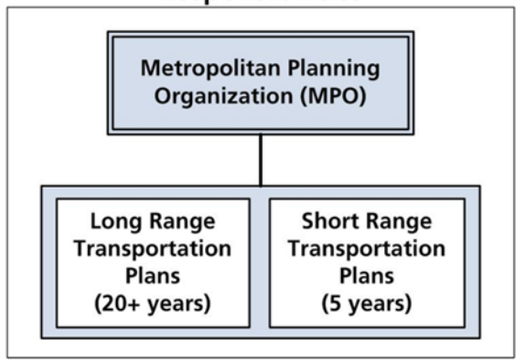
Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Transportation planning in metropolitan areas is the responsibility of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) which are also sometimes referred to as Transportation Planning Organizations (TPO) or Transportation Planning Agencies (TPA). The diagram on the left, **Metropolitan Planning Council Responsibilities**, shows the major tasks that the MPO oversees.

MPO boards consist of elected representatives of local governments. MPOs have a professional staff and are assisted by various committees, such as a Technical Advisory Committee, which includes professionals from local agencies and FDOT, and a Citizen Advisory Committee. A list of the Florida MPOs and links to individual websites can be found on the website of the ***Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council***.

Metropolitan Planning Council Responsibilities



Urban transportation planning and the advent of MPOs began with the passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962. This act required, as a condition of federal financial assistance, that transportation projects in urbanized areas with a population of 50,000 or more be based upon a *continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative* (or "3-C") planning process undertaken cooperatively by state and local governments. Subsequent acts have added to the original, but the basic principles of a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative planning process have remained constant.

The **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)**, and its predecessors, the **Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)**, **Transportation Equity Act of the 21 Century (TEA-21)**, and the **Intermodal Surface Transportation Act (ISTEA)**, further strengthened the process by adding additional responsibilities to both the MPOs and the state transportation agencies. Detailed information can be found on the **U.S. DOT's IIJA** website.

MPOs must produce a cost-feasible long-range plan and a short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The latest legislation requires that the Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs) be based on a 20-year planning horizon and be cost-feasible, using expected revenue projections.

Federal regulations require that the long-range planning process address the following factors:

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and freight.
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system across and between modes for people and freight.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.

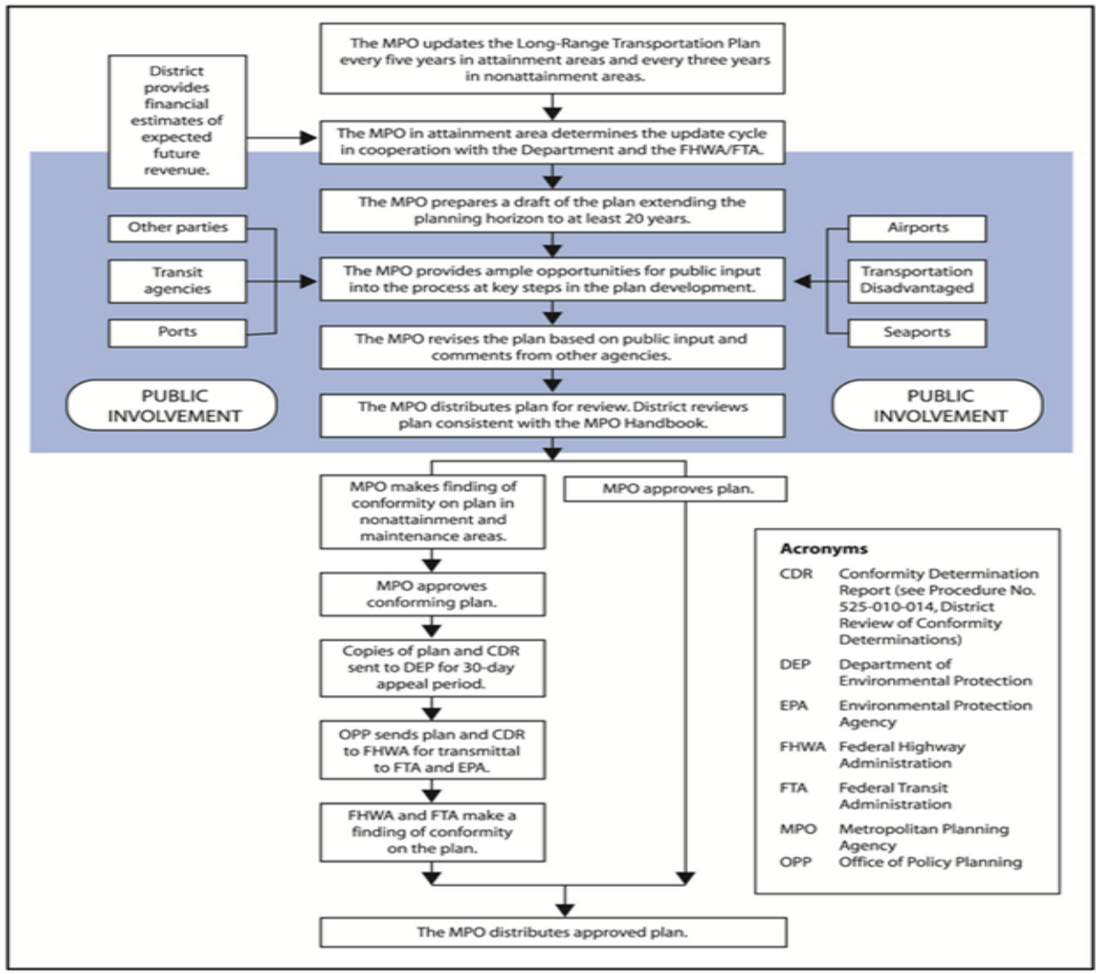
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.
- Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system, and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and
- Enhance travel and tourism.

Metropolitan Long Range Planning: A Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) should reflect the goals, objectives, and values of each community. Each community must establish factors considered important to the local citizenry and address state and federal requirements. These factors should also be consistent with the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP).

The MPO is responsible for developing the LRTP in an urban area with a population of 50,000 or more. Figure 1, **Plan Development and Approval Process** illustrates the general process used to develop the LRTP. The intent and purpose of the LRTP is to encourage and promote the safe and efficient management, operation, and development of a cost-feasible intermodal transportation system that will serve the mobility needs of people and freight within and through urbanized areas of this state, while minimizing transportation-related fuel consumption, greenhouse gases and air pollution.

The LRTP must include long-range and short-range strategies consistent with state and local goals and objectives. The LRTP addresses at least a 20-year planning horizon. An interim period (usually 10 years) can also be included, particularly in areas that do not meet the national ambient air quality standards, as enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). “Non-attainment” areas do not meet the standards; “attainment” areas meet the standards; and “maintenance” areas previously were non-attainment but re-designated as attainment, subject to the implementation of a maintenance plan. The plan should include both long-range and short-range strategies and actions that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods.

Figure 1 **Plan Development and Approval Process**



The LRTP is reviewed and updated at least every five years in attainment areas and at least every four years in non-attainment and maintenance areas. Updates extend the forecast period and confirm the validity and consistency of the LRTP with current and forecast transportation and land-use conditions and trends.

The LRTP may be amended at any time.

The plan amendment process is subject to all the requirements of a plan update, including public involvement. Documentation must include, but is not limited to:

- A revised analysis of the impacts of the proposed plan revision to the system and air quality (for non-attainment areas)
- Documentation of the public involvement process
- New maps, documentation, and data files of the revised Model and/or technique
- A revised balancing of project costs versus forecast revenues.

The MPO must adopt long-range transportation plan amendments. Amendments may result from changes to the financial plan, the addition of new projects, and changed priorities (for example, moving projects from the Needs Plan to the Cost Feasible Plan). A Needs Plan is a transportation plan that contains all needed projects including those that are funded as well as unfunded. A cost-feasible plan contains only those that are funded based on projected revenue. As the need for a project becomes greater, its priority ranking increases versus that of other projects, and it is moved forward into a short-range planning document, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the work program.

The Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) planning screen is used for major projects in the LRTP. The tool allows for interagency and public comment early on in the planning process for the identification of fatal flaws with the project before being moved into the Needs Plan and/or the Cost Feasible Plan of the LRTP.

An LRTP is not required for non-urban areas with a population of less than 50,000. Transportation improvements in these areas are based on plans developed by local agencies and, for state roads, the work program.

Transportation Models: All metropolitan long-range transportation plans at some stage require an analysis to differentiate among competing needs and to document the impact of projects on congestion, air quality, and land use. FDOT has developed a standard transportation model structure that is available for use by all Florida MPOs. The methodology used in the Florida Standard Urban Transportation Model Structure (FSUTMS) is documented in numerous technical memoranda published by the FDOT. The MPO may use any analytical techniques and/or models after consultation with the FDOT. The MPO should provide documentation in the LRTP of the models used. The MPO should prepare a series of technical memoranda explaining model use and detailing how these techniques can be used in various planning applications. Consultants and the FDOT can then duplicate and use the preferred MPO model.

Short-Range Planning: While the LRTP provides a long-term guide for the development of a regional transportation system, a short-range program, known as a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), reflects projects that are actually funded. This five-year, prioritized plan describes specifically which transportation improvements will be implemented and when. The TIP is updated every year to remove projects completed, add new projects, and reflect the changed priorities of the MPO. Federally funded projects (highway and transit) must be included in the TIP to secure federal funding. The MPO establishes a list of priority projects for FDOT to include in its five-year work program. This list is submitted to the FDOT in August of each year to be incorporated into the FDOT's Work Program. The

FDOT will use the list of projects to define the new fifth year of the work program.
TIPs are not required for non-urban areas with a population of less than 50,000.