

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction



## 1. Introduction

### Key Chapter Changes

The Introduction chapter was updated to streamline content and focus on the roles and responsibilities of Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Liaisons in the metropolitan transportation planning process. (February 6, 2026)

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### 1.1 Role and Responsibilities of District MPO Liaisons

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District MPO Liaisons play a vital role in ensuring consistent coordination between FDOT, the state's MPOs, and federal partners. As the primary point of contact for MPOs within each District, District MPO Liaisons help maintain clear communication throughout the transportation planning process. Their work helps bridge the gap between MPOs and FDOT, ensuring MPOs have access to the technical expertise, guidance, and resources they need to successfully carry out federally and state required planning activities. Key responsibilities of the District MPO Liaison include:

- ❖ Supporting MPOs in the development and implementation of their Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs), Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs), Unified Planning Work Programs (UPWPs), and other required plans and agreements.
- ❖ Assisting MPOs in navigating the policies and procedures that guide transportation planning.
- ❖ Ensuring MPOs comply with federal and state regulations while promoting consistency across Districts.
- ❖ Attending MPO board and committee meetings to build relationships with MPO staff, MPO board members, and the local community.

In addition to providing technical and regulatory support, District MPO Liaisons assist MPOs with a wide range of planning functions. These may include, but are not limited to, assisting in developing project scopes, attending meetings related to projects or policies, managing federal funds for an MPO's planning activities, examining project invoices, and reviewing progress reports. Through these efforts, District MPO Liaisons work closely with MPO boards, committees, local governments, and regional partners to ensure proper procedures are followed and that MPO planning activities align with federal and statewide transportation goals.

District MPO Liaisons provide essential guidance, technical assistance, and coordination that help MPOs operate effectively and meet their planning responsibilities. By serving as a direct and reliable point of contact, they strengthen partnerships, support informed decision-making, and help ensure the successful development of transportation plans that meet the needs of communities across the state.

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### 1.1.1 *District MPO Liaison Resources*

There are several online resources available to support District MPO Liaisons and ensure their familiarity with the metropolitan transportation planning process, including:

- ❖ **MPO Partner Site** – An information hub that promotes collaboration, information sharing, and coordination between District MPO Liaisons, MPOs, and federal partners.
- ❖ **District MPO Liaison Toolkit** – Provides District MPO Liaisons with access to guidance, tools, and templates necessary to coordinate consistently and effectively with MPOs.
- ❖ **Planning and Assistance Training Hub (PATH)** – A centralized resource to support District MPO Liaisons through access to educational materials, guidance, and tools related to metropolitan transportation planning documents and processes.
- ❖ **Planning Processes Timeline** – Provides at-a-glance information about the core recurring items in the metropolitan transportation planning process, including process descriptions, time horizons, and responsible parties.
- ❖ **FDOT Procedural Document Library (PDL)** – FDOT's official repository for all forms, policies, procedures, and manuals.

### 1.1.2 *Partners in the Planning Process*

The metropolitan transportation planning process is a collaborative effort and relies on strong partnerships between District MPO Liaisons and a variety of agencies and organizations. Partners vital to the metropolitan planning process include:

- ❖ MPOs and local governments
- ❖ FDOT Central Office and Districts
- ❖ Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- ❖ Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

As District MPO Liaisons serve as the primary point of contact among FDOT, MPOs, and federal partners, they must establish strong relationships with all partners. By cultivating these relationships, District MPO Liaisons support clear communication, regulatory compliance, timely project delivery, and the long-term success of the transportation planning process.

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## 1.2 Purpose of the Handbook

The FDOT District MPO Liaison Handbook serves as a guide to help District MPO Liaisons effectively fulfill their roles within Florida's metropolitan transportation planning process. The Handbook provides clear guidance on policies, procedures, and timelines for developing federally and state-mandated planning and programming products, ensuring compliance with applicable laws and administrative requirements. The Handbook equips District MPO Liaisons with the knowledge and tools needed to facilitate a continuous, comprehensive, and cooperative metropolitan transportation planning process across the state of Florida.

## 1.3 What is an MPO?

MPOs are federally mandated organizations that guide transportation planning in Census-defined urban areas with populations of 50,000 people or more. MPOs comprise representatives from local governments and transportation authorities. An MPO's primary role is to develop and maintain the required transportation plans for a metropolitan area to ensure federal funds support local priorities. In Florida, some MPOs use slightly different names, such as Transportation Planning Organizations (TPOs) or Transportation Planning Agencies (TPAs). Some use entirely different names. Regardless of their name, all MPOs must comply with the same rules, regulations, and planning processes.

**Table 1.1 Statutory References for Metropolitan Transportation Planning**

Citation	Description
<a href="#"><b>23 USC 134</b></a>	Metropolitan transportation planning
<a href="#"><b>23 CFR 450 Subpart C</b></a>	Metropolitan transportation planning and programming
<a href="#"><b>339.175, FS</b></a>	Metropolitan planning organization

Federal transportation planning requirements for metropolitan areas have been in place for several decades. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 provided federal transportation funding to urban areas with populations of 50,000 or more, contingent on demonstrating a continuing and comprehensive transportation planning process carried out cooperatively by states and local communities (i.e., the 3-C planning process). The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 established MPOs as the organizations responsible for carrying out the 3-C planning process.

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### 1.4 What Does an MPO Do?

Each MPO is required to develop and adopt four primary transportation planning products to qualify for and receive federal transportation funds:

- ❖ **LRTP:** The LRTP establishes a metropolitan area's vision for transportation over no less than a 20-year planning horizon. LRTPs set the goals, strategies, and project priorities that guide the future development of the transportation system in an MPO's planning area. The project priorities identified in an LRTP are used to develop an MPO's annual List of Project Priorities (LOPP), a foundational component of FDOT's annual programming cycle. LRTPs must be updated at least every five years. More information on LRTPs is available in [Chapter 5](#).
- ❖ **TIP:** The TIP is an MPO's four-year funding program for high-priority transportation projects. In Florida, MPOs are required to develop and adopt an annual TIP that includes a fifth year for illustrative purposes. More information on TIPs is available in [Chapter 4](#).
- ❖ **UPWP:** The UPWP identifies an MPO's budget and planning activities to be undertaken over two years. UPWPs serve as an MPO's business plan and are updated every two years. More information on UPWPs is available in [Chapter 3](#).
- ❖ **Public Participation Plan (PPP):** The PPP describes how an MPO involves the public and stakeholder communities in transportation planning. MPOs must periodically evaluate whether their public involvement process is effective and update the PPP as needed. More information on PPPs is available in [Chapter 5](#).

MPOs must also consider the 10 federal planning factors shown in [Figure 1.1 Federal Planning Factors](#) in their planning processes. The development, approval, and implementation of the core MPO planning products are ongoing processes that require constant coordination among MPOs, FDOT, FHWA, and FTA.

For more information about an MPO's core planning products, refer to the [MPO Planning Processes Timeline](#) found on the [PATH website](#). This resource provides an at-a-glance overview of the timelines and relationships between both MPO and statewide metropolitan transportation planning products.

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Figure 1.1 Federal Planning Factors

### Federal Planning Factors

- Accessibility & Mobility
- Economic Vitality
- Environmental Quality
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Resiliency & Reliability
- Safety
- Security
- System Efficiency
- System Preservation
- Travel & Tourism

While each MPO's planning products guide transportation development at the regional level, they also serve as essential elements for Florida's statewide transportation planning process. As part of this process, FDOT itself is responsible for developing two statewide plans:

- ❖ **Florida Transportation Plan (FTP):** The FTP is Florida's long-range statewide transportation plan that establishes statewide goals and regional objectives to guide Florida's transportation future. MPO LRTPs must align with the FTP's goals and objectives. The FTP covers a minimum 20-year planning horizon (often 30 or 40 years) and is updated every five years.
- ❖ **Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP):** The STIP combines all MPO TIPs into a single statewide program of projects. Like an MPO's TIP, Florida's STIP is developed annually and covers four years, with an additional fifth year for illustrative purposes.

**Table 1.2** presents FDOT and MPO transportation planning products and associated review and update requirements.

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Table 1.2 Statewide and MPO Transportation Planning Products

Planning Product	Who Develops	Who Approves	Time Horizon	Content	Update Cycle	Statutory Reference
FTP	FDOT	FDOT	Minimum 20 years	Future goals and objectives	Every 5 years	<a href="#">23 CFR 450.216</a> <a href="#">s.339.155, F.S.</a>
LRTP	MPO	MPO	Minimum 20 years	Future goals, strategies, and transportation improvements	Every 5 years	<a href="#">23 CFR 450.324</a> <a href="#">s.339.175(7), F.S.</a>
STIP	FDOT	FHWA and FTA	5 Years	Funded transportation improvements	Annually	<a href="#">23 CFR 450.218</a>
TIP	MPO	MPO and Governor	5 years	Funded transportation improvements	Annually	<a href="#">23 CFR 450.326</a> <a href="#">s.339.175(8), F.S.</a>
LOPP	MPO	MPO	5 years	Priority transportation improvements	Annually	<a href="#">s. 339.175(8)(b), F.S.</a>
UPWP	MPO	MPO, FHWA, and FTA	2 Years	MPO planning tasks and budget	Every 2 years	<a href="#">23 CFR 450.308</a> <a href="#">s.339.175(7), F.S.</a>
PPP	MPO	MPO	N/A	Procedures and strategies for engaging the public	Periodic review and update	<a href="#">23 CFR 450.316</a>

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### 1.5 Florida's MPOs

Florida has 27 MPOs serving metropolitan areas with a wide range of populations, from just over 150,000 to more than 2,700,000, according to 2020 Census data. MPOs are categorized as either a Transportation Management Area (TMA) MPO or a Non-TMA MPO. FHWA designates a TMA for urban areas with populations of 200,000 or more. TMA MPOs are subject to increased planning and reporting requirements but are also eligible for additional funding opportunities. In Florida, 20 MPOs encompass 18 TMAs, as shown in [Figure 1.2 Florida MPO/TMA Areas](#).

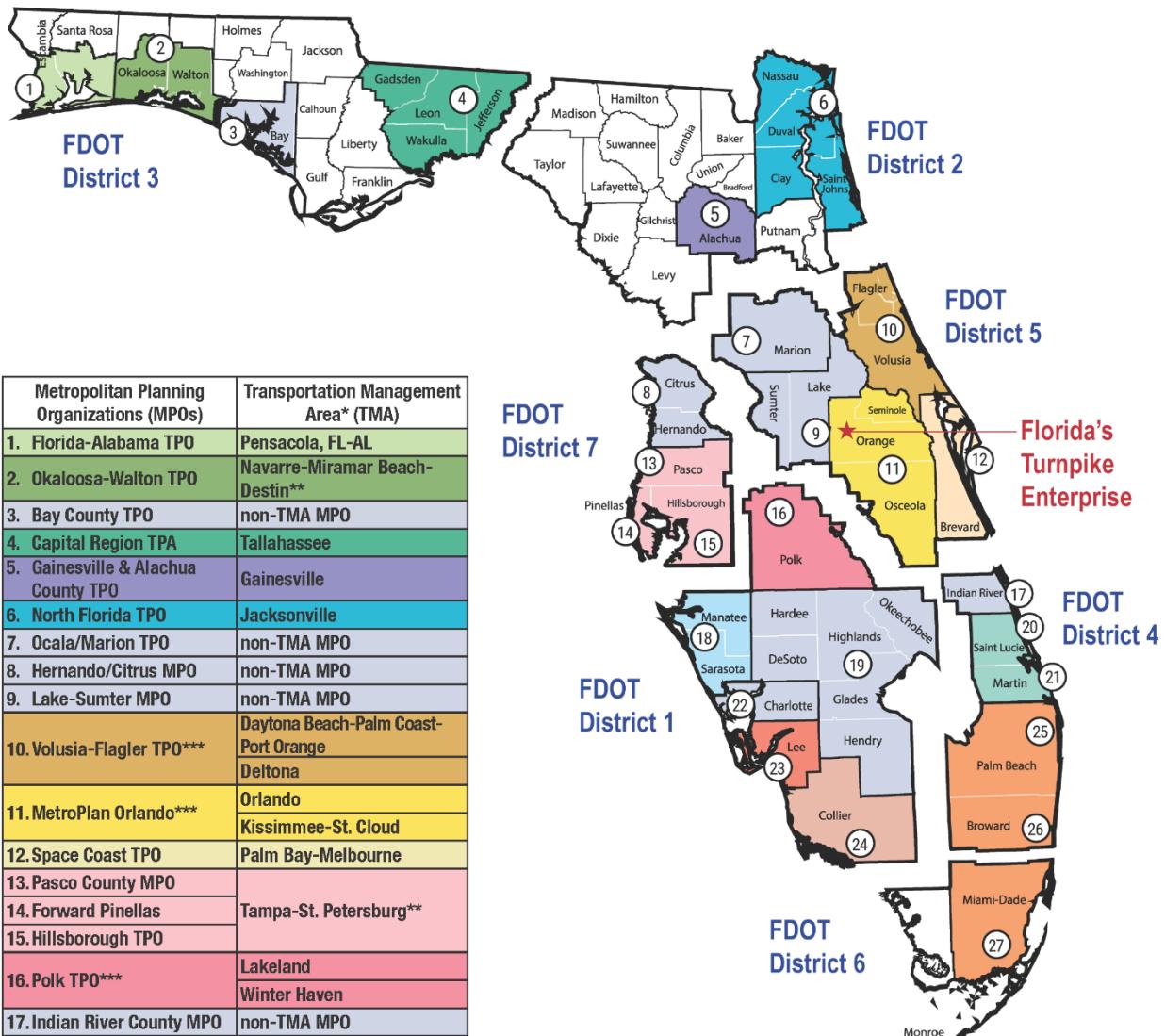
Table 1.3 Statutory References for MPO Formation

Citation	Description
<a href="#">23 USC 134(d)</a>	Designation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
<a href="#">23 CFR 450.310</a>	Metropolitan planning organization designation and redesignation
<a href="#">s.339.175(3), F.S.</a>	Florida-specific MPO board voting membership requirements
<a href="#">s.339.175(6)(d), F.S.</a>	Florida-specific Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) requirements
<a href="#">s.339.175(6)(e), F.S.</a>	Florida-specific Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) requirements

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Figure 1.2 Florida MPO/TMA Areas



- Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Districts

\* Urban area population over 200,000

\*\* Navarre-Miramar Beach-Destin, Tampa-St. Petersburg, Bradenton-Sarasota-Venice, Port St. Lucie, Bonita Springs-Estero, and Miami-Fort Lauderdale TMAs are within multiple MPOs

\*\*\* Volusia-Flagler TPO, MetroPlan Orlando, and Polk TPO contain multiple TMAs

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### 1.5.1 MPO Organizational Structure

MPO organizational structures span a continuum from fully independent, freestanding (non-hosted) organizations to fully integrated within a host agency. Hosted MPOs are typically affiliated with another governmental agency, such as a county or regional planning council. The host agency typically provides the MPO with human resources, financial management, and administrative services, while the hosted MPO follows the host agency's policies for procurement, hiring, and other functions. [Figure 1.3 MPO Organizational Structures](#) provides details about MPO structures that fall along this continuum.

**Figure 1.3 MPO Organizational Structures**

Independent MPOs	Hosted MPOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Freestanding Independent MPO:</b> An MPO meets all its operating needs.</li> <li><b>Leaning Independent MPO:</b> An MPO receives some services from one of its member agencies under a severable contract.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Component MPO:</b> MPO functions are separated from most functions of the host but remains a division of the umbrella agency.</li> <li><b>Dual Purpose MPO:</b> A host leverages MPO planning funds to maintain transportation planning staff that perform both MPO planning and host agency transportation planning functions.</li> <li><b>All-in-One Agency:</b> An agency does not differentiate between MPO functions, non-MPO transportation functions, and all other functions of the broader agency.</li> </ul>

### 1.5.2 Florida MPO Composition

Each MPO has a governing board that oversees the MPO. The number of board members varies and includes voting and non-voting members. Florida law establishes a 25-member cap for each MPO governing board and sets other specific requirements for board composition. Florida law also requires that FDOT serve as a non-voting advisor on an MPO's governing board. MPOs may appoint additional nonvoting members as needed. More information can be found in [Chapter 2](#).

Florida Statutes require each MPO to have a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). These committees meet between board meetings to develop recommendations for presentation to the board. Members of the TAC and CAC are appointed by and serve at the discretion of the MPO board.

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The TAC consists of transportation professionals working for public agencies who review plans, projects, and programs from a technical perspective. Members of the TAC include planners, engineers, representatives of local aviation, port, and public transit authorities, and other relevant representatives from affected local governments.

The CAC provides a mechanism for input into the transportation planning process that reflects the views and interests of local citizens. They also help disseminate relevant information to the public. Members of the CAC broadly represent local communities and include residents interested in developing a safe, efficient, and cost-effective transportation system.

Regional cooperation and partnerships are essential to the transportation planning process. For this reason, MPOs may establish other committees or groups to advise the MPO board on current or local issues in their area. Some MPOs may join together to form regional groups, such as the Southeast Florida Regional Transportation Council or the Central Florida MPO Alliance, to promote shared priorities and coordinate regional activities.

### 1.5.3 *Florida MPO Contact Information*

Contact information for each of Florida's 27 MPOs is available on the [Partner Website](#).