



Florida Department of Transportation Research

Regional Cooperation in Transportation Planning

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As Florida's urbanized areas grow and merge, neighboring jurisdictions experience interrelated problems and opportunities, and regional cooperation becomes an imperative. In the transportation sector, Florida's metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) currently support coordinated decision making by bringing together relevant transportation players, such as local governments, transit system operators, airports, seaports, and toll authorities. Most MPOs in Florida, however, operate at the county scale, whereas Florida's economy increasingly functions at regional scales, and few MPOs can coordinate transportation priorities or planning at this scale. Improved regional cooperation will require restructuring existing institutions and processes, perhaps through consolidation or formal partnering of transportation entities, to reflect urban growth, commuting patterns, funding goals, and other economic relationships.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) contracted with researchers in the University of Florida's Department of Urban and Regional Planning to collect and analyze information on regional transportation practices to create a basis for developing such practices in Florida. The researchers comprehensively reviewed the literature, and statutes and programs of all fifty states, to identify regional transportation planning practices. They focused on innovative transportation planning approaches that support regional integration across jurisdictions, sectors, and levels of government.

The fifty-state survey showed that Florida's statute-based MPO designation process is among the most comprehensive and the most detailed. For example, Florida uses part of the federal designation language in the state statute. Also, Florida's Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) is the only state-wide incentive program for regional transportation.

Based on information gathered from the states

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Vast amounts of goods are moved around the state – and the world – in shipping containers. Moving from ships to trains to trucks, they symbolize the need for smooth integration of transportation resources.

and Florida's specific needs and opportunities, the researchers made recommendations for Florida in several areas. They described how the state can encourage local jurisdictions to make greater use of current state programs that support regional cooperation in transportation planning. For example, Florida can revise state statutes and regulations that restrict localities from engaging in regional coordination. Also, the researchers outlined steps to further integrate and promote participation in regional transportation planning, such as aligning administrative districts more closely with metropolitan areas. For example, MPOs can be structured to better match metropolitan areas, and FDOT district boundaries can be moved to encompass metropolitan areas, where possible, rather than dividing them. In addition, the researchers highlighted opportunities to integrate planning for transportation with planning for other sectors and made recommendations for identifying Florida's regional planning needs.