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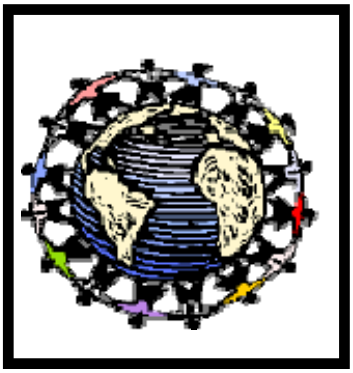


MPO/RPO COORDINATION

What is it?

The Charlotte Metropolitan region includes six transportation planning organizations--four Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and two Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs). Each of these groups handles transportation and transit planning for a specific geographic portion of the region. Coordination of these groups is essential to provide the necessary planning and funding to create a reliable transportation system that meets the region's economic, educational, and social needs. Coordination is also essential to ensure that transportation projects mesh with land use plans to promote long-term sustainability and to promote reduction in the growth of vehicle miles traveled (VMTs).

Costs

Major coordination costs include staff time for information-sharing and joint planning, and possible consultant contracts on major projects.

This Action Item can be implemented as a

- ☑ POLICY
- ☐ ORDINANCE
- ☑ PROGRAM

Shared Impact and Benefits

- By minimizing travel delays and traffic jams, a well-planned transportation system reduces idling and stop-and-go traffic--a major contributor to NOx emissions that form ozone. Ozone's direct health effects include asthma and respiratory problems.
- A coordinated transportation plan provides mode choices across jurisdictional boundaries more readily than separate, uncoordinated plans.
- A well-coordinated regional transportation effort minimizes "false starts" on projects, marshals financial resources for major regional needs, and ensures that four-lane roads in one community don't funnel into two-lane roads next door, just because transportation priorities and land use plans didn't mesh.
- Coordination of transportation planning supports coordination of land use planning, contributes to a rational mix of uses along corridors, and supports orderly growth.
- Coordination among transportation planning agencies ensures that the entire region is served by a workable transportation system that minimizes travel delays, maximizes safety, and promotes transportation options. The region can then promote its funding and construction needs with the unified voice of over 2 million people.

How long does this take to implement?

Depending on the formality of the arrangement, coordination can take as little time as a phone call or e-mail, or as much time as regular meetings and combined planning efforts.

The Bottom Line

- Coordination of transportation planning is essential to ensure that the region's transportation needs are met and that its long-term economic vitality is ensured. Coordination of transportation and land use decision-making is critical for "smart growth." Coordination of MPOs and RPOs in identifying regional needs creates a powerful voice to argue for funding, construction priorities, and additional multi-modal choices.
- Coordination doesn't have to take a lot of time and money but it does require commitment and attention to information-sharing and consensus-building.

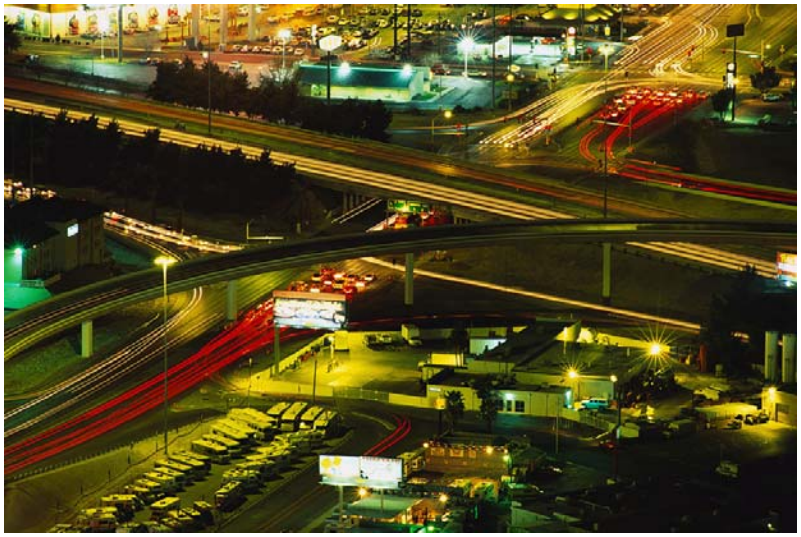
Interested? Read on!

Action Steps

1. Read the **Basic Information** section including the coordination summary provided.
2. Encourage representatives to MPOs and RPOs to support increased regional coordination through CRAFT, the Councils of Government, Committee of 21 and other means.
3. When land use and transportation projects under consideration in one area impact on another jurisdiction, raise the question of coordination, so that the need for coordination is emphasized regularly and frequently.
4. Adopt a policy at the local level that requires discussion of interjurisdictional impacts and priorities for proposed transportation projects, and work through the MPOs, RPOs, SCDOT and NCDOT to implement it (support Formal Information Sharing). The NC 73 Council of Planning provides a good example.
5. Participate in discussions of regional transportation coordination, and appoint representatives knowledgeable about community transportation AND land use needs and how those can fit into a regional transportation and land use framework (supports movement toward implementation of Joint Advisory Decision-Making coordination).
6. Support State and Federal funding for regional transportation planning that addresses the needs of the entire metropolitan area, and support the use of funding for development of a regional Transportation Plan that actively promotes a choice of modes (supports movement toward implementation of Joint Advisory Decision-Making coordination).
7. Actively participate in local and regional efforts to promote transit and multi-modal uses. Transit and shared rides reduce the number of single occupant vehicles on the road, which reduces VMT and has a measurable positive impact on air quality.
8. Be aware that to improve long-term environmental quality both transportation and land use planning will have to be better coordinated through formal information sharing and eventually joint decision-making of some type. This coordination is the a way to minimize congestion and protect the people and goods mobility in the regional over the long term.
9. Participate in programs aimed at tracking environmental benefits and costs.

Resources

- The cost for coordinating regional transportation planning among the MPOs and RPOs varies depending on the method of coordination used. The most common form of coordination in the region today is Formal Information Sharing. Given the complexity of the issues the region faces even this basic coordination needs to be enhanced. While it can be improved incrementally, it still will require added staff cost. Staff cost would include additional time on the part of MPO/RPO staffs attending regional meetings and/or the time of a central regional transportation coordinator to organize the effort.
- Funding for coordination will need to be considered an ongoing expense, because one-time coordination is not sufficient to promote continuous and comprehensive planning that supports both growth and environmental quality. Furthermore, for non-attainment areas, regional transportation plans will need to be submitted every three to five years, requiring a coordinated effort.
- Coordination of regional transportation plans will require the attention of a dedicated staff person with transportation planning expertise.
- Consolidation, sometimes discussed, involves less NO ADDED cost because it pools current planning money in one agency. However, it also would require considerable time to work through issues of bi-state project funding and may encounter considerable resistance.



Prepared by
Centralina Council of Governments
in collaboration with
Catawba Regional Council of Governments,
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Basic Information

- Transportation is widely recognized, along with water and sewer, as key infrastructure that determines how and where a region develops. Coordination of transportation planning, along with land use planning, throughout a metropolitan region, including its adjoining still rural counties, is critical to managing the growth that occurs in a region in a way that preserves quality of life.
- Responsibilities for transportation planning are established by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), MPOs and the State Departments of Transportation.
- Coordinated planning is a part of both federal and stare requirements, but the purpose and type of coordination required varies considerably. The next page is a coordination summary that describes the characteristics of different levels of coordination with Metrolina area examples of each.
- On the federal side, FHWA and the states designated Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for areas with an urbanized population of 50,000 or more with a density of 1,000 persons per square mile.
- MPOs are federally-recognized as having responsibility for transportation planning and inclusion in the MPOs' Long Range Transportation Plan is a requirement for a project's funding being included in the State's Transportation Improvement Program.
- MPOs receive their planning funds from Federal sources and local match.
- A number of states, including North Carolina, have adopted legislation encouraging the formation of Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) to do much the same type of planning in rural areas. SCDOT has long used the Councils of Governments to fulfill the RPO role, although they do not call them by that name.
- RPOs have only state recognition, and not any type of federal designation. RPOs receive their planning funds from the state which formed them.
- Both MPOs and RPOs are governed by Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs) that are composed of elected officials from member jurisdictions, and Transportation Coordinating Committees (TCCs) composed of staff.
- In North Carolina, GS 136-200 requires coordination among MPOs in metropolitan areas; in this region, this is accomplished through the Charlotte Regional Alliance for Transportation (CRAFT). CRAFT meets quarterly and includes the TCC heads of the various MPOs and RPOs as well as their staff; there is also an Executive Committee that meets on an as-needed basis. CRAFT was formed by Memorandum of Understanding among the MPOs primarily for information exchange and added RPOs in 2004. CRAFT has no staff or authority to make regional transportation decisions.
- A great deal of project-related transportation planning coordination currently occurs in the Charlotte region.
  - The MPOs and RPOs work together through the Metrolina Model Oversight and Executive Committees to develop a regional travel demand model that serves the greater part of the region. The effort was funded by NC and SC DOTs and the MPOs.
  - This modeling effort was expanded to include appointment of a coordinator of the transportation planning effort, with the position funded by the NC and SC DOTs, the MPOs and the RPOs, but this occurred on a one-time basis.
  - The NC 73 Corridor Study and Plan was the collaborative effort of 11 jurisdictions, 2 MPOs, 1 RPO and 3 Chambers of Commerce, as well as NCDOT.
  - The Metropolitan Transit Commission, governing CATS, includes non-voting representation from some areas outside Mecklenburg County. Additional multi-jurisdictional corridor studies funded locally, are slated for NC 3 and NC 150 from Lincolnton to Cherryville.
  - Most MPO staffs discuss the crossjurisdictional implications of long-range planning projects in the preparation of their long-range transportation plans (LRTPs). RPOs are becoming involved in this effort.
- The Regional Roads Committee supported coordination of transportation funding through their analysis of unmet needs in the region—that study found that the region had, in 2007, almost $4.6 billion in unmet road needs on projects of regional significance. This was an increase from $1.6 billion in 2000.
- Coordination of transportation planning across the non-attainment area will be essential because the entire area (including three MPOs and two RPOs) will fail if any single entity fails the transportation conformity test.
- MPO/RPO boundaries and other planning jurisdictions are shown in the map Page 5.

Tracking Progress

- Let Centralina Council of Governments know when you've joined the MPO/RPO COORDINATION program by contacting Carol Lewis at 704-348-2730 or clewis@centralina.org.
- Track your Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), commuting times and traffic counts. If these get higher, your air quality if probably getting worse and your transportation and land use planning may not be mutually supportive.
- Track your transit ridership. The more people ride or are in carpools, the fewer single-occupant vehicles on the road.

FAQ's

Q: Don't we run the risk of losing local influence on transportation priorities if MPOs and RPOs coordinate planning?

A: Not necessarily—it depends on how priority-setting is included in the coordination efforts. Different priority-setting models may preserve local influence on projects through voting structures. Furthermore, a regional push for local projects may result in their being funded at a faster rate than projects from areas that don't have coordinated priorities.

Q: How does MPO/RPO coordination help the fact that NCDOT just doesn't have enough money to build the projects we need?

A: MPO/RPO coordination can lead eventually to regional collaboration to identify and push for access to additional funding sources, which often can't be done effectively on an individual jurisdictional basis. In more metro regions of NC, there are a significant number of secondary roads that need improvement, but are not in "crisis mode" that gets them statewide funding priority. Regional coordination can look at ways to address both significant regional mobility needs as well as more local needs, whereas NCDOT's focus is moving statewide to Strategic Highway Corridors.

Q: What does MPO/RPO coordination have to do with environmental quality and sustainability?

A: MPO/RPO coordination really addresses environmental quality and sustainability at the intersection of land use/transportation decisions. Transportation planning currently does not always take into account some factors that are important for long-term sustainability—how the transportation plans mesh with proposed land uses, whether other modes of transportation than private motor vehicle are the most appropriate, and the impact of "induced travel." This should be done both within individual MPOs and RPOs, and across those planning boundaries, to be most effective. Without a total and consistent effort region-wide, it becomes too easy to NOT consider these factors, and to simply build roads and support/foster "sprawl" as growth occurs.

Q: **The Atlanta area has had a single MPO for a number of years, and it hasn't helped them with their environmental problems! So why would we be any different?**

A: Both Atlanta and Charlotte represent urban areas that really "took off" in terms of growth after the introduction of the automobile. Land use patterns didn't support transit, and the absence of geographical barriers to growth and the plentitude of less-expensive land fostered lower rather than higher densities. Consequently, the approach to transportation planning in Atlanta, as in most regions of the country, was to resolve traffic problems by building more and bigger roads for everyone's car to use. We can learn from Atlanta's experience—but only if we plan on a regional, rather than on an individual MPO basis,

Who needs to be involved in implementation?

- The individual jurisdictions' governing boards, who appoint representatives to the transportation planning organizations and sometimes direct their votes
- MPO and RPO membership and staffs
- The Metropolitan Transit Commission/CATS
- NC and SC Departments of Transportation
- Councils of Governments
- CRAFT: The Charlotte Regional Alliance for Transportation
- The Metrolina Regional Model Oversight and Executive Committees
- The Chambers' Regional Roads Committee (RRC)
- NC 73 Council of Planning

Intersecting Interests

IDLE REDUCTION POLICY

Air quality is impacted by transportation, not only by cars but by trucks. Idling is a huge contributor to ozone and diesel traffic is a huge contributor to PM2.5 (particulate matter). A transportation system that works well region-wide can minimize delays.

CONNECTIVITY FOR MULTI-MODAL TRANSIT

MPO/RPO coordination can increase communication about best practices in linking land use and transportation planning. Connectivity is one of these best practices—reducing the number of cul-de-sacs in subdivisions, decreasing block lengths, etc.

Intersecting Interests

MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL UDOs

Consistent transportation planning region-wide supports the action of developing regulations for land use that are also consistent region-wide. This doesn't mean that every jurisdiction looks the same or does things the same way—it does mean that they consider the same strategic goals of linking land use and transportation planning and promotion multi-modal functionality for both. And these actions can lead to reductions in the growth of vehicle miles traveled, air quality improvements and longer-term functionality of implemented projects.

INFILL DEVELOPMENT

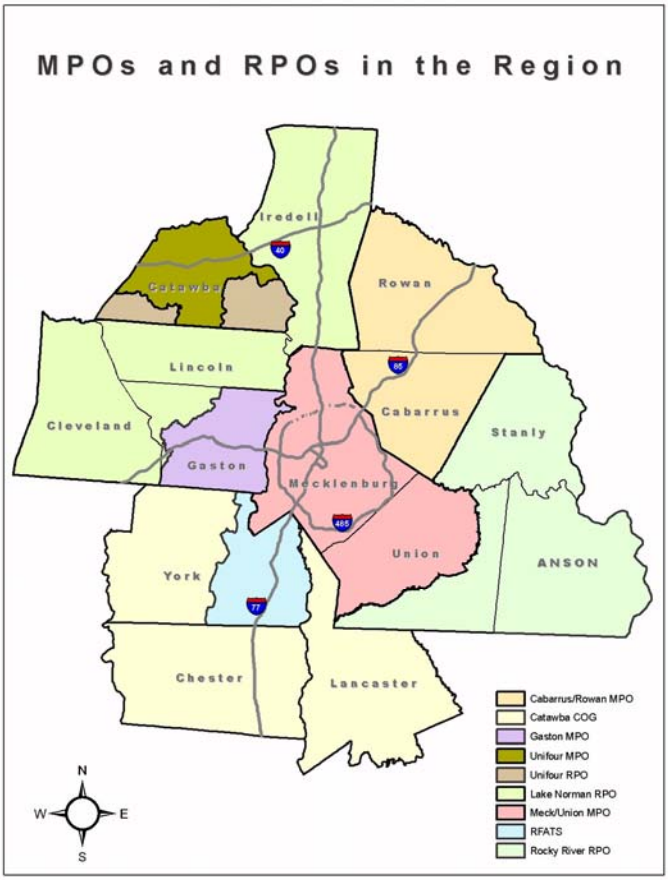
MPO/RPO coordination can also support interjurisdictional discussions about infill versus greenfields development because infill development may increase both the feasibility for and demand for transit. This then becomes an area within the purview of the MPO or RPO as part of their funding recommendations.

GREENWAYS AND OPEN SPACE

When we think of transportation planning we usually think of roads or transit. The development of greenways, a fundable item through the SAFETEA-LU is also an important transportation planning function. Multi-MPO/RPO coordination can provide a powerful voice in supporting greenway/bicycle funding on a multi-jurisdictional basis especially since many greenways follow streams..

PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY STREETSCAPES

While this can be managed on a single-jurisdictional basis, the coordination of multiple MPOs and RPOs on potential transit routes and the supporting neighborhood connectivity is needed to provide the inter-municipal transportation that makes it possible for people to get to work within walking distance of home.



Who's doing this?

- Most major metropolitan regions in the country are served by a single MPO for transportation planning. Examples are Denver, Washington, DC, Atlanta, Dallas/Fort Worth, Pittsburgh and St. Louis.
- In a number of cases, such as Denver, a single agency has responsibility for both land use and transportation planning and can encourage VMT efficient development patterns through incentives.
- Some of the most fragmented transportation planning occurs in North Carolina and Florida, in terms of multiple MPOs serving an MSA.

MPOs/RPOs Websites

Cabarrus Rowan MPO
www.crmpo.org
Gaston Urban Area MPO
www.gastonmpo.org
Lake Norman RPO
www.lakenormanrpo.org
Mecklenburg Union MPO
www.mumpo.org
Rock Hill Fort Mill MPO
www.ci.rock-hill.sc.us/planning/RFATS.asp
Rocky River RPO
www.rockyriverrpo.org

Coordination Summary

Coordination: The process of integrating different organizations and activities in a system to accomplish a common goal.

	Primary Purpose	*Process*	*Scope of Coordination*	*Follow-up Action*	*Metrolina Examples*
Informal Information Sharing	• Information sharing, relationship building, trust & issue familiarity	• Individual initiative • Based on personal relationships or networks	• Issues defined by individuals on an as needed or ad hoc basis	• No documentation expected • No follow-up action expected	• Staff to Staff phone calls, locally based list servers No coordinated decision- making
Formal information Sharing	• Information and data sharing only	• Structured • Usually institutionalized • May be formal agreements (i.e. MOA5) to define how coordination is to occur	• Initial issues defined by group • Mostly informal process to raise new issues	• Generally some form of documentation • No follow-up action expected or required	• CRAFT • Metrolina Model
Advisory Joint Decision-Making	• Discuss, define & decide on common goals	• Structured • Institutionalized usually • Formal and informal agreements to define coordination structure and range/type of issues subject to coordinated decision-making	• Initial issues defined on formal agreements • Formal & informal processes to screen new issues subject to joint decision-making	• Individual representatives expected to take agreed to decisions back to official decision-makers for final action • Individual representatives expected to recommend endorsement or approval	TCC (per MPOs) RPO-TAC COGs Hwy 73 Corridor Study
Binding Joint Decision-Making	• Adopt and implement common goals	• Structured • Institutionalized • Formal Agreements	• Initial issues defined by formal agreement • Formal process to incorporate new issues subject to joint-decision-making	• Individuals have full authority to comment on behalf of coordinating agencies for range/type of issues agreed to	MPO-TAC CATS/MTC Model Oversight and Executive Committees

NOTE: The four models are listed in a hierarchy. For example, in a binding joint decision-making structure, informal and formal information sharing and advisory joint decision-making also occur. However, coordination groups formed for information sharing purposes rarely, if ever, engage in formal joint decision-making. The decision about the type of coordination is defined by discussions and negotiations among authorized decision-makers. These decision-makers establish the boundaries of authority that is delegated to the coordination group and it is those boundaries of authority that determine what the group's purpose and scope of coordination can be.