

Request for Research Funding for FY 2020-2021

Requesting Office	Planning – Office of Policy Planning	Priority	6 of 8
Proposed Title	An Assessment of Florida MPO Unified Planning Work Programs (UPWPs)		
Justification	<p>Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are required by Federal law (as detailed in 23 CFR 450.308) and Florida law (as detailed in Section 339.175, F.S.) to document funded transportation planning activities in a unified planning work program (UPWP). UPWPs are developed in coordination with the State and public transportation provider(s) and identify planning priorities and activities planned within a metropolitan planning area (MPA). UPWPs are required to describe each planning task including responsible parties, schedule, cost of work, and funding source(s). Although minimum requirements serve to guide MPOs in developing UPWPs, anecdotal evidence suggests significant variations in content beyond the minimum requirements, particularly for MPOs in Florida as compared to MPOs across the U.S.</p> <p>This project proposes to evaluate the UPWPs from MPOs in Florida and several states across the U.S. This research will begin with an in-depth review of existing Federal and State requirements and guidance for UPWPs, followed by a review of UPWPs from MPOs in Florida and a select number of states across the U.S. The results of this review will serve as the basis for a comparative analysis of the UPWPs from several MPOs in various states. The analysis will identify key similarities and differences beyond minimum requirements and determine the strengths and weaknesses of included content. The results from this analysis will be used to develop a set of suggestions to streamline UPWPs for improved clarity, readability, brevity, and concision. Additional suggestions will be included for revisions to Chapter 3 of FDOT’s MPO Program Management Handbook. Anticipated outcomes of this project include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More streamlined and effective UPWPs, • Reduced work effort for MPO and DOT staff during the development and review processes, • Preserved planning funds for studies, plans, programs, and other planning efforts as a result of the reduced work load, and • Increased accessibility of UPWPs to the public. <p>The proposed deliverables will include a review of existing literature and legal requirements for UPWPs, a technical memorandum providing a synthesis of UPWPs from a select number of MPOs, and a final report compiling the research findings and suggestions.</p>		
Impact	By streamlining Florida MPO UPWPs, these documents will become clearer, shorter, and more concise. As coordinating agencies on the UPWP, this will benefit the Department by minimizing labor needs for required activities during development and review processes. It will benefit MPOs by identifying notable practices with examples from a variety of MPOs across the U.S. and providing a set of suggestions for improved development of the UPWP. Additionally, a more streamlined UPWP that uses plain language will be more accessible to the public.		
Affected Offices	Office of Policy Planning Florida MPO Advisory Council Florida’s 27 MPOs FDOT District Planning Offices		
Existing Work	FDOT. (2019). MPO program management handbook. Chapter 3: Unified planning work program. Retrieved from https://fdotwww.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/planning/policy/metrosupport/resources/fdot-mpo-handbook99c4d55af487435394909e5f80818235.pdf?sfvrsn=861c81ff_8		
Keywords Used In Existing Work Search (Cannot leave blank)	Unified Planning Work Program, MPOs		
Related Contracts (Give contract numbers)	N/A		

Funding Request	180,000	Anticipated Duration	18 months
Project Manager	Mark Reichert/Erika Thompson	Contracting Method	Direct contract with university
Urgency	1	While Federal and State laws define the minimum requirements for UPWPs, anecdotal evidence suggests significant variations in these documents between MPOs in Florida and MPOs in states across the U.S. The frequency with which these documents are updated warrant urgency in initiating this evaluation to guarantee the effectiveness of the UPWPs during future updates. Findings and suggestions from this research are intended to be applied during the 2022 update cycle and subsequent update cycles. The anticipated benefits of this research include reduced work effort and a streamlined product to benefit Florida MPOs, FDOT, other agencies, and stakeholders.	
Implementability	1	The findings from the study will be applicable during UPWP updates.	
Project Benefits (Succinct, complete explanation)			
Project Benefits (Select all that apply and explain)	Quantifiable Benefits (units, dollars, etc...if applicable)	Methodology or Data Sources Used to Determine Quantifiable Benefits. If not applicable, please give justification of project benefits	
<input type="radio"/> Materials Enhancement			
<input type="radio"/> Materials Savings			
<input type="radio"/> Time Savings	DOT Staff Time	A shorter and more streamlined UPWP would save DOT staff time during the development and review processes.	
<input type="radio"/> Lives Saved/Injuries Prevented			
<input type="radio"/> Other (Explain)	Cost Savings	A shorter more streamlined document would reduce staff time during development and review processes. These time savings will also translate into cost savings, thus preserving planning funds for studies, plans programs, and other planning efforts.	
	Clarity	An assessment of UPWPs and subsequent suggestions will streamline these documents, making them more efficient and increasing their overall utility. Through streamlining the UPWP, they will be shorter, clearer, more readable, and more concise.	

*Comments should explain and support urgency, financial benefit, and implementability scores