Several of you told us how helpful FTA is when they are asked to focus on an individual transit property.

While the certification review is a specific legislative requirement, Federal oversight of planning processes actually is an ongoing effort, with multiple opportunities for expedited, focused attention to the types of quality factors identified in this report. In awarding grants for metropolitan and statewide planning, FTA field leadership considers the quality of planning performed by the MPO and where improvements are needed. At the time of joint FTA and FHWA approval of the statewide Transportation Improvement Program, a "finding" is issued by those agencies that the underlying planning processes are being carried out in full accordance with statutory and regulatory requirements. And in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas, joint FTA and FHWA determination of the "conformity" between transportation and air quality plans considers many factors, including the adequacy of the underlying planning process. Finally, transit operators in receipt of Urbanized Formula funding from FTA (Section 5307) are posed a series of planning questions as part of the FTA's grantee-based Triennial Review program. All of these occasions represent opportunities to call attention to any concerns or opportunities for improvement regarding planning in your area.

Certification Benefit: Dealing with a Highway-Oriented MPO

To ensure that the transportation plans and programs of MPOs have a multimodal context, Congress has authorized funding from both FTA and FHWA to support the work of MPOs. One of you told us that in spite of receiving joint FTA and FHWA funding, the MPO paid little attention to the needs of transit. This was evidenced by the absence of transit ridership forecasting as a component of the MPO's modeling process and the MPO's failure to prepare a transit element for its transportation system plan. Another told of frequently putting transit proposals on the table that were always voted down. Still another said that the MPO did not recognize the important role transit could play in helping to comply with air quality standards.

Although certification may not quickly solve such deep-seated problems, these periodic reviews, and your internal discussions to prepare for them, provide opportunities to call attention to your concerns. Here are excerpts from selected certification review reports that illustrate how transit-related issues have been raised and addressed.

- *The MPO is encouraged to obtain early input from FRA ana the state DOT's Rail Division on the four transit corridors.*
- *The 2003 update to the LRTP must demonstrate long range and short range strategies for an integrated intermodal transportation system.*
- *In the next plan update, the MPO must identify locations of minority and low-income populations, assess the distribution of benefits and impacts of transportation investments, and more thoroughly address the issue of allocation of resources to benefit diverse populations.*
- *Within six months the MPO should identify actions that can be implemented to address the transit operators concerns regarding effective representation on the policy committee.*
- *The MPO should complete the Transit Needs Analysis ana include its results in the plan even prior to the next update.*

- *The public involvement process must be proactive and support early and continuing involvement of the public in the development of transportation plans and TIPs.... The MPO has agreed to report on a quarterly basis on efforts to enhance the public involvement process.*

- *The next update of the long range transportation plan should include summaries of the various planning studies completed (such as bicycle, pedestrian, transit...).*

You should not wait for the Federal review team to notice such problems. You may realize more benefit from the effort by doing advance work and being proactive. This could include alerting the team, in advance, to departures from good practice and providing them with supporting facts and testimony from adversely affected parties. This is important for the Federal team to receive if they are to carry-through with recommended changes to the work of the MPO and/or corrective actions. Federal review teams often have a hard time making the case for needed changes without local support, and they don't have time to dig out little-known facts without local help. Here are excerpts from selected certification review reports that illustrate how these reviews have picked up locally suggested issues.

- *In the last review, we (the Federal review team) recommended that the area consider implementing service changes shown in its transit development plan. This continues to be an area of discussion among the localities and the transit operator, and the review team continues to encourage the area to explore options for funding the transit development plan.*

- *The review team notes that a number of organizations have been critical of the MPO. They maintain that low-income and minority populations are not getting fair consideration of their need for more efficient and effective transit service. The review team believes that, while the MPO has taken some steps to address environmental justice issues, further work needs to be done.... We...encourage groups...to take a more active role in the planning process.... We believe that the concerns raised... merit careful review and should be addressed by the MPO.*

- *The team recommends that the MPO continue to review the planning process...to ensure that demands for additional transit service, as reflected in public comments, are adequately addressed.*

Certification Benefit: Dealing with a Highway-Oriented State DOT

In Boston, a certification-driven redesignation added local elected officials, the City of Boston in particular, to the MPO policy board for the first time. Compared to the former state-dominated structure, the new MPO has a different outlook on transit. In the words of one participant, "The new MPO is very sensitive to transit issues—locals are interested in shuttle buses, connections between employers and commuter rail stations. Local influence has caused the MPO to look at those issues more extensively than we had before. Previously MBTA was interested much more in capital intensive projects and in fine-tuning conventional bus routes than in running shuttle buses but now they work with TMAs and employers who provide the bulk of this service to ensure that connections are made."

Transit and MPO leaders alike agree that state DOTs are not always as responsive to the needs of local jurisdictions when allocating CMAQ or surface transportation program (STP) funds within metropolitan areas as those jurisdictions wished. There were occasions, too, where transit agencies were being excluded from participation in corridor studies. As suggested by the Boston case, using the certification review process to bring the state DOT and MPO closer together can increase attention to transit needs.

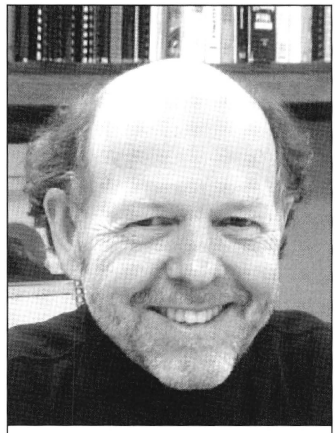
The following excerpts from selected certification review reports illustrate how the need to strengthen the state DOT/MPO relationship was addressed in the review.

- *The state transit and turnpike authorities should be more active participants in the MPO process.*
- *Redraw state DOT districts to be consistent with MPO planning boundaries.*
- *Develop procedures to guide cooperation between the state DOT and MPOs for project selection.*
- *(There) needs to be a formalized procedure for incorporating MPO TIPs into the state DOT's STIP, including informing the MPO.*
- *Indicate in the STIP document that the STIP isn't final until metropolitan TIPs are approved by the state DOT.*

Dallas, Texas

Getting More Out of Certification

Certification reviews address the relationships among the MPO partners, the practices they use, and the degree to which transit is accepted as a full partner in the process. Certification provides an opportunity to raise important transit and multimodal coordination issues, but it may be up to you to raise them, to participate more fully in the process, and to persist until you get the acceptance you need.



Bill Habig
Executive Director
Mid-Ohio Regional
Planning Commission

In Columbus, Ohio, where the relationship with the transit operator is especially close, MPO Executive Director Bill Habig takes certifications very seriously. As he explains, "We've had several good certification rounds, and we've always tried to implement the recommendations as soon as possible." Both the transit agency and the MPO benefit by working together to be up to date and learn from other metropolitan areas.

The documents you submit for the desk review can identify the key issues needing attention in your region, and you can recommend transit-friendly persons and organizations in your region for the review team to talk to. With the Federal team as a catalyst, certification provides an opportunity to help sensitize all the parties in the planning process to the benefits of including transit as a full partner in solving the region's problems.

Involvement and input from citizens and community leaders to the certification process is important, as well. Commenting on a recent certification process in a major metropolitan area, a DOT official said that environmental justice "has been a hot topic for a while here, and we received specific EJ complaints. Our findings on environmental justice have been met with approval by many of the groups that spoke with us individually and at public hearings during the certification review.... The work on environmental justice stemming from this certification review will help prevent future Title VI

complaints here…." The implications of this for transit are important. Providing appropriate levels of transit service to low-income and minority populations is at the center of many transportation-related EJ issues.

Self-Assessment Can Help

The compliance topics reviewed during certification provide a convenient checklist for a transit operator (and others) to use in two ways: (1) preparing to participate in, and get the most out of, the formal certification review, and (2) assessing, at any time, how well transit operators are participating in and getting the full benefits of the MPO process. As previously mentioned, this may be a guide for self-assessment in large metropolitan areas not just during certification, but at any time. It also can be used in the MPOs of smaller metropolitan areas (less than 200,000 population), where certification is not required. As a final note, MPOs in all metropolitan areas, regardless of whether a Federal certification is required, must self-certify their compliance with all the laws and regulations applicable to the Federal surface transportation programs. The question for them is whether they will just sign the self-certification form, or whether they will perform a careful review of their own—including their transit operator and others—before they execute the form. If they do this, they may find it useful to follow a checklist such as the one in Appendix A to make sure the transit operator is adequately involved.

Portland, Oregon

MARTA
Atlanta, Georgia

II Transit Can Be a Positive Force in Transportation and Land Use Planning

This chapter shows how you can achieve benefits by vigorous participation in your region's transportation planning processes—long range transportation systems planning, all corridor planning, and coordinating transportation and land use planning. Planning sets the stage for future investment decisions and provides the opportunity for influencing other transit-supportive decisions. You may lead these activities or contribute substantively, representing your interests, in the efforts of others. What matters most is that you be a highly active participant.

Funding is provided on a formula basis from FTA and FHWA to support staff work and consultant efforts underlying all aspects of planning conducted by the MPO. These monies are scheduled and programmed in the Unified Transportation Planning Work Program (UPWP), the budget document of MPO work activities supporting all aspects of the metropolitan planning process. Included in the work activities funded through the UPWP are regional mobility needs assessment, corridor and subarea systems planning studies, preparation of the Federally required plan and program, and all underlying database and planning methods maintenance. The UPWP, therefore, represents an important opportunity to ensure that transit is a component, or is at least considered, in the information provided to MPO decisionmakers.

A traditional planning barrier for transit has been the inability of regional transportation officials to provide for credible modal split estimation and related data. Fortunately, most transit agencies contacted for this study seem satisfied with the modeling processes in their areas, with the exception of continuing complaints about delays in producing the forecasts. The study found a woefully-lacking model in only one region where, interestingly, the transit agency had never participated in the development of that area's UPWP, including the development, testing, and application of travel forecasting models. If that transit operator had participated with the other MPO partners in developing the UPWP, perhaps they could have pressed the MPO to use their FTA planning grants for model improvement. If travel forecasting models are sensitive to transit operations and service parameters, transit options may be more seriously considered in the regional, subarea, and corridor studies that use those models. This could, in turn, improve the justification for including transit options in the MPO's plan and program.

In at least one metropolitan area it was reported that the MPO transportation plan had no transit element. In retrospect, the UPWP should have been the vehicle for the transit operator in that area to use in ensuring that the MPO would produce a transportation plan with a transit element, including transit-oriented development plans that make sense. In some areas, the UPWP has also been used as the vehicle for consolidating the transit and highway planning grants to the MPO in a single package, which could be another strategy in promoting multimodal planning.

There is a wide range of other obstacles that can affect transit participation in metropolitan planning. These include differences between FTA and FHWA funding programs, weak public involvement programs, city/suburb differences in transportation and land use policies, and limited assessment of benefits and burdens of proposed transportation investments across socio-economic groups. Community input to the MPO process is particularly important to you, as citizens usually demand more transit service to their communities. When transportation plans are prepared without open, ongoing public input, lack credible, multimodal analytical methods for assessing the regional benefits and burdens, or are not based upon a comprehensive needs assessment, communities who use transit at higher rates than the general population may be short-changed. And, if the need for these services is understated in planning analyses, transit will receive a lower priority in the regional plan and program.

A disturbing trend in some areas is the development of regional plans without consideration of transportation needs from a regional perspective. Instead, these plans are based on local priorities, tied to local funding sources, and are very often suburban-based. The result is that MPO plans can

become a compendium of local plans stapled together. This appears to be the case in some of the regions looked at in this review. Decentralized decisionmaking, while forging a closer connection with local political processes, may enable the "who gets what, when, and where" of politics to play a stronger role than planning and funding deliberations based upon objective, regional criteria, combined with open public involvement. Transportation studies, policies, plans, and programs, when prepared from a regional perspective, seem more in transit's best interest than decisionmaking dominated by parochial interests.

Other more visible and direct problems stem from the overt exclusion of transit participants in regional and corridor studies, as well as from air quality planning. Study participants cited instances where state DOTs refused to allow transit representation on highway corridor study advisory committees and other occasions where transit involvement was not permitted on air quality groups dealing with conformity issues. A less extreme but still objectionable barrier occurs when transit is an invited participant, but is expected to refrain from commenting on any issues other than specific transit issues. As stated previously, the FTA/FHWA-funded UPWP supports MPO staff work on these activities, providing you with an important means to challenge questionable practices.

Finally, political changes at state and local levels can help or hinder transit's prospects in the planning arena, depending on the degree to which transportation, and transit in particular, was a platform issue. Certainly, politics influences transportation decisionmaking in a region (it seems to vary widely), and the transit-friendliness of key incumbents.

The remainder of this section describes effective strategies used by other transit operators to deal with these barriers.

II.1 Participate Fully in Preparing the Long Range Plan

"It's all one big cooperative process. We've prepared very few LRP elements that didn't get implemented. Those that didn't are still awaiting funding."

— Will Jefferies, former Director, Wasatch Front Regional Council (Salt Lake City MPO)

Transit officials participate in developing the long range plan (LRP) as part of the MPO planning processes for a variety of reasons and in different ways. It is not surprising that satisfaction with the effort seems to increase with the level of participation and degree of influence achieved.

Benefits

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) sees active participation in the MPO's plan development process as a good way to move decisionmakers in more multimodal directions. By playing a large role in development of the constrained plan and working with other transit advocates, WMATA has helped to enhance the transit component of the MPO's recent vision plan, which has a longer-range time horizon than the official MPO plan. WMATA Director of Business Planning and Project Development, Rick Stevens, observes that transit agencies are better prepared for LRP negotiations because they are required by FTA to have more detailed information on rehabilitation and expansion needs than highway departments, and they also have a better handle on long range operating expenses. However, WMATA officials continue to work with MPO leaders to enhance the multimodal needs-based project prioritizing process.

Portland Metro contributes to the LRP development process in their area by providing both technical and policy staff to assist with establishing funding priorities. Their efforts were rewarded when their Interstate Max Project was ranked as the region's number one priority, with flex funds awarded to the project.

Utah Transit Authority's GM John Inglish also sees project implementation as a major motivator for participation in preparing the MPO's long range plan. He notes that "Ultimately, the MPO holds the key to the bank on two levels: 1) We can't have a priority project that won't be a priority for the political leaders, and the LRP process defines our program. 2) Once the priorities are set, these are the priorities that FTA will recognize...you want your priorities to be the MPO's priorities." In addition, Inglish believes that having an objective entity (the MPO) endorse the LRP "gives public comfort that UTA is not imposing its nefarious will on them."

Paul Skoutelas, CEO of the Port Authority of Allegheny County (Pittsburgh area), has worked closely with the MPO over the past several years and is currently co-chairing the transit portion of their LRP update while MPO staff are heavily involved in the Port Authority's Strategic Transit Visioning Study. He stresses the value of obtaining MPO concurrence and support for a long range transit vision. "The fact that we have MPO buy-in is important because the agency has a critical role to play in advancing plans for the region. If we can get them to be actively involved, rather than taking a hands-off approach, we'll have greater understanding about our needs and solutions, and then hopefully increased responsibility for finding solutions to our funding challenges…We feel good about having been able to do this." Skoutelas reports that relations between the two agencies have improved significantly recently, although transit officials still hope to obtain greater decisionmaking influence over time.

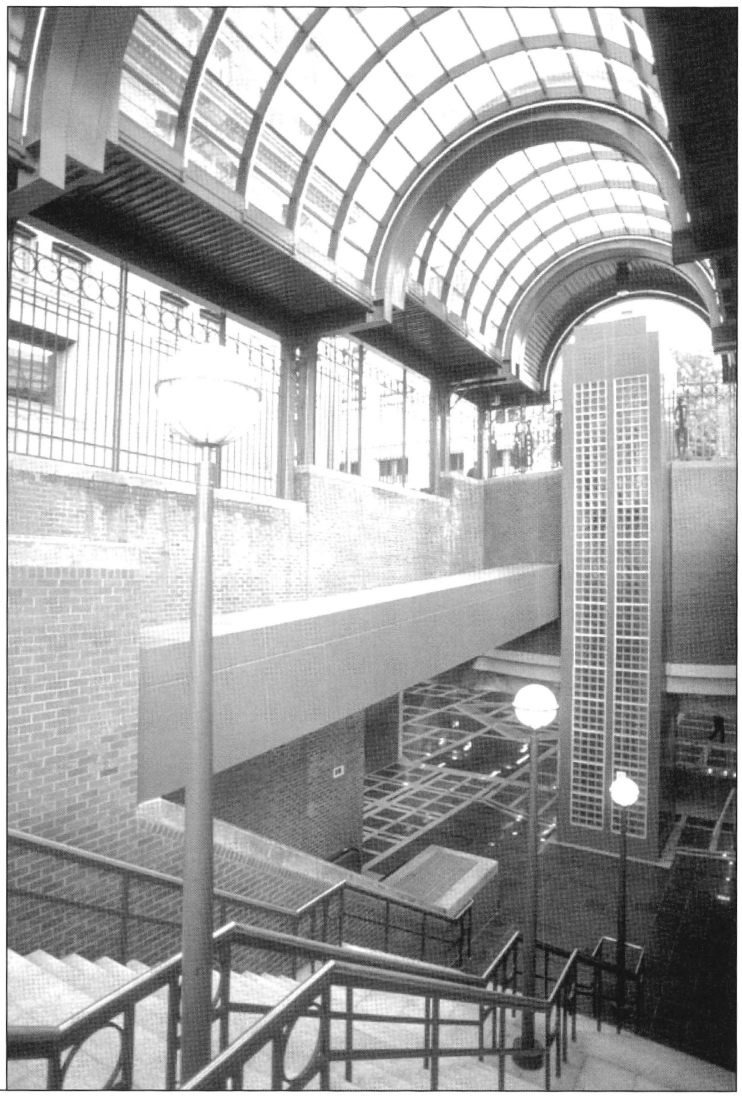
Institutional Arrangements and Strategies

There are many institutional variations on the way LRPs are prepared. Most commonly, the MPO prepares the plan with formal and/or informal input from a wide range of participants, including transit agencies. Albany's MPO, which has traditionally hosted one of the nation's most collaborative, transit-friendly LRP processes, is one example. Special task forces are created for major plan updates, a strategy that transit officials believe has been highly effective.

In other regions like Washington and Pittsburgh (discussed previously), transit agencies prepare their part of the plan and it is incorporated into the larger regional plan. It is important to note, however, that transit's component of the plan includes a regional needs assessment, as does the broader MPO plan.

Charlotte's situation is unique. Transit is a department of the City of Charlotte yet they have their own policy board. In addition, the Mecklenburg-Union MPO is city-dominated (with the city holding 9 of 13 seats on the policy board). Charlotte Area Transit System GM Ron Tober reports strong satisfaction with his group's involvement in the LRP. "We work with City Department of Transportation staff, who staff the MPO and…do the LRP work for the MPO. Because we are an equal city department, we're very involved in meetings, cabinet meetings—our technical staff is very involved and there is lots of interest." His transit board adopts the transit plan, which then goes to the MPO for adoption as part of the region's plan.

Thus, while there are many approaches to preparing the transit element of an MPO's LRP, the effectiveness of the techniques vary widely in terms of transit involvement and the objectivity of the process. At the MPO level, the major concern to many transit officials is a lack of regional project prioritization at the MPO than is principally based on objective, collaboratively developed criteria, rather than on available funding under each source.



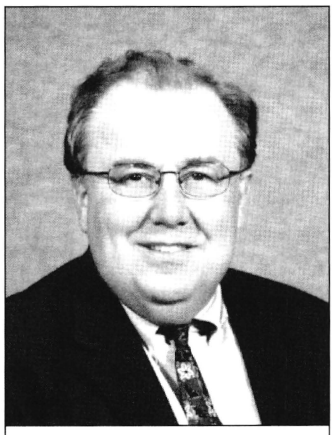
Seattle, Washington

The Dallas region has especially effective institutional arrangements and other noteworthy strategies for implementing their LRP process.

Dallas MPO Has Full Transit Plan Integration Plus Other Exemplary Planning Features

In sharp contrast to many of the other larger metropolitan areas investigated, planning and decisionmaking in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area are accomplished on a region-wide basis. The North Central Texas Council of Governments' Barbara Maley, AICP (Principal Transportation Planner) observes, "Our Director (Michael Morris, P.E.) believes in the adage 'thinking globally, planning regionally, and acting locally.'" In addition, as a region, we are fortunate that our policy officials rarely, if ever, remark, 'My constituents want something different than the regional need.'"

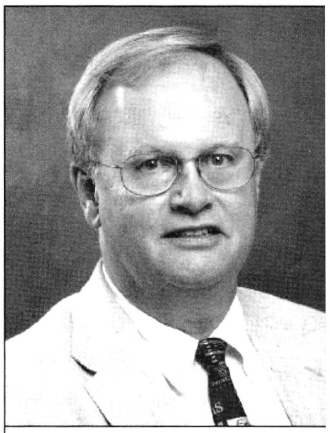
Barbara Maley
Principal Transportation Planner
North Central Texas Council of Governments



Mike Morris
Director
North Central Texas Council of Governments

This regional philosophy is strongly reflected in the excellent planning integration between the MPO and the three transportation authorities: Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (the T), and the Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA). For example, DART and the MPO are preparing their transit system plan (TSP) and metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) in tandem, with the MPO actually housing, on occasion, a DART employee. It is through cooperation and coordination that the similarities between the two plans far outweigh the differences. The coordination extends to the use of the same financial assumptions and target year (2030). Having similar target years can be uncommon as the transit industry usually does not use such a long time frame. This cooperation and coordination have proven especially beneficial for preparing environmental documents, which have to be consistent with the adopted MTP. It is also helpful to the public to see a consistent timing message.

Maley observes, "Certain efficiencies have been realized with DART working on their TSP at the same time the region is working on its MTP. For example, the MTP includes chapters devoted to each mode, including rail/transit. DART official Trip Brizell (Senior Manager, Capital Programming), also reports satisfaction with the metropolitan transportation planning process. "It's good to have another view of our projects, which are often iterative," he notes.



Trip Brizell
Senior Manager,
Capital Programming
Dallas Area Rapid Transit

In addition to the cooperative plan efforts, the MPO sets out work program areas that are responsive to the needs of the transit authorities. This is a product of MPO representation that includes voting rights for the region's transportation partners, including the transportation authorities.

The Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area has long been acclaimed for strong technical integration in all planning aspects. For example, the MPO has a widely acknowledged travel forecasting model DART is able to use to analyze alternatives during all phases of project planning.

Another practice of note is that DART no longer focuses their plan on just their member cities. While they are sensitive to the cities that fund them, they now also plan for areas outside DART's official service areas.

II.2 Be a Strategic Participant in All Corridor Studies

As a transit service provider, your agency likely has some, if not considerable, experience with corridor planning efforts. Corridor planning is an essential step in the identification and development of transportation projects and improvements of all kinds. An MPO's long range plan frequently identifies desired major studies, or, more typically corridor studies are initiated on an as-needed basis by a modal agency. Under ISTEA and TEA-21, corridor studies consider all reasonable transportation modes, and when regional officials look for a study leader, transit operators should get involved.

Depending on the characteristics of the corridor, the study leader might be a transit operator, a state DOT, local public

works department, the MPO, or in some cases, a special interagency group or collaborative established just for this particular planning effort. The study itself may be an Alternatives Analysis, a highway or multimodal corridor study, or another successor to the ISTEA-era Major Investment Study. Any of these options can include preparation of key environmental documents necessary for project implementation—an Environmental Assessment or draft/final Environmental Impact Statement.

Transit operators consulted in this study report a range of experiences with corridor planning. Some transit agencies get involved in corridor studies from the very beginning, and others report needing to elbow their way to the table to ensure that transit improvements are considered among the alternatives.

The most proactive transit agencies consulted for this study consistently got involved in regional corridor studies, even when the major improvements were likely to be road-oriented or when the study was led by a state DOT or local public works department. The stories of these operators show that, regardless of what a corridor looks like today, transit may play any number of roles in the corridor in the future, and transit operators can ensure that such prospects are examined by being involved in corridor studies. If you currently or prospectively operate in the study corridor, the planning process will provide opportunities for you to ensure that identified improvements yield benefits to your customers.

Surveying the Scene

In corridor studies, savvy transit agencies anticipate and avert potential obstacles to future services, making the best of the situations before them and drawing upon the successes of transit operators in other regions. Many of the operators involved in this study sought participation when the study was in preliminary planning stages. The following strategic questions are culled from their experiences in getting involved:

1. How is the corridor perceived by MPO participants? Do your MPO partners see a role for transit?

Most corridor studies seek to understand the problems in the corridor, their underlying causes, and the viable options for addressing them, without pre-determination of modal outcomes. However, when corridor studies are approached from the perspective of just one mode, the challenge cited by transit operators is to ensure that transit representatives are at the table, and that transit alternatives are fairly considered among the viable solutions to mobility problems. Where a corridor study sponsor has overlooked, discounted, or actively excluded transit participation, the transit operator must tell the sponsoring agency that it wants to play a part. These represent important, highly visible challenges for you to work on overcoming. As a participant in the MPO process, you have a right to request representation. And, as discussed elsewhere in this report, where FTA or FHWA funds support the study, you have an even stronger opportunity to appeal to those funding agencies if your requests for regional cooperation are denied by your state/local partners.

Shut Out by State DOT

The following dilemma was described by a study participant. The transit operator is eager to participate in corridor studies for a variety of roadway projects in the region, including widening projects being considered for an interstate and a major arterial. The transit operator sees opportunities to include transit improvements in these efforts, perhaps by reserving some additional right-of-way for future transit use or by constructing a park-n-ride where a new interchage may be added. "We want to be involved to keep right-of-way available for projects we're interested in doing later or for small stuff," said the operator. However, most of the studies are conducted by the state highway department which, according to the operator, "doesn't see the need" for transit's participation. "They may invite us to the scoping. We sometimes ask to be involved in the technical advisory committee, but are rarely included by the state DOT.... This has happened two or three times, and we have lost opportunities by not being in on the front end of planning these things." This presents a challenge that strategies identified throughout this report may help address, or, better yet, avert.

2. Has a sponsor for the study been identified?

Depending on the status of the corridor study, a sponsor may or may not have already been identified. The transit operators

and MPOs who participated in this study provided examples of corridor studies conducted in their regions by various organizations, and identified advantages and disadvantages of particular sponsorships. It is common for state DOTs, transit operators, and MPOs to sponsor multimodal corridor studies. There is no recipe for identifying the best sponsor other than to identify if any would restrict your participation.

3. Among MPO member agencies and other public entities, which is the most appropriate study sponsor? How about your agency?

In many cases, the corridor in question and the modal emphasis of the study will suggest a particular organizational sponsorship. When transit or multimodal improvements are being studied, it is more likely that the transit operator or/and the state DOT will lead the effort. Following are comments by transit operators sharing their experiences with corridor studies sponsored by different organizations.

When the Highway Department Leads a Corridor Study

"This project is very large, and there are more committees than you can shake a stick at. We've been involved in them all."

— Catherine Debo, Metro Transit (Madison)

Where do transit operators fit in when a corridor study is led by the state DOT or when circumstances suggest that the effort will focus on road-oriented improvements? Many transit operators said transit could win a range of benefits in such cases by active engagement in highway corridor studies. Some operators explained that a corridor serving only private vehicular traffic today could be a strategic setting for transit service in the future. In preparation for that, they made sure that transit alternatives were examined in the corridor study. Other operators who already provide service in a corridor being studied said it was critical to make the DOT aware of transit's operational considerations in the planning process. For these reasons—and many more—savvy operators wanted to be at the table.

Several transit operators were strategic participants in the highway corridor studies in their regions. Their active involvement yielded three major types of benefits for transit.

1. **Piggybacking on Capital Projects**—Where the local highway department is poised to make roadway improvements, many transit operators see an opportunity to include physical enhancements for transit service in the corridor as well.

- **Pittsburgh's** Port Authority participated in the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission-led study for the Monfayette Expressway. "It's a pure highway project," says Skoutelas, "but we've located appropriate positions for park-n-ride facilities in the project, which affects our system and riders. We ensure that transit's voice is heard and that transit receives some benefit from improvements that are advanced."

- **Charlotte's** Ron Tober says getting involved in highway studies can be financially smart for transit. "We can get more bang for our buck by coordinating roadway improvements with transit improvements like bus shelters, signage, landing pads, and wheelchair landing pads. If we know about a study or project at an early stage, we can get our work done at a fraction of the cost of going it on our own. For example, we still pay for bus shelters and signs, but we don't pay [for] installation. As for sidewalks, landing pads, and turning radii improvements, if we get the design standards or features in the project, these are no cost items for us." Cooperation with local towns to foster such collaboration is also important. "This kind of stuff is not always happening through the MPO." While there have been no recent roadway corridor studies in Charlotte, Tober says, "if there were one, we'd be involved up to our eyeballs."

- **Washington's** WMATA sits on the policy board for a number of highway studies. Says Rick Stevens, "We're involved in all of them…by being on the technical committee or helping to develop transit alternatives and to evaluate all alternatives. We provide cost information about transit services, and operating plans and impacts. If the study is looking at road improvements, we ask, 'what can they do that will make it easier for rubber tire transit?' If they add an HOV lane, we make sure they connect to the park-n-ride to serve transit.

In designs for a park-n-ride, we make sure our buses are accommodated."

- In **Madison,** a state DOT study was prepared for the reconstruction of East Washington Avenue, a major arterial to the city. Says Catherine Debo, "This was typical of what happens with highway projects in our area. We always have staff involvement. We have a Metro staff person who is the liaison on any highway activity in the area. This project is very large, and there are more committees than you can shake a stick at. We've been involved in them all." The project itself includes many physical elements for transit in the corridor, including bus shelters, benches, signage, bus pull ins, and possibly ITS components for transit. Additionally, the state DOT will help pay for the cost of property acquisition for a Metro park-n-ride facility. Says Debo, "This is a terrific benefit to get in the course of a project. It's a major transit corridor, and we'll be able to get buses through and also get the park-n-ride facility that we've wanted for a long time."

2. **Strategic Gains for the Long Term**—By participating in road studies, some transit operators have secured other transit benefits that will materialize over the longer term and shape the region's transit service profile. Tober says that getting involved "gives us the ability to ensure that the needs of transit service are considered. When something will spur development, we work for planning decisions that will result in development that is more transit supportive than would otherwise occur."

- **Portland's** I-5 is the focus of a Federal Borders and Corridors Study concerned with I-5's role as a trade corridor. A large study task force was established that included representatives from Oregon, Washington, and even Vancouver, Canada. Tri-Met GM Fred Hansen says his job on the task force is "to make sure alternatives to more highway lanes are represented on the committee…to make sure transit is at the table." The committee has advanced recommendations that light rail transit be part of transportation solutions in this crowded corridor.

Katy, Texas

- In **Houston,** Metro has been a highly active steering committee member for TxDOT's study to widen the Katy Freeway. After a recent proposal was accepted that would convert the Katy's central lanes to toll lanes, Metro has been active to ensure that the reconfigured project can provide for high-capacity transit at some point in the future. The current project is defined as auto-only and calls for structures that, if designed for autos and trucks only, would not be strong enough to hold another mode. Metro has been working with TxDOT to amend the designs and to ensure that elevated structures (overpasses and bridges) are sufficiently strong to accommodate the heaviest demand transportation mode, which would be LRT. They have designed bridges for LRT loading threshold so that if the community elects LRT for this corridor in the future, bridges and overpasses will be able to accommodate it. Shirley DeLibero explains, "We're involved and collaborating. We are putting money into the effort to reinforce all elevated structures in the toll road's design and construction to ensure that at a later date, when the toll road is obsolete or saturated, we can put a rail line in. This will keep us from tearing it up later. If we were not at the table early on, we wouldn't even know about this opportunity. For Metro, it is easier to spend a little extra now and to tweak structures for a maximum future load demand than to rebuild it for high-capacity transit 10, 15, or 20 years from today."

3. **Redefining Problems and Solutions**—Sometimes transit's presence at the table can help to redefine a corridor problem.

- According to **Las Vegas'** Jacob Snow, the state DOT Northeast Corridor study involved lots of street and highway infrastructure. However, given constraints on right-of-way available for road expansion, a realization came that bus rapid transit (BRT) could also play a role in the corridor. Moreover, additional potential BRT corridors were identified, along with a park-n-ride. Transit staff served on the study's technical advisory committee. Says Snow, "We get involved with every EIS....Transit is always considered a more important mode now than in the past. There just isn't right-of-way for new freeways; you have to look for alternatives."

Paul Skoutelas
CEO
Port Authority of
Allegheny County

When Transit Takes Charge

"Transit must know what it wants and be a catalyst."

— Paul Skoutelas, Port Authority of Allegheny County

Initiating and taking the lead on planning studies can have clear advantages for a transit operator, providing the transit organization an outlet to move its priorities forward and an ability to shape the process. Transit alternatives analysis has been a key part of established transit planning practice for many years. The operators interviewed identified the following advantages of transit-led corridor planning efforts.

- **Meeting transit's needs.** A transit-led corridor study can influence the range of options considered and ensure that transit scenarios are workable and would have community support. "The fact that we're the catalyst is important," says Paul Skoutelas of the Port Authority of Allegheny County. "Transit must know what it wants and be a catalyst."

Sandy, Utah

- **Doing it on time.** Heading a study also enables your agency to set the study's timetable; where timing is important for advancing a set of transit improvements or a particular project, transit's management of the effort can make the most of time-sensitive windows of opportunity. Says one transit agency representative "The [transit] operator is able to ensure we get it done on time and within budget."

- **Showcasing transit's strengths.** Leading a corridor study can showcase your agency's strengths. "It's been very good for us," said Director of Planning William Fernandez, of Metropolitan Area Rapid Transit Authority's lead role in a corrdior feasibility study. "We have a strong planning department, and they work well with...other regional planners. [Leading the study] shows new life and growth...[and helps us] to expand our system."

- **Getting broad participation.** Leading a corridor study allows your agency to promote a collaborative process and to identify a course of action supported by an array of stakeholders. Charlotte's transit operator, the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), has led a number of corridor studies to help develop recommendations and create system plans. While the operator has driven the process, they have also coordinated closely with surrounding towns, the planning commission, and the community.

Skoutelas' Port Authority has sought the MPO's active involvement in its studies. The advantage to a meaningful participation by others, says Skoutelas, is that "we'll have greater buy-in and understanding about needs and

solutions and a better response to the funding challenge.... We feel good about having been able to do this."

Participating in Another Agency's Transit Study

In regions serviced by multiple transit operators, one operator's study is an opportunity for other operators to be involved. Indeed, by working within another operator's study, it is possible to find ways for transit to perform better for the whole region. The Seattle and Houston examples demonstrate this.

- In **Seattle,** a multiple-operator region, King County's Metro-Transit participated heavily in the development of fellow operator Sound Transit's Regional Transit System Plan and a subsequent alternatives analysis. The Sound Transit plan calls for developing light-rail transit in King County, which would affect the services delivered by Metro-Transit. Metro-Transit's participation in the Sound Transit study allowed the two agencies to address operational issues around use of the downtown Seattle transit tunnel. Metro-Transit runs buses through the tunnel, and the potential introduction of light rail to the tunnel presented a whole range of shared operational issues which the two providers needed to address. The study provided an opportunity to do this.

- In **Houston,** Metro was an active participant in the study by the Houston Galveston Area Council (Houston MPO) of the financial and logistical feasibility study of commuter rail in the US 290A corridor. While the corridor is beyond Metro's service area, Metro is part of the team evaluating the consultant's work on the study. The advantage to being at the table is that Houston Metro can help to ensure that any proposed rail project complements Metro's existing and planned transit network.

When the MPO Leads the Study

The MPO may be the appropriate candidate to lead a corridor study, especially when the MPO brings significant staff and other resources to the study and has a multimodal perspective. Several transit operators interviewed reported a preference for MPO-led transit alternatives analyses because of benefits discussed below.

- **Greater Credibility for Transit Projects.** A transit-oriented study managed by the MPO may have more credibility among regional stakeholders than a study produced independently by the transit operator. Local officials, partner agencies, and the public may be more likely to view the study conclusions as serving the region's interest, not just transit's interest.

- **Greater Potential for Transit Consideration in Highway Corridor Studies.** The MPO can bring a broader regional and multimodal perspective to a highway-oriented corridor study. As with MPO-led transit studies, this may bring greater credibility for the study results overall. When an operator pushes for transit improvements in a highway corridor study, the MPO can lend credibility to the transit proposals. Said one operator, "The study looks like a regional study with the MPO leading it.....The MPO is very objective; they're not cooking the numbers in our favor."

- **Tackling Controversial Issues.** Where regional stakeholders are likely to assume opposing positions on corridor issues, the MPO can provide a neutral lead. Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) Planning Manager Kristina Younger (in Albany where BRT and light rail advocates were contending) explains, "The MPO took the lead on making BRT the preferred alternative,...taking it to the next step of detailed scoping, and getting local municipalities to buy in." The MPO "is moving the region toward consensus on the preferred alternative and this has shielded us from the initial controversy over light rail versus BRT."

Kristina Younger
Planning Manager
Capital District
Transportation Authority

Another example comes from the San Francisco Bay Area. The US Route 101 corridor has experienced significant residential and commercial development, and

rapid population growth in recent decades. The congested corridor connects Marin, Sonoma, and San Francisco Counties, and is an important regional transportation link. Earlier planning studies had proposed the addition of HOV lanes, but scarce funding prevented their construction. Local counties have also proposed rail transit in the corridor. Although potentially controversial, the region's MPO began discussing the possible use of tolls to help finance a high-occupancy toll (HOT) lane in the corridor. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) Deputy Director of Policy Therese McMillan reflects, "It's easier for MTC to look at that option. HOT lanes are potentially controversial. In such cases, we can give cover to a wide range of issues that cause controversy at the local level."

Therese McMillan
Deputy Director of Policy
Metropolitan
Transportation Commission

- **Access to MPO Funding.** Some operators also reported that their MPO was an important source of funding for transit studies. Transit operators who could not provide their own funding for a study have successfully approached the MPO to lead the effort. In cases where planning in a regionally important corridor might be neglected due to scarce funds, MPO sponsorship can provide a way to get important studies off the ground.

- **The MPO Straddles Turfism.** In the San Francisco Bay Area, the MPO leads corridor studies when a potential project has a high profile in the legislative arena or when a corridor spans multiple counties, serving an important regional function. An MPO-led study can eliminate the need for localities to have joint agreements when advancing such a study, and can also neutralize turf issues when it is unclear who should be in charge at the local level.

- **Expanded Staff Resources.** Another advantage to an MPO-led study is the staff resources the MPO can provide. The relative staff sizes of transit operators and MPOs vary from place to place, but where an MPO has a well-sized and capable staff, the MPO may be a logical choice to lead a corridor effort. Ron Barnes (formerly with COTA) reported having a longstanding agreement with the MPO to assist with long range planning efforts: "Our staff was not big enough to take the lead and do all the work, so we used the MPO staff. They had a good technical staff, especially for modeling. We had a healthy working relationship with the MPO through the years, and their work products have been top quality."

  On the flip side, several transit operators expressed frustration with the level of transit planning tools and capabilities at the MPO. Said one operator, "They don't have staff and are not in the business of hiring consultants. Everything there takes forever to get done." Another remarked, "The MPO doesn't make it a high priority to do transit planning. The MPO doesn't do transit planning."

Potential advantages to an MPO-led corridor study are evident in the example of Salt Lake City's Utah Transit Authority.

In Salt Lake City, MPO is the Way to Go

For many years, the Wasatch Front Regional Council (Salt Lake City MPO) led alternatives analyses with the support of Utah Transit Authority, the transit agency. Says former Director of the Wasatch Front Regional Council, Will Jefferies, "Their staff realized the transit system impacts communities it goes through. [A] study done by the MPO took UTA out of an adversarial role. The Regional Council did EIS for all transit projects while I was there...Having the MPO do an EIS is a fantastic advantage for a transit agency...you have the buy-in of the community and other affected agencies. We don't do analyses without full cooperation of all the modes. We get stakeholders involved too. We would not have formal public hearings—we'd have open houses where anyone could be involved in equal level. We tried to get the point of view of the general community and not of special interest groups alone. The MPO doing it over transit is a big advantage...For many years across the country, we stood alone in that practice."

Hybrid Approaches to Studies

In some regions, responsibility for a major corridor may be shared among two or more agencies. Where transit is closely involved, it can benefit.

- **Dallas** Area Rapid Transit is working with the MPO on a number of rail corridors outside of the DART service area. These corridor planning efforts have not advanced to the alternatives analysis stage yet, but DART is collaborating with the MPO at the systems planning level with an eye toward DART later leading the effort. "Because we are so involved with the MPO on an overall basis, we have established a routine agreement for how studies are generated and how they go through the planning process and feed the RTP. We have established procedures for moving the studies along," says DART Senior Manager of Capital Programming. "Nothing falls through the cracks. We always know what each agency is doing, and we can anticipate what our role will be. We know that in certain corridors, because it comes from our process, that we'll be the implementing agency."

- **St. Louis'** Transportation Corridor Investment Group (TCIG) has received much attention for its collaborative approach to corridor efforts. The TCIG leads all major investment studies and alternatives analyses in the region. It is composed of two state DOT staff; two St. Louis Metro staff, the transit provider; and two MPO staff. The group is managed by an MPO employee, and they are housed within the MPO's offices. The TCIG originated in a 1996 MOU. "All agreed that it was essential that the staffs sit together and work together," says former St. Louis Metro official Susan Stauder.

East-West Gateway Council of Governments (St. Louis MPO) Director Les Sterman says the TCIG is a "successful collaboration" that works effectively to smooth the planning and design stages of major projects. BSDA (the transit agency) participates when we plan a major highway project. There are good staff relationships …the TCIG has helped to develop relationships between the MPO and implementing agencies—we work side-by-side with the agencies as opposed to handing things off in a series. Design and implementation goes much more smoothly."

Stauder says the TCIG's collaborative approach to major transportation studies keeps the discussion of the financial viability of a project in front of the region, so the region can make decisions about highways and transit in an atmosphere where all the information is on the table. This has been very important. The group also helps to build a broader consensus for transit projects that are developed. "If there were less public discussion and community engagement, the system that would be operated would not be as acceptable to the community as it is under this process."

II.3 Promote Land Use Integration

"You can't separate transportation and land use. The whole issue of [traffic] congestion is about how we accommodate future growth."

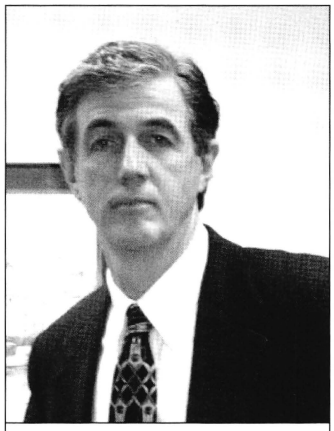
— Sam Williams, President, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce

Communities across the country are turning to new land use policies and programs as a means to reduce worsening traffic congestion and improve quality of life. According to the Growth Management Alliance, almost half the states and a growing number of local governments (particularly those representing urban central cities) are pursuing or adopting "smart growth strategies."

These evolving land use measures are highly supportive of transit, and FTA has sponsored a number of programs and policies to strengthen local land use/transportation relationships including their previous "Livable Communities Initiative," the ongoing Joint Development program, and the promotion of TOD. A Congressional mandate that land use be a major New Start criterion for transit sponsors seeking Federal major capital investment funds, combined with numerous local success stories, has led to dramatically heightened interest in improved land use integration. Transit operators are particularly enthusiastic about developing the land around transit stations in ways that increase ridership, revitalize communities, and create an income stream.

A major obvious barrier to greater transit operator participation in land use decisions is that they have no direct control over land use—this is the purview of local governments. However, as many of you have demonstrated, there is still much you can do, with the MPO as an important venue and source of funding for this planning and coordination. Several strategies and programs uncovered in this study are discussed below. Those of you who wish for more information can consult recent publications sponsored by FTA, the Transportation Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), and others, as well as attend conferences such as APTA, Rail~Volution, and others sponsored by smart-growth organizations.

- **Albany** has traditionally had limited local land use planning, with minimal requirements for municipal master plans and consistent zoning. Seeing this as an opportunity, the Capital District Transportation Commission (Albany MPO) under John Poorman's leadership, proposed using the UPWP FHWA/FTA funds to encourage and nurture an improved local-level planning process, including the development of master plans, zoning processes, and corridor and special area studies. Although a local match is required, this is still a significant source of local planning funds. Kristina Younger, planning manager for the transit agency (CDTA), says her agency helped approve the program through their seat on the MPO Administration and Finance Committee, and thinks it's having a major impact.

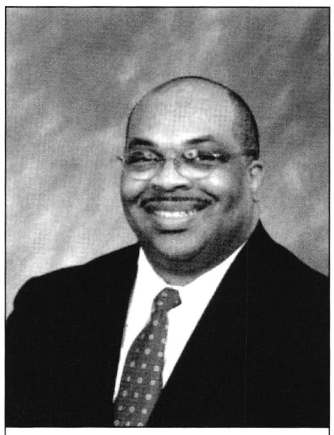


John Poorman
Staff Director
Capital District
Transportation Commission

"This 'Linkage Program' has spurred local planning...CDTA can make sure transit planning and pedestrian issues are addressed, whereas we didn't have a good forum for this before."

—Kristina Younger, CDTA

- The success of **Charlotte, North Carolina's** transit referendum approving a half-cent sales tax for transit is partly attributed to their development of a land use vision plan in support of their proposed transit plan with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission. The MPO's 2025 Transit Land Use Plan supports implementation of their "centers and corridors" vision plan, which proposed to focus office and residential development around transit stations, established five rail or BRT corridors, and increased feeder, local, and express buses to station areas and for surrounding towns. Former Transit Planning Manager Tim Gibbs explains why the land use/transit linkage was so compelling to the voters: "In communities that have been consistently expanding through suburban sprawl, the costs associated continue to escalate and reach a point that you can't afford it—water, sewer, etc." Because CATS is a department of the City of Charlotte, there is a strong commitment to coordinating land use with transit. General Manager Ron Tober believes that being a peer with the other department heads represents a great opportunity to obtain needed coordination with other departments like planning and utilities. He says, "My goal is to get TOD institutionalized as a way we do business."



Tim Gibbs
Former Transit Planning Manager
Charlotte Area Transit System

Local officials are now trying to win acceptance from the development community, working with the Urban Land Institute and local businesses to conduct a series of forums to show the development community that, as one official said, "not everyone wants a 1/4-acre lot on a cul-de-sac."

- **Columbus, Ohio** has several land use initiatives involving transit and local governments acting through the MPO, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission.

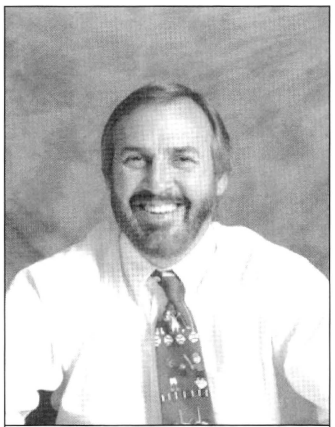
Their Linden Project is a new bus transfer station developed jointly with a child-care facility, children's clinic, and bank, with a nearby police station, city housing authority, office development, and other community amenities. Completed about three years ago, it sparked significant revitalization in the Linden area of the City.

More recently, the MPO, in close coordination with the City and COTA, sponsored a two-pronged TOD study. The first part, funded by the City, was an education booklet designed as a tool to assist COTA in bringing TOD to the community. The second, co-funded by both the City and COTA, was the development of sample TOD site plans. These included model plans for a developing suburb, a developed suburb, and an urban neighborhood.

- In **Denver**, the transit agency, Regional Transportation District (RTD), has embarked on a major joint development project—the redevelopment of the City's historic Union Station. Paid for by the City, RTD, and $20 million in CMAQ funds, this is a collaborative effort involving the state, city, MPO, and, of course, RTD. The district wants to convert the station into a transit center for the metropolitan area serving riders of light rail, commuter rail, regional buses, and bicycles. Adjacent development will include office, residential, and retail.

"A great project...we're all working together to make it a hub for the entire state."

— Guillermo Vidal, former Director
Denver Regional COG



Guillermo Vidal
Former Director
Denver Regional Council
of Governments

Bay Area Lavishes "Tender Loving Care" On Livable Communities

A particularly creative use of enhancement and CMAQ funds to encourage better land use development was developed by the Bay Area's MPO—Metropolitan Transportation Commission. They distributed half the region's enhancement money to the County Management Agencies and added CMAQ and STP money to the remaining enhancement funds to establish a new "Transportation for Livable Communities Program" (TLC). Launched in 1998, $54 million was distributed through this program over the six-year life of TEA-21.

Developed in collaboration with the Citizen's Advisory Council, TLC has unique program features - many designed to encourage grass-roots collaboration and participation. The program's basic premise is that small-scale transportation investments like streetscape improvements, transit-oriented developments, and related strategies can sometimes make a big difference in a community's vitality and identity. It encourages redevelopment that adds housing and economic vitality to older business and community centers. TLC offers three kinds of assistance: planning grants, capital grants, and housing incentives. All proposals must be collaboratively developed; they can't come from just one prospective sponsor. Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), for example, is teaming with the City of Richmond for a transit village.

BART officials helped develop TLC's criteria and their Michael Tanner (Manager of Capital Development and Grants) estimates that roughly one of every three TLC dollars benefits them, although not always directly. Because the program's main thrust is higher development around transit and transit-friendly development generally, all grants to communities adjacent to their stations will help increase BART ridership. One example is the BART station at 16th and Mission Streets, where San Francisco received funding to rehabilitate the adjacent plaza and make a more pleasant environment for pedestrians. Another is the Bay Fair station in San Leandro, where a TLC grant created access improvements concerning safe pedestrian passage from BART to an adjacent mall. According to Tanner, "This program benefits our patrons and us, but it is sponsored by the County of Alameda."

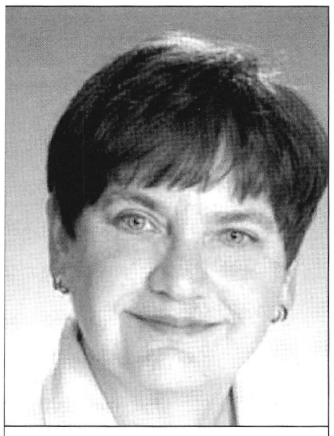
For more information on the TLC program, contact TLC Project Manager Ashley Nguyen at (510) 464-7809 or **anguyen@mtc.ca.gov.**

MTA
New York City, New York

Financial Planning Counts

"It's a barrier not to have our own taxing authority, like asking Mom and Dad for money—they set the rules and you get an allowance if you behave."

— Susan Stauder, former Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Economic Development, St. Louis Metro



Susan Sauder
Former Deputy
Executive Director
St. Louis Metro

Throughout the interviews, the importance to transit operators of a strong independent source of funding was stated repeatedly. Those of you without this advantage are often limited in your ability to make significant improvements to transit service in your regions. Observations of Metroplan (Little Rock MPO) Director Jim McKenzie are typical of the laments repeatedly expressed. "We so desperately need a dedicated funding source for transit. This has been a consistent recommendation of the MPO and of the Feds in certification reviews. It's been on the ballot twice but defeated both times. CATA (the local transit agency) has to go begging every single year from the general fund from its member cities. If one of them gets into financial problems, transit funding is often the first thing to cut. It's difficult to do much long range planning when the transit director has to worry about cutting routes and services frequency on an annual basis."

While you may seldom feel you have sufficient funding to provide the types of transit service truly needed in your regions, some of you do enjoy the benefits of significant dedicated funding. In agencies where there are sources of dedicated and other available funding, like New York, Denver, the Bay Area, Dallas, Salt Lake City, Charlotte, Portland, and Houston, there appears to be some correlation with the relative strength the transit operator has at the MPO table. This means that the better-off agencies probably have more opportunities to further improve their financial position than those with more limited resources—an unfortunate "chicken-and-egg" situation.

Clearly, obtaining new and increasing existing funding sources is a priority for virtually all transit operators. Equally apparent, however, is that this formidable undertaking is often fraught with obstacles at all levels of government.

While the Federal government has provided significant flexibility and funding opportunities for transit, especially since ISTEA, the operators who participated in this study feel that increasing transit ridership and worsening congestion warrant even greater Federal transit support. Many of you feel the largest state barriers revolve around limitations on use of the state gasoline tax. The failure of most states to raise or index this tax has created severe highway funding shortages, and gas tax restrictions in many states prohibit its use for transit. Additional problems relate to insufficient funds for transit as the result of sub-allocation funding decisions by states related to metropolitan areas and localities.

Still more obstacles exist at the metropolitan level, where, as described in Chapter I, local politics and modal preferences may undermine transit revenue enhancement initiatives that are perceived as threatening to road funding. Also, in this era of national fiscal austerity, new tax initiatives to support transit face increasing skepticism, particularly in communities without a strong transit tradition. Multi-state regions face even greater difficulties.

Given the significance of their effect on resource allocation, these impediments should be regarded as rallying points – important focal points for your involvement in MPO processes. In fact, by so doing, many of you have accomplished a great deal for transit service in your region. A growing national awareness of transit's role in managing metropolitan congestion, plus your own resourcefulness and perseverance, has contributed to transit's progress. The examples in this chapter discuss how especially proactive transit operators have overcome some of the barriers, with the MPO as the location of the negotiating table.

III.1 Help Determine the Cooperative Revenue Forecast

Estimating future available revenues to support transportation programs over the planning period may seem like just another technical task the MPO must carry out to comply with Federal regulations. However, this forecast may significantly influence future levels of Federal aid received by your metropolitan area, and the scope of the systems and services you are allowed to plan. Thus, it is far too important to be left to a purely technical process – without your involvement.

Estimating Revenues

The cooperative revenue forecast is at the core of the MPO's financial planning process. Although the MPO is responsible for producing the forecast, it needs to get much of the information from others, including FTA and FHWA, the state DOT, local transit operators, and local governments. The forecast is called "cooperative" because of the various sources of information it is based on, and because it requires a consensus among these revenue-generating units.

In addition, the forecast should reflect policy choices as much as statistical projections. All the reasonable options should be examined before settling on the one that all the responsible parties in the metropolitan area pledge to implement together. This requires financial planning to be treated at least as seriously and thoughtfully as any other type of planning, and perhaps more. The perceived availability of future year resources may effectively open or shut the door on implementing your priority projects. Also, early awareness of future resource limitations may spawn discussion of possible flexible funding, innovation finance, and other resource-generating opportunities.

Revenue forecasts are important because they establish the "fiscal constraint" within which Federally-assisted long range plans and short range transportation improvement programs must be constructed. Planned expenditures must not exceed the "reasonably anticipated" funding. What is reasonable, of course, is to be determined in the estimating process. Transit representatives must be involved to make sure that reasonably anticipated transit revenues are as fully reflected in the estimates as the highway revenues, so that long range and short range transit planning is not put at a disadvantage. Utah Transit Authority (UTA) John Inglish, commented, "If you constrain [the vision for transit] to what you have in the bank, you might as well pack up and go home." He went on to explain, "If you don't envision an aggressive program in the long range plan, you won't know what to ask for and when. It should not be outrageous, rather it should be what you think you may be able to do."

Applying Fiscal Constraint

The fiscal constraint concept has been widely applauded for making plans and implementation programs more realistic; they are no longer just wish lists that include many projects that will never be realized. Now, they describe transportation systems and specific projects that the region can expect to be built and operated as proposed. Following this approach, the MPO and its partners prioritize plans and projects to fit within the amount of available funding estimated by the "cooperative revenue forecast."

To some, the downside of this Federal requirement is that systems and proposals that cannot be financed cannot be included in adopted plans and implementation proposals. However, your region has the choice of simply "estimating" future revenues on the basis of past trends, or "forecasting" them in concert with effecting policy decisions to bring about a fiscal future more supportive of your programs. TEA-21 encourages highly participatory "vision planning" as the first step in the planning process. It may look forward 40, even 50 years to envision future development patterns and their implications for highway and transit improvements. In Utah, transit expansion for Salt Lake City and the Governor's "Envision Utah" visioning process went hand-in-hand. Long range visioning also provided the foundation for transportation planning in the San Francisco Bay Area, in metropolitan Washington, and in other places. Inglish sums it up, "First ask, what do we need? Then, how to pay for it? We can work this way."

In either case, reliable and timely financial data play a key role in helping transportation planners and decisionmakers understand how much revenue may be available under different policy scenarios that would raise or lower future revenues. As noted in Section I.6, Federal certification reviews remind everyone that these estimates must now cover operating and maintenance costs for the entire system in addition to capital costs of proposed new projects.

MPO revenue forecasts directly affect transit operators, and must be based solidly on reliable state and Federal-aid forecasts. Some states conduct cooperative revenue forecasting processes that involve MPOs in timely sharing of financial information to provide clear foundations for MPO forecasts. Future allocations of state and Federal funding among MPOs and other parts of the state are key components of this cooperative process. But other states do not do this.

Illustrative Experiences

To illustrate the issue, the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) cites Arizona. The 1998 certification review of the Maricopa Association of Government (Phoenix MPO) made a formal finding that cooperative revenue forecasting was deficient, and required that it change. As a result, Arizona developed a "noteworthy practice" using a statewide Revenue Allocation Advisory Committee, with roles for the director of one of the state's major transit agencies, as well as officials from MPOs and the state DOT. This arrangement was designed to afford MPOs a fairer share of available state funds. The AMPO Noteworthy Practices report also cites other states that have such processes.

Transit operators who participated in this study told us about a range of cooperative forecasting practices. In one instance, transit fare-box revenues were not being included in the cooperative revenue estimate, and in other instances, timely information on the availability of Federal-aid funds being funneled through the state DOT was not forthcoming. In addition, many officials reported that the state DOTs were not sub-allocating STP and CMAQ funds to metropolitan areas in predictable ways. Without timely information on the future availability of such funds, the MPO cannot make realistic estimates of future revenues, as required by Federal law. Similar deficiencies were noted in various MPO certification reviews (see Section I.6).

Transit operators also reported a range of experience with helping to develop cooperative revenue forecasts. Some just let the MPO do it alone. Others provide their own transit revenue forecasts to the MPO, which then automatically incorporates them. A few transit operators were unhappy with the limited amount of information and involvement they had in the supposedly "cooperative" processes. Nevertheless, several of you were more deeply involved.

- In **Albany,** the cooperative revenue forecast is an active topic of discussion at the Capital District Transportation Commission (Albany MPO) committee level. The discussion involves the transit authority, the MPO, state DOT's regional office, and focuses on estimating a reasonable multi-year budget of funding by fund source for the MPO area. Without a formal method at the state level for cooperatively establishing budgets in each MPO area, the MPO participants in Albany fashion estimates around their assumptions of a fair share of various fund sources. The New York State DOT headquarters does provide resource allocation estimates to their regional offices, but these are not identical geographic areas to MPO areas; additionally the state DOT headquarters may significantly modify the allocations to regional offices after the MPO assumptions have been made. As a result, total aid, aid from specific programs, and potentials for funding flexibility are all discussed, but not fully resolved during the planning process.

For this reason, the current resource estimation process has plenty of room for improvement, according to MPO Staff Director John Poorman. The MPO is not given enough reliable information in a timely fashion to cooperatively develop a forecast on which it can rely. The time frame of the MPO's TIP development process is not well accommodated by the resource information from the state DOT. "We saw their numbers this year for the first time only after the 60-day public review period on our draft TIP had ended… It's a disconnect that doesn't acknowledge the MPO's needs to carry out a meaningful TIP process." As a result, "We had programmed more than they think we should have and were being held accountable." He notes that after discussion, headquarters negotiated new resource estimates that avoided a major re-programming effort by the MPO. He expressed hopes that a truly cooperative estimation process can be established up front to avoid such last-minute conflicts in the future. "We're not that far from having a commendable practice in New York, because the state DOT headquarters does sub-allocate to regions in an objective, defensible manner. What's missing is simply an explicit, timely negotiation with the MPO to establish workable budgets for TIP development."

- In **New York City,** the transit coordination agency, Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), considers the cooperative revenue forecast to be a policy mechanism, not simply an accounting tool. Although the state DOT resists making commitments to transit until the last minute, the transit agency pushes for better forecasting data with help from the MPO. Although they all believe in fiscal constraint, the transit agency feels it needs more flexibility than it gets, and greater ability to modestly over-program. This appears to be more competitive than a cooperative forecasting process.

- In **Santa Clara County,** California, the transit agency is a major source of tax revenue itself, and is centrally involved with the state and the MPO in developing the cooperative forecast. They like the fiscal constraint policy, because it supports prudent management and provides clear communication to elected officials about what is possible and what is not. Thus, if the elected officials want more transit than they can afford with current revenues, they know they need to develop a plan for additional revenue. And, that's exactly what they did in 1999-2000. The new plan went to referendum and won handily.

- In **Salt Lake City,** Wasatch Front Regional Council (Salt Lake City MPO) is very precise about fiscally constraining the TIP, revising it when necessary to keep it in balance. But the MPO treats the long range plan somewhat less precisely. "Nobody can guess what might be available in 20-30 years," says UTA GM John Inglish. "If you don't envision an aggressive long range program," he continues, "you won't know what to ask for and when. Staying within the bounds of what seems to be practical to accomplish," he suggests, "it seems reasonable to speculate on some future funding source to accomplish it. If you constrain it to what you have in the bank, you might as well pack up and go home."

- **Seattle** Metro Transit takes a similar view. They believe fiscal constraint is essential, but they also need to know enough about what they plan to do to make the case for additional resources. Thus, Metro's Eric Gleason concludes that his agency "needs both constrained and unconstrained plans."

Fund Raising Positions

Of course transit agencies are by no means all equal in their ability to acquire additional funding. The ability to obtain additional funding for transit follows in Section III.2.

III.2 Make the Most of Federal Flexible Funding Opportunities

"Baby Steps" Toward Flexible Funding

Since 1991, states and metropolitan areas have been able to transfer highway dollars to transit under the flexible funding provisions of ISTEA and TEA-21. A report by the Brookings Institution, *Flexible Funding for Transit: Who Gets It?*, identifies the potential for much greater use of that provision than current practice. During the seven-year period from FY 1992 to FY 1999, only $4 billion of the $33.8 billion potentially available was actually transferred from highway programs to transit – about 12.5 percent. As transit needs continue to escalate, one wonders why the amounts transferred are so small relative to what is potentially available. Why do some very powerful transit agencies accept caps on the amounts that can be transferred? Why do some of the less powerful get no flexed funding at all? Why are CMAQ and STP the only programs that usually get put on the table?

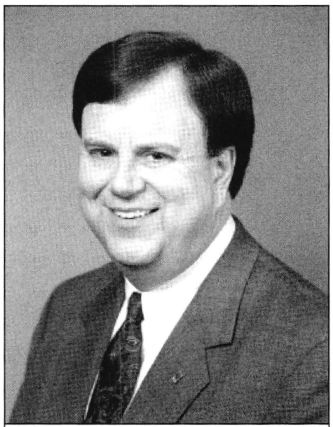
Four reasons were cited most often in the in-depth interviews:

The first is insufficient funding for highway improvements. Without enough money to meet basic highway needs, the prospects for transit interests to successfully compete for highway dollars obviously become more challenging. Portland's Tri-Met GM Fred Hansen notes that: "We do make substantial use of flexible funding, especially CMAQ and STP, but not as much as I would like. That's because the state has not raised the gas tax since 1991—not even adjusted it for inflation. Thus, there is great pressure from both road and transit operators for flex funds."

The second barrier, discussed in Chapter I, is that the voting membership of many MPO boards and committees have a majority of highway-oriented interests. Former Seattle Metro GM Rick Walsh explains his situation: "Four counties are in our MPO and even here in the Seattle Region, they all want roads. Certain dollar amounts are left over but there are a number of other transit operators at the table…I don't know how to break the barrier." MPOs of smaller geographic size seem better off. One Tampa transit official speculated on the impact of a local consolidation proposal. "We get quite a bit of enhancement, STP, and CMAQ funds. However, our metropolitan area has several single-county MPOs and there is both state and Federal pressure to consolidate them into one. If that happens, I'll have much less influence in the MPO and will probably lose money. Regional highways will probably take money away from my more local transit projects."

Third, in a surprisingly large number of regions, there is no systematic process with objective prioritization criteria for determining which projects will receive funding of any types, including flex funds. Instead, the process is often highly political, with contenders making presentations and lobbying for votes. One participant in such a process notes, "Everyone likes the status quo to a certain extent. The problem is that the other participants don't want any process—process means more work and uncertainty as to how much money they have." Las Vegas transit GM Jacob Snow feels that "Even though a more formal process might mean that transit could lose out (because we just don't know), I am still in favor of a more objective process." Most of you in regions that have objective technical processes report that these greatly benefit transit.

Finally, the desirability of greater sub-allocation was mentioned by several transit officials. Claims Walsh, "more sub-allocation would certainly help—we do quite well with what's sub-allocated now. My boss, County Executive Ron Simms, is pushing for more dollars to be sub-allocated to the MPOs, bypassing the state. Under this scenario, the MPO would become more significant."



Rick Walsh
Former General Manager
Seattle Metro

Other barriers to flex funding, in no particular order, include:

- project cost overruns that necessitate the programming of additional program funds, thereby reducing any amount that might otherwise have been flexed;
- the perception that transit should get flex money only if the highway sponsors cannot spend all the dollars in the various programs;
- the sense in some places that the SDOT uniformly restricts flex funding;
- limited availability of resources for non-Federal match; and
- a tacit acceptance that agreed-upon caps are all that can be obtained.

Several of you commented that the administrative approval process for flexing is cumbersome and time-consuming. Santa Clara County VTA's GM, Pete Cipolla, indicates that they do not do flex funding for this reason. They just use the sales tax for transit and program all FHWA funds for highways. "This greatly simplifies our paperwork and clearance process," Cipolla explains. Finally, in a few places, there are formal restrictions on the use of flex funds. In Houston, there was an exemption to Federal law prohibiting the use of FHWA program funds for transit unless the City passes a referendum. This obviously made flex funding much more difficult. In Chicago, the MPO, Chicago Area Transportation Study made a formal policy decision not to use STP for transit.

"Tampa has problems with flex funds that have to be processed by the state, and then have to go to FHWA as well. It's a long complicated process, very discouraging, and hardly worth the effort. There are not good processes and feedback loops to keep the money moving along."

—Sharon Dent, former Executive Director, HART

To varying degrees, many of these barriers can be addressed with your active involvement. Some of you may be setting your sights too low, content with flex funding or other state support. Recognizing this, Tampa's Sharon Dent candidly notes that, "It may be that our expectations are so low that when you get anything, you're thrilled—you're thrilled when you get a little." A number of transit operators also reported fear of "rocking the boat" as a self-imposed constraint because they do not want to jeopardize local relationships and other SDOT funding they receive. By raising your goals and implementing strategies to improve your bargaining position at the MPO table, you may be able to secure more funding.

The remainder of this section presents a sampling of the strategies some of you have used to get flex funding.

- The **Columbus** transit agency, the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), has a good working relationship with their MPO, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, and has taken advantage of opportunities to flex dollars for transit. Mike Greene, former Director of Planning, reports that he is particularly pleased with the MPO's TIP reporting process. It identifies when highway projects run into problems—especially environmental difficulties—and grind to a halt. These projects are not tossed out of the TIP, but their funding gets pushed back, presenting an opportunity for everyone to compete for the unspent funds from that fiscal year. COTA has benefited from these circumstances and has been able to accelerate pipeline projects, especially their bus replacement program. Greene says COTA is "happy to be there if MORPC (the MPO) needs projects to spend the money more quickly—we can fill that role for them."

  Greene also reports satisfaction with flex funding, in large part because of COTA's good working relationship with their MPO (See Section I.3). They have used flex funds to support:

  - bus replacements;
  - corridor studies like the Major Investment Study for the North Corridor LRT Project;
  - a study of regional rail freight;
  - installation of bike racks on buses; and
  - a multimodal downtown terminal.

- Albany's transit agency has benefited from flexible funding, receiving about $750,000/year in CMAQ funds to support a large ITS project (described in Section I.5) and $5 million in STP funding for a large intermodal facility. The transit agency planning manager Kristina Younger reports, "When there's CMAQ on the table, we're one of the strong competitors."

- **Albany's** transit agency enjoys a receptive forum for flexible funding for many reasons, including:
  - The flexing barriers in New York State were first broken by powerful and transit-needy New York City; after that, other cities clamored for the same consideration.
  - The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) emphasized mobility—if the best way to improve it was to support a transit need, then that was what was done—funding was flexed to make it happen.
  - Albany is always a special case because of its role as the state capital and the presence of a major Amtrak station.
  - The transit operator's planners do their homework, claiming, "Knowledge is power," and presenting strong cases for funding in an objective decision-making environment. Proposals are derived from the MPO's long range plan, so it is easier to obtain acceptance for them.

  Younger reports that all negotiations for highway/transit flex funding happen in the open forum of the MPO's Planning Committee. They take candidate projects and do consistent fact sheets for each. She says, "It allows us to make our case—doesn't always mean we will get them."

"I think they (Albany's transit agency) fare pretty well."

— John Poorman, Capital District Transportation Commission Staff Director

- **Memphis** also reports success in getting CMAQ money and over the past few years, has averaged $750,000-$1 million per year. Projects funded include small suburban transit centers, bus replacements, fare revenue equipment, operating assistance for expanded service, and an AA/DEIS for a rail corridor study from downtown to the airport. Transit agency Director of Capital Planning Tom Fox explains that, "When all the traffic signal projects that are CMAQ-eligible for highway projects are done, there's more left. There's a ranking for CMAQ projects and in the last few years, there's been more money than projects; so it was easy for us to get more dollars. This has not been the case for STP, which also has rankings but is handled separately. These are the only two flexible finding sources that ever get out on the table."

Dallas, Texas

"Politicians let CMAQ be used in less concrete-oriented projects, less roads. STP funds are seen as funds to be used for concrete and roads, to get extra lanes."

—Carter Gray, Transportation Planning Coordinator, Memphis Urban Area MPO

- The **New York MTA** receives about $55 million of flex funding per year, mainly from CMAQ, but also from STP. However, there seems to be a tacit understanding that they are "capped" at this amount because the MPO and DOT feel the need to spread the money around.

  "There are many mouths to feed," says one agency official, "It is sometimes possible for MTA to get more for special projects."

Planning and funding in the region is almost totally decentralized due to the belief that the metropolitan area is too big and complex to set priorities in real "planning school fashion." European and selected U.S. metropolitan area experiences like Dallas, (discussed in Chapter II) suggest that regional decisionmaking can be possible and when achieved, is usually preferable from a transit perspective.

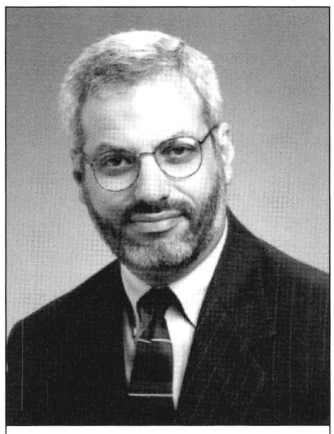
Still, within this current funding environment, the MTA stands out in understanding the levers provided by the MPO process and vigorously using them all within the constraints of their institutional setting.

However, a key concern of local officials is the timeliness of the flexible funding approval process. MTA Grant Management Director Sarah Rios describes the problem: "To obtain flex funding, I have to go though the Regional NYSDOT person, then the main DOT office, then FHWA—there are layers to this process, it's arduous. It should take 3-6 months (compared to the current 6-9 month time frame)."

Several of the study participants reported caps on flexible funding. While these may be negotiated in some type of political arena, one might consider whether transit could fare better in a regional prioritization process, based on objective criteria, as Jacob Snow advocates. When this is not possible, could a fallback strategy be for transit operators to enlist more allies, including citizens and business groups along with elected officials (Section I.4) to press for better "deals?"

- In **Salt Lake City,** UTA GM John Inglish reports receiving a "significant amount" of flexible funding. He attributes this to the attitude of the public and elected officials about public transit, which has radically changed in the five years since LRT was introduced to the community. Previously when his agency was attempting to develop LRT, there was enormous negativism about it. Now the line is built and is hugely successful, with ridership exceeding projections. Now everyone is getting on the bandwagon, according to English, with a majority of Salt Lake City residents and officials vigorously supporting transit, making it easier to get additional flexible funds for transit.

As demonstrated above, many transit agencies have benefited from the CMAQ program as illustrated by Houston Metro's $63.4 million under this program since 1996. However, East-West Gateway Council of Governments (St. Louis MPO) Executive Director Les Sterman believes that transit should not continue to depend on CMAQ dollars because when air quality improves, as it did in his region, CMAQ dollars will decrease or disappear. Transit operators should make broader use of other flexible funding programs like STP and transit operators need to make a broader case for transit than just air quality. "I'm not a big believer in air quality as a lever for transportation decisionmaking," says Sterman, "Air quality problems are going to go away at some point, and then what do you do? Go back to the old way of thinking? …Air quality has helped us in that we [have] gotten CMAQ and we have flexed it to transit. This has been helpful, but it hasn't changed our relationship with the transit agency. People have to have transportation choices, and those are important whether there are air quality problems or not." Sterman's region has moved from nonattainment to maintenance status, but he hopes this won't mean that state and local officials will stop investing in transit.



Les Sterman
Executive Director
East-West Gateway
Council of Governments

III.3 Aggressively Explore Additional State and Local Revenue Sources—Bringing the Money to the MPO Process

"It's important for transit operators to try for other funds instead of going to the same well—look for other opportunities…There is traditional transit and highway money, but there are also more non-traditional Federal, state, and local funding sources which can be of use. Try to get funds from many sources and get the MPO comfortable with that. It's not easy, and has to be worked at."

— Bill Millar, APTA President

As communities demand more and better public transportation, in the face of state and local reluctance to increase traditional user fees such as state gasoline taxes and fares, reliance on a broad range of new transit funding sources is growing. The most significant of these is the local sales tax, secured most typically through a referendum. The Surface Transportation Policy Project confirms this finding in their 2002 report *Measuring Up: The Trend Toward Voter-Approved Transportation Funding*.

Support for (and from) Public Referenda

To offset the dramatic drop in fuel tax revenues and rising demand for additional resources for transit proposals, transit operators increasingly are turning to voter referenda, seeking permission to generate the new revenues they need. They most often call for a sales tax increase, but sometimes include vehicle registration fees, property taxes, taxes on real estate sales, local income or payroll taxes, or impact fees levied on new development. In many of these cases, MPO partners proved to be invaluable allies in building support for the proposed referendum. And, once these revenue increases were enacted, the transit operators enjoyed elevated priority in the plan/program development work of the MPO that helped them.

Los Angeles, California

Here are some examples you reported:

Charlotte's successful November 1998 referendum now generates approximately $50 million per year for transit, enabling the Region to embark on an ambitious multiple-corridor fixed guideway expansion program. A focus on land use plus strong support from business, the public, and the mayors all contributed to the success. With the support of many of the elected officials serving on the MPO Board, the referendum passed on its first try. The referendum also created the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC), which included key members of the MPO. Since transit was a City department, it was well represented on the MPO because a weighted voting structure gave the City and County combined a majority of the votes. The six towns in Mecklenburg County also had MPO votes and passed resolutions requesting the County to put the sales tax referendum on the ballot. A subsequent bond referendum in 2002 provided an additional $20 million for infrastructure on the City's South Corridor Light Rail along with $60 million for street and sidewalk improvements. Having other champions is often critical in getting a referendum for transit passed, and the MPO may be an important source of those champions.

Chamber of Commerce Leader Bob Morgan Describes the History and Strategies of Charlotte's Financing Initiative

In 1994 the Mayor and Chairman of the County Commission appointed a "Committee of 100" composed of business and community leaders as well as local governmental officials to study the future transportation needs of the region. The Committee ultimately endorsed a "Center and Corridors" plan addressing both land use and transportation, and floated the concept of a sales tax to finance the proposed transportation improvements, but it was not well received. Two years later, a powerful all-business Committee of 10 was established to revisit the funding issues, this time winning state authority to have a referendum, which was successfully held in 1998.

Morgan attributes their victory to Charlotte's strong corporate leadership, an intellectual underpinning for their "vision plan," a strategy of not defining transit too narrowly, complementary ballot initiatives for sidewalks and roads in addition to transit that were voted on separately but "bundled together" in public communications, and public support for taking action to solve the region's mounting congestion. His advice to other communities contemplating a referendum: "Be prepared for a long road, but be persistent and don't give up."

Dallas' transit agency, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), is partly funded through a local sales tax created with state permission through a local referendum. The agency received $325 million in 2002. DART also has bonding authority, which was approved by voters in a 2000 referendum, which allowed DART to issue $2.9 billion in bonds. The MPO for the region, the North Central Texas Council of Governments, has been very supportive of DART's efforts to find new revenue sources. In addition, the MPO created a Sustainable Development Grants Program that helps support these efforts using CMAQ funds. These grants support transit-oriented development by providing pedestrian and bike access to transit.

Houston Metro is supported by a 1-cent sales tax obtained through a referendum that generates around $400 million annually. After rejection of an initial bond issue, Metro officials initiated a major program to build community relationships, proactively solicited public input, and employed several service improvement and advertisement strategies. In the subsequent referendum, voters overwhelmingly approved a $2.57 billion bond issue. In November 2003, by a narrow margin, voters resisted a multi-million-dollar campaign to reject rail expansion and approved Metro's ambitious $7.5 billion regional transit plan.

Las Vegas' MPO is the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Southern Nevada. Under Nevada law, the RTC is given exclusive authority to operate a public transportation system within their jurisdictions. As the RTCs are also highlighted under state law as logical choices for designation as MPOs, the two major RTCs (Washoe County around Reno and RTC of Southern Nevada around Las Vegas) are both combined transit providers and MPOs.

The RTC of Southern Nevada has long been active in advocating transit funding and service extension. In 1984, the RTC advocated a sales tax to create a public bus system to replace the private system that used RTC buses, but the initiative failed. In 1990, a "Question Ten" initiative that included a sales tax for public transit grouped with street and highway improvements was passed and the Citizens Area Transit (CAT) agency was created. In 2002, the RTC followed up on a recommendation from a broad-based community coalition to develop a second "Question Ten" that also passed, adding another tax on developers, aviation fuel, and retail sales. This initiative is expected to raise $2.6 billion over the next 25 years to pay for roads, highways, and an expanded transit system. The issue's success is partly attributed to close collaboration between the transit agency and the road interests, under the auspices of the MPO, in developing a joint funding proposal.

Non-Traditional Local Taxes

"Local funds are gold, state funds are silver, and Federal funds are tin."

— A local transit official

As expressed in the above quote, local funds can be a desirable source of additional transit funding. Some operators we spoke to found local funds flexible and easier to administer than Federal funds.

There is a myriad of possible local funding sources. General funds, sales taxes, property taxes, and automobile excise taxes are among the most common but there are numerous others, including parking charges, special assessments, and utility taxes.

If you are seeking funding for a major capital investment, TCRP Report Number 89, *Financing Capital Investments: a Primer for the Transit Practitioner*, may be a helpful resource. It identifies four different types of local funding strategies: debt mechanisms, capital lease financing mechanisms, equity and partnership mechanisms, and credit enhancement mechanisms.

Portland seems fairly typical of most medium-sized transit properties. Despite gas tax restrictions, they have managed to find other ways to fund transit—state appropriations, local ballot measures for bonds secured by local property taxes, an employer payroll tax, etc.

San Francisco Bay Area Has a Strategic Expansion Plan

Like all metropolitan regions, the Bay Area has a fiscally constrained long range plan (LRP) designed to finance transportation plans and programs. Because its LRP budget is only large enough to sustain the existing system and accommodate marginal improvements, local officials have also prepared a more ambitious and optimistic unconstrained supplemental plan that would serve expected growth and improve congestion levels.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the Bay Area's MPO, took the lead in developing this plan with significant input from Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), other regional transportation, and the public.

The final "Bay Area Blueprint for the 21st Century" identifies $33 billion worth of unfunded transportation needs in the region of which about one-tenth ($3.8 billion) are addressed in the early plan phases. Transit improvements represent about two-thirds of the total project costs.

The Blueprint Plan does not outline final investment priorities. Instead, it serves as a ready reference in developing coherent packages of programs and projects when funding opportunities arise.

User Fees

Thirty states have prohibitions in their state constitutions or statues on using state gasoline taxes for public transportation services. Even where these taxes can be used for transit, many states have failed to raise the gas tax for many years or even to index it to inflation. When states feel they have insufficient funding to meet their highway needs, they are often reluctant to entertain proposals to flex Federal money to transit. The American Road & Transportation Builder's Association reports that there have been significant breakthroughs since 1997, 14 state legislatures have voted to raise their gas tax for transportation investment purposes, a total of 17 times. However, the Brookings Institution notes that only three states have raised it enough to keep up with inflation. The gas tax increases range from 1 cent per gallon (North Dakota) to 6 cents per gallon (Ohio). While most of the new gas tax revenues are slated for highway maintenance/improvements, some of the money also benefits mass transit. Even if there are no direct paybacks, it is still often in transit's interests to support gas tax increases because alleviating highway funding shortfalls may free more general state money for transit investment and/or make it easier to compete for flexible funding.

"The role of gas tax restrictions in funding is quite significant. There is very little state funding for transit. The gas tax is limited to road purposes. That's a large reason why flexible STP and CMAQ have a heavy weighting toward transit...In addition, when transit funding has been approved by the voters, they have a mandate to invest in better transit. What we try to accomplish is multimodal."

— Andy Cotugno, Metro (Portland MPO)

Toll revenues are another form of user fee that sometimes benefits transit. While traditionally viewed as difficult to administer, tolling is now more feasible and attractive given current technological innovations like the East Coast's EZ Pass. In New York, surplus toll revenues totaling roughly a billion dollars annually from MTA bridges and tunnels are used to support the needs of NYC Transit, as well as the MTA's commuter railroads. New Jersey Transit has benefited from this for years and after London's recent congestion pricing success, some U.S. cities are considering new or

increased tolls and related strategies to both relieve congestion and provide new revenue streams. Transit officials could advocate and share in the benefits of this new trend.

Denver, Colorado

Non-Traditional State Funding Sources

Although not always a part of the formal metropolitan planning process, MPOs often support transit agency efforts to secure independent funding sources and bring them into the process. This improves their status as a service provider and elevates their status at the MPO table.

Two states where transit operators have flexible state funding were of particular interest—Maryland and California. According to a July 2003—Number 60 TCRP Research Results Digest (*Characteristics of State Funding for Public Transportation—2002*), both states ranked in the top six for per capita funding of transit. At $118 per capita, Maryland was second only to the District of Columbia, and California was sixth at $64 per capita. If ranked by total level of investment in transit, California was first with $2.1 billion, and Maryland was sixth with $627 million.

"In Maryland, Transit Has Gotten Its 'Fair Share', And Then Some"

Maryland has the only SDOT in the country that has all modes under one roof—highway, transit, airports, and ports. Funded by the consolidated Transportation Trust Fund (TTF), funds go to whatever the priority needs of the moment might be—there are no set-asides or divvying up of the pie based on other considerations. Funding comes from the gas tax, vehicle registration, license fees, a state corporate income tax, and other taxes. While Maryland might not flex much funding to transit outside of CMAQ, they had traditionally provided much more money to transit than other states from their own "flexible fund." In FY 2002, transit received 30 percent of the state's total transportation capital budget. A local official estimates that, considering combined operating and capital funds, transit has traditionally taken about 60 percent of the TTF funds. He also noted that because the TTF funds were not as economically cyclical as other state taxes, there was more certainty. Thus, while outside the norm, the Maryland experience has been exemplary from a transit funding perspective.

Another state with a large pot of discretionary funds has been California. According to the TCRP Digest number 89 report cited above: "State funding supports the full spectrum of transit needs—capital, operations, and planning. The primary source of state transit funding continued to be revenues from the 1/4 cent of the 7 1/4 percent retail sales tax flowing through the local transportation fund established by the Transportation Development Act. Revenues are collected by the state and returned to each county according to the amount that was collected in that county…State gasoline and diesel sales taxes flow to transit through the 'State Transportation Assistance Fund/Public Transportation Account." Finally, approximately half the governor's traffic congestion relief program in 2000 ($2.6 billion) was dedicated to transit, with $574 million allocated in 2002.

As described, this money flows down to the counties, which also have broad discretionary control over their money. The TCRP report also found that regional transportation agencies in California more than doubled the state transportation improvement program (STIP) funds available for transit from FY 2000 to FY 2002. A Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) official reports high satisfaction with this flexibility and "launders" money around to different programs

to expedite project development as much as possible. As a County Management Association with both road and transit responsibilities, VTA tries to avoid using FHWA funds for roads where possible because of the lengthy National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) reviews that its programs trigger. Thus, VTA has used local dollars earmarked for transit for highways while spending Federal highway dollars on transit.

Other states that have contributed heavily to transit in the past (New Jersey, New York, Delaware, Pennsylvania) obtain their funding from a range of sources, including general funds, motor fuel taxes, toll roads, heavy truck fees, diesel fuel taxes, motor vehicle registration fees, casino revenues, corporate franchise tax surcharges, long lines taxes, base petroleum business taxes, realty taxes, public utility taxes, auto rental taxes, vehicle lease taxes, tire fees, lottery funds, and general state obligation bonds.

For transit operators in need of supplemental funding, it may be worthwhile to explore what funding sources other states use for transit, and to try tapping them in your state. Pennsylvania provides an example of how this might be achieved on a small scale. In the 1990s, Bill Millar (who then headed Pittsburgh's transit agency) faced state gas tax restrictions requiring a constitutional amendment to gain access to that fund source for transit. Realizing this would be a tough battle that, if won, would only serve to further shrink an already under-funded pot of money, he instead collaborated with Lou Gambaccini (then head of Philadelphia's transit agency) to go after a combination of five-state "junk taxes" [his term]. Business leaders from his Citizen's Advisory Committee helped by going to Harrisburg to testify before the state legislature, and the initiative passed. Unfortunately, the largest revenue generator, a utility tax, became much less productive after a few years when deregulation occurred. Still, this example serves as a model for how a transit agency might gain additional state funding—be resourceful in identifying supplemental revenue sources, partner with other major transit operators in the state, and enlist the support of others who may be helpful—including business leaders, citizens, and local elected officials. Again, the more funding transit agencies can bring to the MPO table, the more powerful they are likely to be.

Although most states are reluctant to propose a gas tax increase, Salt Lake's Wasatch Front Regional Council has done so, beginning in 2006, which includes a half-cent jump in Utah Transit Authority's (UTA) share in the sales tax revenue to cover future transit needs. Utah State DOT has also proposed a 5-cent increase in the gas tax by 2005—and every six years thereafter—to pay for road projects. UTA supports both proposals even though only the MPO proposal would directly benefit transit. They feel that by alleviating highway funding shortfalls more general state money may be available for transit investment and/or make it easier to compete for flexible funding.

Washington, D.C.

METRO
St. Louis, Missouri

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the Bottom Line

The MPO's TIP translates the long range transportation plan into specific fundable projects that have individual cost estimates, proposed schedules, and committed sponsors. To be eligible for Federal funding, a highway or transit project must be included in the MPO's long range plan and TIP. In areas that have air quality problems (classified as "nonattainment" or "maintenance"), the TIP must also include all regionally significant projects regardless of funding source.

The TIP process is where everyone is supposed to "come together" to consider and prioritize projects identified in the long range plan, as well as in recent sub-area and corridor studies. The projects listed in the TIP for implementation are limited to those that can be afforded with resources identified by the MPO's cooperative revenue forecasting process.

Once the TIP is adopted, the status of projects must be tracked and adjustments made throughout the year to achieve the greatest benefits for transit. This tracking information may identify slippages in the schedules of highway projects that may provide opportunities to propose transit alternatives.

No actual TIP development process is neat or simple. Different MPOs approach the task in very different ways. No matter how it is approached in your area, you need to be at the MPO table advocating your needs when the TIP is being prepared, tracked, and adjusted, just as you need to be there for preparing the long range plan, conducting corridor studies, and cooperatively estimating future revenues. All the gains you make at those other tables can be leveraged—or lost—at the TIP table. A strong follow-through by you at the TIP table is the only way to ensure fair treatment of transit in your region.

Transit operators and MPO staff revealed how this process plays out in different places.

In **Dallas,** they use a "Partnership Program" for determining how to use flex funds. All of those funds are pooled at the MPO, the North Central Texas Council of Governments, and MPO members decide a regional focus for the TIP. Projects are then selected based on their support of that regional focus.

In **Albany,** the Capital District Transportation Committee MPO has set up a process for soliciting projects and evaluating them using both quantitative and qualitative criteria. The criteria are objective, focusing on moving people, not just vehicles, and therefore are applicable to transit, as well as non-traditional projects. The MPO also recently acquired a greatly enhanced capability to do transit demand modeling, allowing the transit agency to make an even stronger case for CMAQ funding.

Even in a state where the state DOT has a strong emphasis on highways, "We're mostly satisfied. We get our share of projects, particularly from CMAQ. We're the only transit agency in our region, so our proposal is generally accepted without modification. Our basic strategy is to use formula dollars to meet basic needs, and to go after flexible dollars for strategic projects."

— Kristina Younger, Planning Manager, Capital District Transportation Authority

In **Seattle,** with a number of operators, it's a very bottoms-up process. The Puget Sound Regional Council (Seattle MPO) has four counties, with transit operators mostly based within those counties. In addition, a new multi-county transit agency was recently created, and the MPO has a transit operator committee representing the larger transit systems in the region. Most transit projects come to the MPO already prioritized within their individual county-based processes. Those individual proposals add up to the MPO transit plan.

Tampa, Florida has the opposite situation. With Florida's practice of designating counties as the MPOs, the Tampa metropolitan area has four single-county MPOs in one area. However, the dynamic is not too different than in Seattle—with its county-by-county TIPs. In the most heavily urbanized county in the Tampa region (Hillsborough), the transit agency has a voting seat on the MPO policy board and has traditionally received quite a bit of enhancement, STP, and CMAQ funding.

Some other areas also have TIP processes that rely heavily on decisions made outside of the MPO process. Often the transit

system, especially when there is a dominant one, submits its own transit TIP component for inclusion in the MPO TIP. In the **Nation's Capital,** the three-state configuration of the region produces separate District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia TIP components, which are strongly influenced by the three state DOTs, and are incorporated into the metropolitan TIP.

The powerfully legislated and heavily funded countywide congestion management agencies (CMAs) in **California** (illustrated by cases in the San Francisco area, which has more than 20 transit operators) complicate the area-wide role of the MPO. The single-county MPOs in **Florida's** multi-county metropolitan areas provided additional evidence of an emerging trend toward sub-metropolitan decisionmaking in large urban areas.

In these cases, the primary purpose of the MPO process is to consolidate and reconcile differences between the sub-regional transit components of the TIP. Bringing these separate parts together is critical, requiring transit agencies to be at the table as it occurs. This is no time for surprises. And, TIP development processes that use objective, mode-neutral criteria may benefit transit most.

Once the TIP is negotiated and adopted, attention shifts to **tracking implementation and results.** Do the TIP projects get funded and completed? Are they on schedule and within budget? Do their costs and timing schedules need to be adjusted? If a project cannot progress on schedule, which one(s) should take its place? And, how well do transit operators stay "at the table" throughout this process to take advantage of opportunities to advance their projects as they arise?

Systematic reporting on the implementation status of the TIP was an explicit requirement set forth in TEA-21, calling for such a report annually. Transit and MPO officials in areas including Albany, Charlotte, Denver, Pittsburgh, Salt Lake City, and New York City indicated that improved information sharing among regional implementing agencies is necessary to make this tracking system work well. Transit operators need to monitor TIP implementation on an ongoing basis throughout the year in order to be in a position to capitalize on any additional funding opportunities brought about by schedule delays in other projects. Two of the MPOs participating in this study have adopted policies to reprogram TIP funds that are not being used in a timely way. In **San Francisco,** they call it the "Timeliness of Funds Policy," and in **St. Louis** they call it the "Reasonable Progress Policy." These are essentially "use it or lose it" policies. In some cases, highway projects get into the TIP without the same kind of rigorous planning required for transit projects, and then get slowed down by environmental reviews, unexpected cost overruns, or other factors. Sometimes this provides an opportunity to move transit projects ahead to avoid losing Federal funds already assigned to the metropolitan area.

In **Columbus, Ohio,** the MPO assigns a full-time staff member to monitor the TIP projects, maintaining a file that is published monthly and sent to the Technical and Citizens' Advisory Committees. It is also posted on the MPO website. In fact, many projects do not stay on schedule. Because everyone can track delays, as projects drop behind, MPO partners have an opportunity to propose others as substitutes. The MPO and transit authority work together closely on this, and transit has benefited.

The Seattle MPO produces a TIP project status memo every two months, which is addressed by the Regional Project Evaluation Committee, the group responsible for preparing the TIP. The memo draws attention to projects that are lagging and uses peer pressure to spur remedial action. This process has benefited greatly from strong state DOT and MPO cooperation. Both agencies send project information as soon as it's available. The state DOT stays on top of this information and connects the MPO to reporting systems already in place between them and public works staff in the local jurisdictions. The DOT appreciates the MPO's work to track those 86 jurisdictions. MPO Regional Strategy Advisor King Cushman commented, "I've heard from other MPOs that relations with some of their state DOT representatives are not so great; I guess we're lucky."

Adoption of the TIP is not the end of the process. Tracking projects and making adjustments throughout the year has potential payoffs for transit agencies willing to follow through.

The T
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

APPENDIX A

Self-Assessment Checklist For Transit Operators

Key findings from the study, *Transit at the Table: A Guide to Participation in Metropolitan Decisionmaking*, were used in preparing the following questions for transit operators to use in assessing their profile and participation in metropolitan planning. The indicators are generic and not exhaustive. As such, these questions should be regarded as only the starting point for subsequent discussion focused on local issues.

While answering these questions may illuminate issues and opportunities, perhaps the greatest value of this work is in the resulting discussion among planning partners. The checklist may be applied effectively in facilitated group settings, as a useful catalyst to discussion, and with less attention to scores. "Yes" responses generally suggest more positive Transit at the Table experiences.

Transit at the Table experiences:

1. Representation on the MPO Board and Committees.	**YES**	**NO**
• Is the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between your agency and the MPO up-to-date reflecting policy, responsibility, or funding changes?	——	——
• Does the MOU identify explicit roles for transit operators in the MPO process?	——	——
• Are you a voting member of the MPO Board (or have Board representation)?	——	——
• Are you represented on, and active in, MPO policy and technical committees?	——	——
2. Involvement in Planning and Special Studies.		
• Are you involved in developing the metropolitan area long range plan?	——	——
• Do you monitor progress and products of the metropolitan planning process?	——	——
• Does the transportation plan integrate public transportation elements with highway, pedestrian, bicycle, air, and other modes?	——	——
• Is the metropolitan transportation plan coordinated with local land use plans?	——	——
• Are transit-supportive development policies and strategies included in the plan?	——	——
• Are transportation system management, maintenance, and operations included?	——	——
• Does the MPO plan include plans/policies that highlight the benefits of transit?	——	——
• Does the MPO plan consider economic development, job access, air quality, social services, health and safety, and/or historic preservation?	——	——

	YES	NO
• Are you involved in educating the public or promoting regional comprehensive plans and politics?	____	____
• Are you involved in corridor studies to ensure that all modes are considered?	____	____
• Do you propose work tasks for the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)?	____	____
• Does the UPWP respond to transit needs?	____	____

3. Involvement in Funding and Implementation.

• Are you involved in identifying, prioritizing, and scheduling projects for the TIP?	____	____
• Do you feel that the TIP prioritization process is objective and fact-based?	____	____
• Do you feel that you receive a fair share of the region's project funding?	____	____
• Is the MPO's status reporting of TIP project funding timely and reliable?	____	____
• Are you involved in cooperatively forecasting revenues for the Plan and TIP?	____	____
• Are your revenues considered and incorporated in these estimates?	____	____
• Are you able to assume future revenue enhancement plans and proposals?	____	____

4. Involvement in Planning Certification Reviews.

• Are you involved in the Planning Certification Review process?	____	____
• Do you provide materials for the FTA-FHWA desk review?	____	____
• Are you involved in the on-site review?	____	____
• Have you suggested other agencies/people for the Federal team to contact?	____	____
• Have you identified issues for the Federal review team to consider?	____	____

METRO
Seattle, Washington

APPENDIX B

Study Methodology and Characteristics of Selected Areas

The purpose of this study is to document and share successful practices that transit operators are using to get involved in decisionmaking for planning and programming the allocation of Federal-aid highway and transit funds in states and areas where transit agencies operate. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) enhanced the opportunities for transit operators to get involved in and influence the metropolitan planning and decision-making processes required for receiving Federal transit and highway aid.

Federal Transportation Planning Requirement

Federal planning requirements under these two acts apply to transit operators differently in large metropolitan areas (areas with populations greater than 200,000 known as transportation management areas, or TMAs for short), in smaller metropolitan areas, and in non-metropolitan areas. In each metropolitan area, the "appropriate" transit agency must have a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Federally recognized metropolitan planning organization (MPO). These MOUs outline how transit agencies will be involved in the Federally required comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing transportation planning process for the entire metropolitan area. However, the Federal program requires that the transit agency be on the MPO policy board only in TMAs, and then only if the MPO has been redesignated since the 1991 enactment of ISTEA. Whether or not the transit agency is on the policy board, Federal laws give transit agencies in TMAs more leverage in the MPO process than their counterparts have in smaller metropolitan areas.

In non-metropolitan areas, where no MPO planning process is Federally required, the state department of transportation (SDOT) is required to carry out statewide transportation planning in consultation with local officials having transportation responsibilities. In most non-metropolitan areas, local officials have responsibilities for transit as well as for roads and highways, and the SDOT administers Federal aid for rural transit. In this way, Federal law requires SDOT consultations with rural and small town transit officials, but it provides few guidelines for how to conduct these consultations. Federal laws require statewide and metropolitan transportation planning to be coordinated with each other.

Transit Operators

Several thousand transit operating agencies exist across the nation. Some operate high-capacity heavy rail and/or light rail systems in addition to buses, and sometimes paratransit services for the elderly and disabled as well. Others operate only buses or paratransit, or some combination of the two. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) uses separate Federal-aid grant programs to support urban and rural transit operators and works with separate national associations representing these two components of the nation's transit community. The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) represents the urban transit operators, while the American Public Works Association (APWA) and the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) represent the rural transit operators.

Most major metropolitan areas now have a dominant transit operator responsible for at least the rail and bus systems and these large urban systems account for 80 percent of the nation's total transit ridership. Increasingly, however, significant local feeder and circulation systems are separate. As a consequence, many major metropolitan areas have multiple transit operators. Smaller urban and rural areas have large numbers of small operators.

Focusing the Study

To assist FTA and the consultants with this study, a 21-member Technical Working Group (TWG) was established. It consisted of one elected official from an MPO Policy Board and a broad range of senior professionals representing US DOT headquarters and regional staff, SDOTs, MPOs, transit operators, and national associations (see Table B-1). As the study got underway, the consultants worked with the TWG and FTA to focus the work on what would be most useful and practical to accomplish.

At the direction of the TWG, initial plans to sample all segments of the transit industry gave way to a focus on TMAs alone when it became clear how diverse the areas and transit agencies are. Initial criteria for selecting transit operators were sensitive to including diversity within the following factors:

- Metropolitan size (large, small, and non-metropolitan);
- Modes operated (rail and/or bus);
- Revenue sources (state, local, fare-box ratios, etc.);
- Geographic dispersion;
- Complexity of jurisdictional and organizational structures; and
- Air quality attainment status.

The fundamental decision to focus on TMAs exclusively was based on: (1) the need to limit the number of cases so they could be explored in enough depth to enable transit operator practices to be shared in usable form with other operators—and not do a superficial statistical survey; (2) the fact that there were only about 120 TMAs (compared with all 340 MPOs and thousands of local transit agencies)[1] , and (3) greater familiarity with the larger transit operators, which helped to inform the choice of which ones might yield helpful lessons. Simplifying the selection criteria allowed the consultants, FTA, and TWG to develop a short list of potential TMAs to study.

25 TMAs Studied

Although initial plans suggested a goal to explore MPO participation by transit operators in 50 areas, this number was cut in half as the need to also consult with MPO officials in the selected TMAs was recognized. Ultimately, the 25 TMAs shown in Figure 1 were agreed upon. They include air quality attainment and nonattainment areas, cases in each of FTA's 10 regions, areas with and without rail transit, areas that are relatively unified versus those that are heavily sub-regionalized, transit operators believed to be proactive in MPO relationships who could offer valued "lessons learned," and TMAs with other representative characteristics. Every effort was made to select a diverse cross-section of metropolitan areas with populations over 200,000.

1. When the study commenced, the impact of the 2000 Census on the number of MPOs was not yet apparent. Current information from the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations indicates there are 383 MPOs nationwide, 149 of which are located in TMAs.

Characteristics of Selected Areas

The transit operators in each of the 25 selected TMAs were identified; they are listed in Table B-2, along with their website addresses for more information.

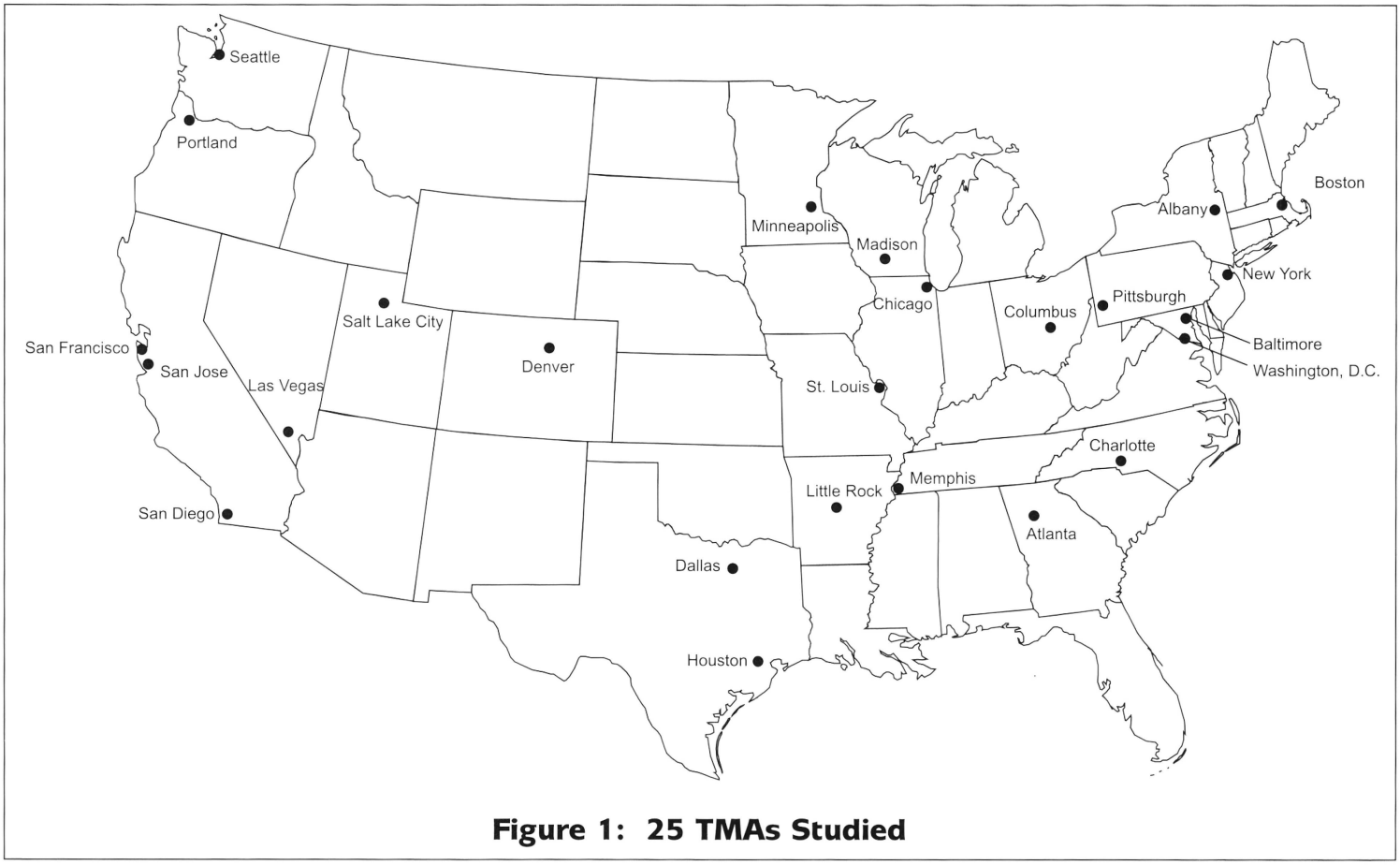
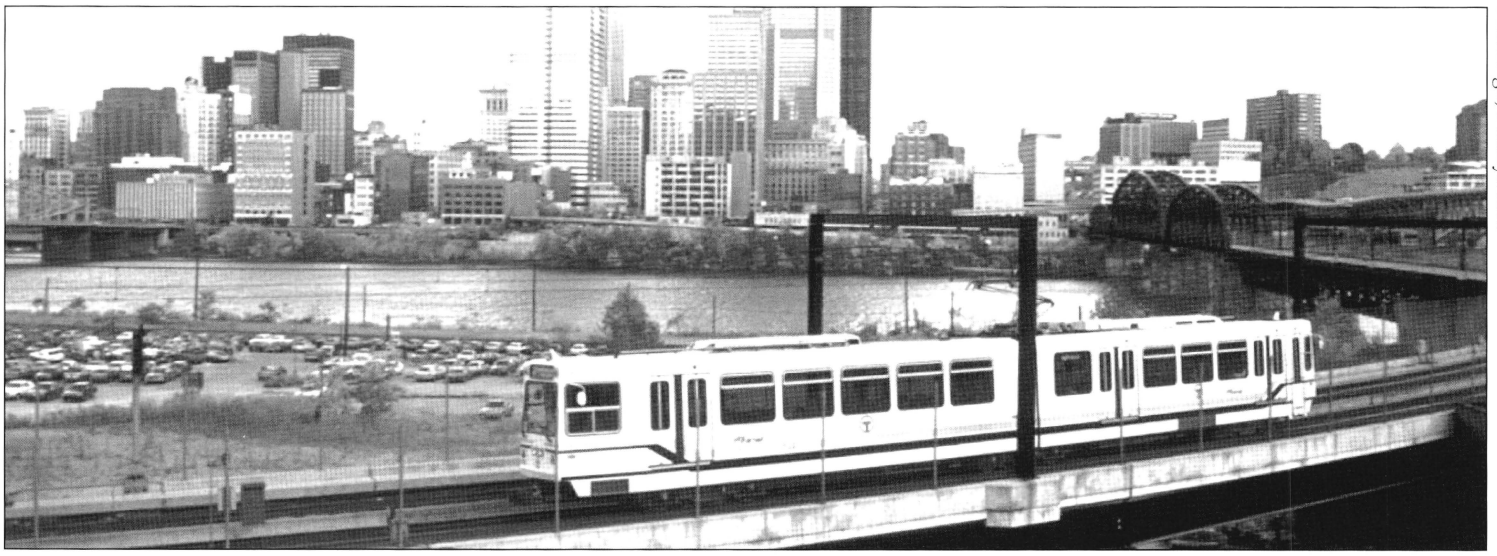


Figure 1: 25 TMAs Studied

They represent a variety of organizational structures and means of local financing, including units of local or state governments funded through general tax revenues, special districts with or without taxing powers, and independent authorities with full authority to levy and receive tax revenues, whether they come from property, sales, or other taxes.



Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Table B-1: Transit Operators Interviewed

State	City/Area	Transit Operator	Website
AR	Little Rock	Central Arkansas Transit Authority (CATA)	www.cat.org
CA	San Diego	Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB)	www.sdcommute.com
CA	San Francisco	Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART)	www.bart.gov
CA	Santa Clara	Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)	www.vta.org
CO	Denver	Regional Transportation District (RTD)	www.rtd-denver.com
DC	Washington	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)	www.wmata.com
GA	Atlanta	Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)	www.itsmarta.com
IL	Chicago	Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)	www.transitchicago.com
MA	Boston	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	www.mbta.com
MD	Baltimore	Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)	www.mtamaryland.com
MN	Minneapolis	Metro Transit	www.metrotransit.org
MO	St. Louis	Metro (formerly Bi-State Development Agency)	www.metrostlouis.org
NC	Charlotte	Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS)	www.charmeck.org/Departments/CATS
NV	Las Vegas	Regional Transportation Commission (RTC)	www.rtcsouthernnevada.com
NY	Albany	Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA)	www.cdta.org
NY	New York	Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)	www.nyct.org
OH	Columbus	Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)	www.cota.com
OR	Portland	Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District (Tri-Met)	www.trimet.org
PA	Pittsburgh	Port Authority of Allegheny County	www.ridegold.com
TN	Memphis	Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA)	www.matatransit.com
TX	Dallas	Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)	www.dart.org
TX	Houston	Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (Metro)	www.ridemetro.org
UT	Salt Lake City	Utah Transit Authority (UTA)	www.utabus.com
WA	Seattle	King County Metro Transit (Metro)	http://transit.metrokc.gov
WI	Madison	Metro Transit System (Metro)	www.ci.madison.wi.us/metro

It is interesting to note that among the 25 TMAs studied in this report, 13 transit officials report having a vote on the MPO Policy Board, whereas 12 do not. Representation on the Policy Board is not necessarily indicative of transit's overall success in multimodal metropolitan planning. The interviews with transit officials summarized in this report cite several successful examples of cooperation and satisfaction although those with direct representation argue that it is preferable to have a direct vote and several of those without such status indicated publicly or privately that they desired a seat at the table. Those few reporting satisfaction with indirect Board representation feel adequately represented by their elected officials. Most are also active in other Board committees they feel do much of the supporting work for decisionmaking by the Policy Board. All but one of the transit officials interviewed report direct representation via transit staff in a technical, policy, or other committee of the MPO.

Table B-2: Transit Participation in MPO

State	City/Area	Transit Vote on Policy Board?	Transit Represented in Technical/Policy /Other Committee?
AR	Little Rock	Yes	Yes
CA	San Diego	No	Yes
CA	San Francisco	No	Yes
CA	Santa Clara	No	Yes
CO	Denver	No	Yes
DC	Washington	Yes	Yes
GA	Atlanta	No	Yes
IL	Chicago	Yes	Yes
MA	Boston	Yes	Yes
MD	Baltimore	No	Yes
MN	Minneapolis	No	Yes
MO	St. Louis	Yes	Yes
NC	Charlotte	No	Yes
NV	Las Vegas	No	No
NY	Albany	Yes	Yes
NY	New York	Yes	Yes
OH	Columbus	Yes	Yes
OR	Portland	Yes	Yes
PA	Pittsburgh	Yes	Yes
TN	Memphis	No	Yes
TX	Dallas	Yes	Yes
TX	Houston	Yes	Yes
UT	Salt Lake City	No	Yes
WA	Seattle	No	Yes
WI	Madison	Yes	Yes

As indicated below, selected TMAs included areas of varying attainment of Federal air quality standards, for one or more pollutants (e.g. ozone, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, et al.). The attainment status indicated in Table B-4 was reported by the transit official interviewed for this report and may not indicate the specific pollutant for which the area is in nonattainment status. The air quality status for a particular TMA is important in the context of flexible funding. Only areas in maintenance or nonattainment of Federal air quality standards can access funding from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program. Transit is typically key among strategies to reduce both congestion and air pollution and can benefit significantly from flexed CMAQ funding.

Table B-3: Air Quality Status

State	City/Area	AQ Status (Self-reported by Transit Operators)
AR	Little Rock	Attainment
CA	San Diego	Serious nonattainment for Ozone
CA	San Francisco	Moderate nonattainment for Ozone
CA	Santa Clara	Moderate nonattainment for Ozone
CO	Denver	Maintenance
DC	Washington	Serious nonattainment for Ozone
GA	Atlanta	Nonattainment for Ozone
IL	Chicago	Severe nonattainment for Ozone
MA	Boston	Nonattainment
MD	Baltimore	Severe nonattainment for Ozone
MN	Minneapolis	Attainment
MO	St. Louis	Nonattainment for Ozone; nonattainment for CO
NC	Charlotte	Maintenance
NV	Las Vegas	Nonattainment for CO; moderate nonattainment for PM10
NY	Albany	Nonattainment for Ozone
NY	New York	Severe nonattainment for Ozone
OH	Columbus	Maintenance
OR	Portland	Maintenance
PA	Pittsburgh	Nonattainment for CO; maintenance for PM10
TN	Memphis	Nonattainment for Ozone
TX	Dallas	Nonattainment for Ozone
TX	Houston	Severe nonattainment for Ozone
UT	Salt Lake City	Nonattainment for PM10
WA	Seattle	Maintenance
WI	Madison	Attainment

During six years of Federal transportation spending under ISTEA, nearly $3.3 billion were flexed from FHWA and obligated by FTA. This increased during the next seven years under TEA-21 to nearly $6.2 billion, for a 13-year total of approximately $9.4 billion. Though summing to a relatively small amount of total Federal spending across all surface transportation

modes, these amounts represent significant resources invested in local transit services. These funds have supported the maintenance and continuance of established transit services in older areas and the expansion of new services in fast growing areas of the country. The decision by local decisionmakers to flex or not to flex is based upon a number of considerations that are unique to each metropolitan area. (See Section III.2.)

For information purposes only, the funding amounts obligated under both ISTEA and TEA-21 for each of the 25 TMAs selected for study in this report are reported in Table B-5. No inference is made here regarding the range in flex amounts, both between ISTEA and TEA-21 as well as among TMAs. Decreases in total funds flexed from ISTEA to TEA-21, for example, do not necessarily indicate a corresponding decrease in support for transit at the local level; rather, the fluctuation may reflect different needs and ways of addressing those needs during each Federal funding period.

Table B-4: Funds Flexed to Transit Under ISTEA And TEA-21

State	City/Area	ISTEA Total Flexed to Transit	TEA-21 Total Flexed to Transit	TOTAL Flexed to Transit (1991-2004)	Change in Funds Flexed to Transit From to ISTEA to TEA-21
AR	Little Rock	$3,495,000	$5,614,443	$9,109,443	$2,119,443
CA	San Diego	$23,486,983	$56,054,766	$79,541,749	$32,567,783
CA	San Francisco	$18,800,900	$110,263,436	$129,064,336	$91,462,536
CA	Santa Clara	$38,829,750	$161,361,876	$200,191,626	$122,532,126
CO	Denver	$3,396,000	$64,904,292	$68,300,292	$61,508,292
DC	Washington	$71,416,439	$56,122,854	$127,539,293	-$15,293,585
GA	Atlanta	$13,929,221	$108,821,000	$122,750,221	$94,891,779
IL	Chicago	$40,683,032	$9,538,284	$50,221,316	-$31,144,748
MA	Boston	$124,285,896	$51,145,186	$175,431,082	-$73,140,710
MD	Baltimore	$23,712,000	$89,630,770	$113,342,770	$65,918,770
MN	Minneapolis	$4,800,000	$0	$4,800,000	-$4,800,000
MO	St. Louis	$14,331,090	$85,449,875	$99,780,965	$71,118,785
NC	Charlotte	$0	$5,547,240	$5,547,240	$5,547,240
NV	Las Vegas	$0	$14,154,967	$14,154,967	$14,154,967
NY	Albany	$10,748,000	$21,591,250	$32,339,250	$10,843,250
NY	New York	$724,371,599	$408,577,102	$1,132,948,701	-$315,794,497
OH	Columbus	$4,943,600	$20,375,268	$25,318,868	$15,431,668
OR	Portland	$71,294,109	$92,051,311	$163,345,420	$20,757,202
PA	Pittsburgh	$123,811,154	$54,920,050	$178,731,204	-$68,891,104
TN	Memphis	$1,420,000	$8,428,000	$9,848,000	$7,008,000
TX	Dallas	$26,704,000	$17,855,323	$44,559,323	-$8,848,677
TX	Houston	$0	$56,299,006	$56,299,006	$56,299,006
UT	Salt Lake City	$5,228,020	$26,001,871	$31,229,891	$20,773,851
WA	Seattle	$26,782,834	$27,672,128	$54,454,962	$889,294
WI	Madison	$1,600,000	$0	$1,600,000	-$1,600,000

Interpretation and Use of Results

Because of the small number of cases and the way they were selected, the results of this study should not be interpreted as having statistical validity. The results are insightful and practical to use, but they are based on too few cases to generalize in a statistical sense; therefore, no summary statistics based on the results are presented here.

Each metropolitan area is unique. It has its own culture based on its long-term political, social, economic, legal, and planning experiences. What works in one place may not work in another. Although there is certainly no single best way to improve planning, strengthen interagency relationships, or tap additional revenues, all the study areas shared the need to do so. The insights gained in this study provide sound tools and advice to build upon; they can have general applicability in the hands of seasoned professionals and policy officials charged with getting the most out of the MPO process by taking advantage of the wide range of opportunities it provides to strengthen transportation planning in their areas. Much of the advice is simply good political strategy for any transit operator, regardless of whatever Federal requirements may be in place.

Discussion Guide

To develop a body of structured insights about transit operator participation in the MPO process, a discussion guide was designed to use in contacting each area's primary transit agency. The discussions were conducted by telephone. Attempts were made to talk with the agency's GM. Where that was not possible, the senior transportation planner was substituted. Most discussions lasted at least one hour, with many taking longer. In many cases, follow-up calls to the original contact or another person in the transit agency was required to fill in additional information.

Based on the transit agency's information and the review of the most recent MPO certification report (discussed in Section I.6 above), follow-up calls to the MPO executive director or transportation planning director. The purpose was to confirm, refine, or get a second view of key points. These calls usually were shorter than those with the transit agency contacts. Additional follow-up calls were made to other regional participants as needed to fill in information gaps.

The discussion guide for transit operators was designed to ask about the transit agency's involvement in each aspect of the MPO process. A brief outline follows.

1. Identification of the Transit Agency and Discussant, including some background information such as:
    - Basic characteristics of the agency
    - Extent of flexible funding being used
    - Highlights of the most recent MPO certification review
2. Organizational Structure of the Transit Agency
3. Experiences with Involvement in the Following MPO Practices
    - Policy Board
    - Technical committee
    - Membership in other MPO committees
    - Transit-oriented alternatives analysis or MIS
    - Highway-led or MPO-led corridor study
    - Participation in MPO committees in which the transit agency is not a member

- MOU with the MPO defining transit agency roles and relationships
- MPO long range transportation/land use planning
- Development and use of the transportation models and forecasting process
- TIP development
- Project selection process
- Reporting on status of projects in the TIP
- Incorporating transit agency plans into MPO plans
- Cooperative revenue forecasting for fiscal constraint
- Negotiating highway/transit fund flexing
- Developing the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- MPO certification process
- Other

4. Best Practices (self nominated)

5. Additional Opportunities (wish the transit agency could be involved, but is not now involved)

6. FTA/FHWA's Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program

7. Barriers Encountered When Participating in the MPO Process (rate on a 5-point scale from bothersome to prohibitive)

8. Importance of the MPO Process to the Transit Agency (rate on a 5-point scale from unimportant to essential, and comment if desired)

9. Importance of Other Partners in the MPO Process (more, same, or less important than the MPO itself)

    - SDOT
    - FTA
    - FHWA
    - Public Service Commission (or other regulatory body)
    - Individual local governments
    - Chamber of commerce or other business organizations
    - Civic or citizens groups
    - Mass media
    - National associations
    - Other (specify)

10. Anything of significance that was missed

11. Additional contacts that should be made

The consultants also conducted two focus group discussions with transit agency GMs at APTA's 2003 legislative conference, using an abbreviated set of questions to probe key issues focused largely on interpersonal and interagency relationships in the MPO process. A list of focus group participants is presented in Table B-5.

Table B-5: Focus Group Participants

Name	Affiliation
Barry Barker	General Manager, Transit Authority of River City (Louisville)
Joe Calabrese	General Manager, Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority
Peter Cipolla	General Manager, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (California)
Shirley DeLibero	Former President and CEO, Metro (Houston)
Sharon Dent	Former Executive Director, Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (Tampa)
William Hudson	General Manager, Memphis Area Transit Authority
Rick Walsh	Former General Manager, King County Department of Transportation/Metro Transit (Seattle)

The discussion notes are confidential, but key quotes illustrating general themes and best practices were cleared for us in this report.

In addition to this feedback, the study team analyzed all available FTA/FHWA certification reviews for the selected stud regions over the past six years as well as recent summary analyses provided by FTA. Internet and other research investigation were also made in the 25 study regions. Parsons Brinckerhoff local office managers and staff frequently provided valuabl background information.

MPO representatives were interviewed in depth from most of the 25 study transit agencies originally contacted to verif information obtained and to obtain the MPO perspective on various events and issues. Each interview was tailored to th specific local situation based largely on the information gained in the transit operator interviews. These interviews contribute enormously to the depth of the analysis and understanding and many MPO representatives are cited in the report.

Finally, other parties were contacted to round out the analysis including SDOT officials, citizen and business representative and others.

Throughout the study, TWG members provided valuable insight and advice to FTA and the study team.