

CHAPTER 7

Certification of the MPO Planning Process

7. Certification of the MPO Planning Process

Key Chapter Changes

The Certification of the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process 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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7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides guidance regarding the certification of the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Florida Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Desktop procedures, how-to videos, templates, and other guidance resources related to MPO certification processes can be found on the [Planning and Assistance Training Hub \(PATH\)](#) website.

Table 7.1 Legal References for Certifications

Citation	Description
23 CFR 450.336	Self-certifications and Federal certifications

There are two MPO certification reviews: the annual FDOT/MPO Joint Certification completed by FDOT and the MPO, and the federal quadrennial review for Transportation Management Areas (TMA).

- ❖ **FDOT/MPO Joint Certification:** Federal regulations require FDOT and the MPOs to jointly certify the metropolitan planning process at least every four years, concurrent with the submittal of the proposed Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The FDOT/MPO Joint Certification is the self-certification completed by FDOT and MPOs to meet these requirements. During the FDOT/MPO Joint Certification process, District MPO Liaisons assist MPOs in developing the FDOT/MPO Joint Certification document and ensure each MPO meets all deadlines.
- ❖ **Federal Certification (Quadrennial Review):** Federal regulations require FHWA and FTA to review and evaluate the transportation planning process for MPOs in TMAs (i.e., urban areas with Census populations of 200,000 or more) no less than every four years. This certification process, conducted by FHWA/FTA, is known as the quadrennial review. During this review process, District MPO Liaisons are responsible for providing technical assistance and regulatory guidance to MPOs.

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7.2 FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Process

Each year beginning in **January**, FDOT Districts and MPOs jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning process. This formal review of the MPO's planning process confirms compliance with federal and state regulatory requirements. The District and the MPO complete a FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Document that includes:

Best Practice: District MPO Liaisons should reach out to their MPOs in December or January to schedule a kickoff meeting to formally start the FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Process.

- ❖ Confirmation that the MPO's metropolitan transportation planning process follows all regulations,
- ❖ A summary of the MPO's noteworthy achievements, and
- ❖ If applicable, a list of any recommendations and/or corrective actions.

The District MPO Liaison must report corrective actions and how they were resolved by the MPO directly to the MPO Board. The FDOT/MPO Joint Certification document must be submitted to the Central Office, Office of Policy Planning (OPP), by **June 1**. The overall process is presented in **Figure 7.1**, and is described in the following sections.

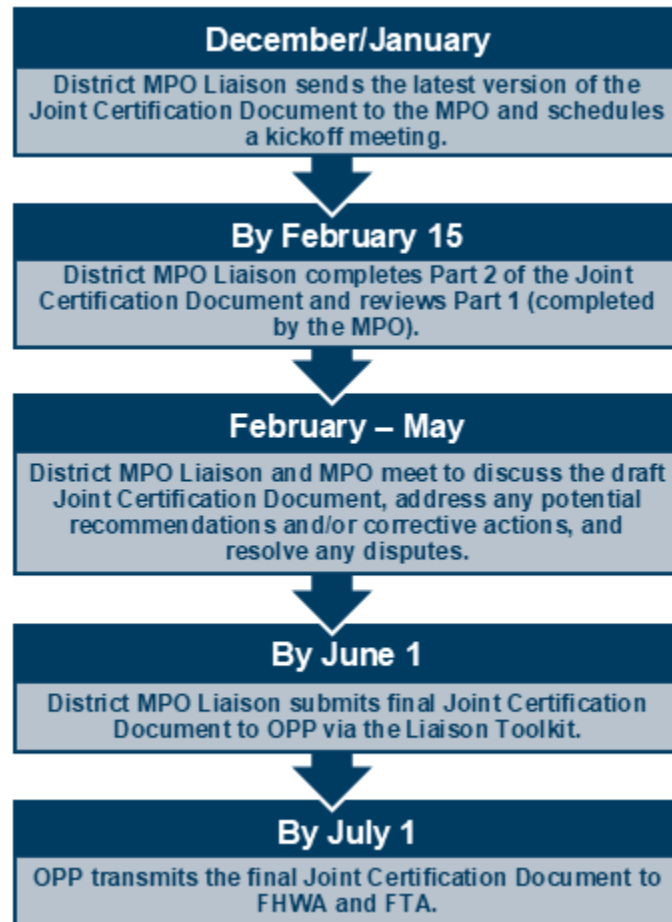
Table 7.2 Legal References for the Joint Certification Process

Citation	Description
<u>23 CFR 450.336(a)</u>	Certification requirements
<u>2 CFR 200.206</u>	Federal agency review of risk posed by applicants

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Figure 7.1 FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Process



7.2.1 Completing the FDOT/MPO Joint Certification

The FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Document template is available on the [Planning and Assistance Training Hub \(PATH\) website](#) and consists of two parts. The MPO completes Part 1, while Part 2 is completed by the District MPO Liaison. The District MPO Liaison is responsible for downloading the most recent version of the certification document and ensuring the MPO receives it promptly for completion. The FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Document must include the following items and information:

- ❖ Part 1 (completed by the MPO)
 - A statement of the MPO's compliance with federal and state metropolitan transportation planning regulations, signed by the MPO and FDOT

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- A summary of noteworthy achievements by the MPO
- ❖ Part 2 (completed by the District MPO Liaison)
 - An MPO Risk Assessment completed by the District MPO Liaison
 - A review of all planning documents completed by the MPO
 - Questions, recommendations, and/or corrective actions from the District MPO Liaison that require MPO follow-up

The District and MPO should cooperatively prepare an initial draft of the FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Document by **February 15**, as a best practice. The District MPO Liaison will review the draft to ensure the transportation planning process is carried out in accordance with federal law and to identify any issues that need to be resolved. Between February and May, the District MPO Liaison should meet with the MPO to collaboratively address any potential recommendations or to discuss potential corrective actions in the draft FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Document. Corrective actions should include a date by which the problem must be corrected. The District MPO Liaison must report corrective actions and how they were resolved by the MPO directly to the MPO Board.

By **June 1**, the District MPO Liaison must submit the final FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Document to OPP by following the steps below:

- ❖ Navigate to the [Liaison Toolkit](#) website
- ❖ Click on “Submit a Joint Certification Package”
- ❖ On the following page, click on “Add new item”
- ❖ Fill in the fields of the form that pops up and click “Save”

Disagreements between the District and the MPO must be resolved before submitting the final FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Document to OPP. Districts should not report deficiencies or agreements of resolution in the Final FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Document that have not been fully discussed and coordinated with the MPO.

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If the District MPO Liaison cannot certify the metropolitan transportation planning process, it will consult with OPP and the MPO. This three-way consultation process will identify strategies and actions to facilitate certification. Should the issue(s) not be resolved within the FDOT/MPO consultation process, OPP will arrange consultation with FHWA, FTA, the District, and the MPO to resolve the issue(s).

Under exceptional circumstances related to dispute resolution, the District and the MPO may have until **August 1** to resolve disputes and submit the signed FDOT/MPO Joint Certification to FHWA, FTA, and OPP. The **August 1** deadline applies to exceptional circumstances related to dispute resolution and is separate from the standard review period.

7.2.2 Risk Assessment

Part 2 of the FDOT/MPO Joint Certification Document includes a Risk Assessment intended to satisfy federal certification requirements. FDOT, as the recipient of federal-aid transportation funds for the State of Florida, is responsible for ensuring that funds used for metropolitan transportation planning are expended in accordance with federal and state regulations.

Table 7.3 Legal References for Risk Assessment

Citation	Description
<u>2 CFR 200.332</u>	Requirements for pass-through entities
<u>s. 215.971, FS</u>	Agreements funded with federal or state assistance
<u>s. 216.3475, FS</u>	Maximum rate of payment for services funded under the General Appropriations Act or awarded on a noncompetitive basis

The Risk Assessment requires the District MPO Liaison to respond to three questions related to the MPO's invoice history, including the number and timeliness of invoices submitted to the District, whether any invoices required correction, and whether supporting documentation needed to be updated by the MPO. The responses to these questions are used to assign a risk level to each MPO. As shown in **Table 7.4**, the risk level determines the minimum frequency by which the District MPO Liaison will monitor and review the MPO's supporting documentation for invoices for the following year.

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Table 7.4 Risk Assessment Scoring Table

Total Number of Late Invoices and Significant Findings	Risk Level	Frequency of Monitoring
Less than 10	Low	Annual
10 - 20	Moderate	Bi-annual
21 - 30	Elevated	Tri-annual
More than 30	High	Quarterly

District MPO Liaisons can help MPOs reduce their overall risk level through consistent coordination, guidance, and proactive outreach. It is the responsibility of the District MPO Liaison to maintain regular communication with MPOs regarding invoicing requirements and expectations, provide reminders and clarification as needed, and help ensure invoices are prepared accurately, submitted on time, and supported by appropriate documentation. Ongoing engagement allows District MPO Liaisons to identify potential issues early, reduce the need for invoice revisions, and support low-risk statuses for their MPOs.

Figure 7.2 shows the risk assessment and monitoring timeline.

Figure 7.2 Risk Assessment Process



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7.3 Federal Certification Review Process

FHWA and FTA must certify that the metropolitan transportation planning process for TMAs is conducted in accordance with applicable federal law at least once every four years. The schedule for federal TMA certification reviews, referred to as the quadrennial review, is updated annually and distributed by the FHWA Florida Division. FHWA and FTA conduct quadrennial reviews on a multiyear cycle, ensuring that TMA MPOs are federally certified at least every four years. FHWA will contact the MPO and the District to schedule the quadrennial review. The District MPO Liaison does not have a specific role in the quadrennial review but still must remain informed on the process and general timeline. FHWA's advance notification letter is sent to the MPO, with copies to the appropriate District staff and OPP. For more information on the quadrennial review process, please contact the FHWA Planner for your District.

Table 7.5 Legal References for the Quadrennial Review

Citation	Description
<u>23 USC 134</u>	Metropolitan transportation planning
<u>49 USC 5303</u>	Metropolitan transportation planning
<u>23 CFR 450.336</u>	Self-certifications and Federal certifications

7.3.1 Overview of Quadrennial Review Requirements

The primary purpose of a quadrennial review is to ensure that an MPO is satisfactorily implementing federal planning requirements and to formalize continuing oversight and evaluation of the planning process. FHWA and FTA work cooperatively with MPO staff by reviewing and approving planning products, providing technical assistance, and promoting best practices. The formal assessment conducted during a quadrennial review offers an external perspective on the MPO's transportation planning process.

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7.3.2 Components of the Quadrennial Review

The quadrennial review consists of the following four parts:

- ❖ **Document Review:** The federal review team thoroughly examines the findings from the FDOT/MPO Joint Certifications since the last quadrennial review. FHWA will also review the MPO's planning documents and work products, such as the TIP, Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Public Participation Plan (PPP), and the Congestion Management Process (CMP).
- ❖ **Site Visit:** The federal review team will visit the MPO to meet with staff and discuss the draft findings from the Document Review and other areas critical to the planning process. The Site Visit provides an opportunity to share information and discuss best practices. The Site Visit may also include a public meeting to meet the public involvement requirements of the quadrennial review.
- ❖ **Written TMA Certification Report:** This report documents the findings from the Document Review and Site Visit, comments from the public, and other meetings with members of the MPO Board and/or its committees, as applicable. A draft of the report is distributed to the MPO, the District, and OPP for review of factual accuracy before finalization.
- ❖ **Closeout Meeting:** To finalize the quadrennial review, the federal review team will present the report findings at an MPO Board meeting.