

## What are MPOs?

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a transportation policy-making organization made up of representatives from local government and transportation authorities. In 1962, the United States Congress passed legislation that required the formation of an MPO for any Urbanized Area (UZA) with a population greater than 50,000. Congress created MPOs in order to ensure that existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs are based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive ("3-C") planning process. Federal funding for transportation projects and programs are channeled through this planning process. Statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes are governed by Federal law (23 USC 134 and 135). As of 2005, there are 385 MPOs in the U.S.



In creating the requirements for MPOs and a metropolitan planning process, Congress identified several key reasons MPOs are essential:

- Transportation investment means allocating scarce federal and other transportation funding resources appropriately;
- Planning needs to reflect the region's shared vision for its future
- Adequate transportation planning requires a comprehensive examination of the region's future and investment alternatives; and
- An MPO is needed to facilitate collaboration of governments, interested parties and residents in the planning process.

In other words, the federal government wishes to see transportation funds spent in a manner that has a basis in metropolitan region-wide plans developed through inter-governmental collaboration, rational analysis and consensus-based decision-making.



## Core MPO Functions:

**Establish a setting:** Establish and manage a fair and impartial setting for effective regional decision-making in the metropolitan area and ensure local and state officials identify priorities and develop implementation strategies in a cooperative and coordinated way.

**Evaluate alternatives:** Evaluate transportation alternatives, scaled to the size and complexity of the region, to the nature of its transportation issues, and to the realistically available options.

**Maintain a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP):** Develop and update a fiscally-constrained long-range transportation plan for the metropolitan area covering a planning horizon of at least 20 years that:

1. fosters mobility and access for people and goods,
2. efficient system performance and preservation, and
3. quality of life.

**Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):** Develop a fiscally-constrained program based on the long-range transportation plan and designed to serve the area's goals, using spending, regulating, operating, management, and financial tools.

**Involve the public:** Involve the general public and all the significantly affected sub-groups in the four essential functions listed above.

Presently, most MPOs have no authority to raise revenues (e.g., levy fees or taxes) on their own; rather, they are designed to allow local officials to collaboratively decide how available federal and non-federal transportation funds should be spent in urbanized areas. The funding for the operations of the MPO agency itself comes from a combination of federal transportation funds and required matching funds from state and local governments.



Burlington-Graham MPO  
 Cabarrus-Rowan MPO  
 Capital Area MPO  
 Charlotte Regional MPO  
 Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO  
 Fayetteville MPO  
 French Broad River MPO  
 Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln MPO  
 Grand Strand MPO  
 Greater Hickory MPO  
 Goldsboro MPO  
 Greensboro MPO  
 Greenville MPO  
 High Point MPO  
 Jacksonville MPO  
 New Bern MPO  
 Rocky Mount MPO  
 Wilmington MPO  
 Winston-Salem MPO

# MPO Structure

