



# Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Transit Agency Planning Coordination

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## Current Situation

As Florida grows, so do its cities, merging into one another and spilling over county lines, creating overlapping responsibilities and a need for more coordinated planning among city and county agencies. To foster and formalize this planning, the federal Highway Act of 1962 mandated metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) for any urbanized area with at least 50,000 people. In 1962, there were only 10 MPOs nationwide, but today there are over 400 – almost 30 in Florida alone. MPOs are required to maintain long-range planning documents (Long-Range Transportation Plan, or LRTP), but so are local transit agencies (Transit Development Plan, or TDP). Ideally, these planning documents would reflect similar overall visions, based on cooperation.

## Research Objectives

University of South Florida researchers surveyed all MPOs in the state of Florida and most of the local transit agencies to examine the current state of planning coordination between them regarding LRTPs and TDPs.

## Project Activities

The researchers sent a questionnaire to all 27 MPOs and all 31 local transit agencies in Florida. All MPOs and 25 local transit agencies responded to the questionnaire. The research team analyzed the survey results and used them to select six MPO-transit agency pairs from small, medium, and large metropolitan areas for in-depth interviews. The questionnaires covered areas such as coordination of the LRTP and TDP, coordination between the agencies, agreement of transit priority corridors, coordination in other planning efforts, and pooled funding.

MPOs and transit agencies expressed high satisfaction with the process of LRTP coordination; however, MPOs were less satisfied than transit agencies with coordination of the TDP. MPOs were also less satisfied with the consistency between the vision, goals, and strategies of the LRTP and TDP. Most MPOs and transit agencies do not coordinate the timing of their LRTP and TDP updates, nor do they plan to coordinate the timing of their next LRTP and TDP updates. Many MPOs and transit agencies said that the biggest challenge to better integration of the LRTP and TDP was the difference in horizon years (20 years for LRTP and 10 years for TDP) and update frequencies (3-5 years for LRTP and annual for TDP).

From the case studies, the research team distilled a number of important influences on MPO-transit agency coordination. They noted the importance of agency leadership that prioritized coordination, which was fostered by regular meetings, cooperation on projects other than the LRTP or TDP, and formal agreements to cooperate on specific projects. In some smaller metropolitan areas, the MPO is the transit agency, automatically resulting in a unified vision.

## Project Benefits

Better understanding how to foster cooperation between MPOs and local transit agencies can promote a more unified and more productive approach to transportation planning.

*For more information, please see [www.fdot.gov/research/](http://www.fdot.gov/research/).*



*Metropolitan areas require good planning to integrate local and regional transit.*