



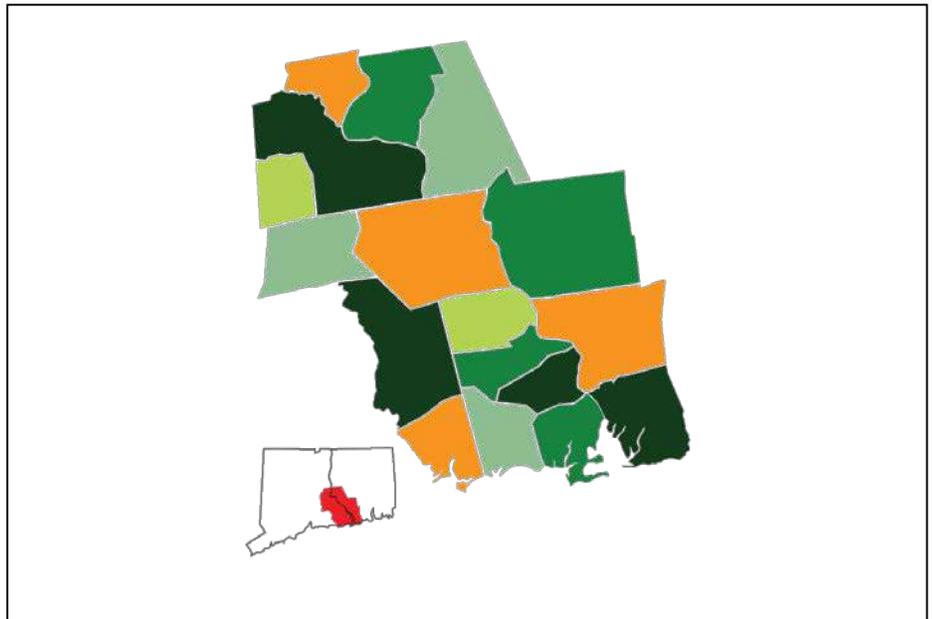
U.S. Department
of Transportation

Transportation Management Area Planning Certification Review

Federal Highway
Administration

Federal Transit
Administration

New Haven Transportation Management Area



Lower Connecticut River Valley Region

June 12, 2017

Final Report





Table of Contents

1.0	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1.1	Previous Recommendations and Disposition	3
1.2	Summary of Current Findings	6
2.0	INTRODUCTION	10
2.1	Background.....	10
2.2	Purpose and Objective	11
3.0	SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	12
3.1	Review Process.....	12
3.2	Documents Reviewed.....	12
4.0	PROGRAM REVIEW	14
4.1	Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries	14
4.2	MPO Structure and Agreements	14
4.3	Unified Planning Work Program	15
4.4	Metropolitan Transportation Plan	16
4.5	Transit Planning.....	17
4.6	Transportation Improvement Program.....	18
4.7	Public Participation	20
4.8	Civil Rights (Title VI, EJ, LEP, ADA).....	21
4.9	Freight Planning	22



4.10	Transportation Safety – Performance Management	23
4.11	Nonmotorized Planning/Livability	25
4.12	Elements of the 3-C Process	26
4.13	Project Selection Process.....	26
4.14	Congestion Management Process	27
4.15	TMA Coordination Efforts.....	28
APPENDIX A – ON-SITE MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET.....		30
APPENDIX B – ON-SITE MEETING AGENDA.....		32
APPENDIX C - LIST OF ACRONYMS		33



1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 23, 2017, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conducted the certification review of the transportation planning process for the Lower Connecticut River Valley portion of the New Haven urbanized area (UZA). The Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG) hosts the MPO for that portion. The South Central Connecticut Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) hosts the other MPO that serves the majority region encompassing the UZA. FHWA and FTA are required to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process for each urbanized area over 200,000 in population at least every four years to determine if the process meets the Federal planning requirements.

The current review found that the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted in the Lower Connecticut River Valley region of the New Haven urbanized area meets Federal planning requirements.

1.1 Previous Recommendations and Disposition

The first certification review for the Lower Connecticut River Valley region of the New Haven urbanized area was conducted in 2013. The previous Certification Review findings and their disposition, based on the MPO’s responses at the 2017 on-site meeting, are summarized below:

Recommendations from 2013	Disposition
Due to the newly merged status of the MPO, coordination efforts will need to expand to Middletown Transit District and other appropriate organizations within the new geographic scope of the Region. The MPO and partner agencies in the metropolitan planning process should continue to look for opportunities to strengthen coordination, cooperation and resource sharing in the New Haven Urbanized Area.	Bylaws amended in 2014 after merger. Also, the Chamber of Commerce was made a voting member along with the two transit districts. Work to increase coordination in the TMA is continuing. MOUs with surrounding MPOs will be reworked.
The MPO should work to develop a regional bicycle and pedestrian plan within the next two years, so that the needs of active modes in the region can be effectively integrated with transportation plans and projects at the state, local, and regional levels.	The regional bicycle and pedestrian plan is currently in draft form.



Recommendations from 2013	Disposition
<p>Going forward under MAP-21, the review team recommends that the next update to the metropolitan transportation plan include measurable regional safety and operations goals and objectives based on CTDOT's goals and targets when available. It is also recommended that applicable goals, objectives, and strategies in Connecticut's SHSP, when available, should be integrated into the MPO's next update to the metropolitan transportation plan, as well as the TIP, in order to highlight safety, which is a FHWA national focus area.</p>	<p>The MPO will be working with the CTDOT to develop regional targets.</p>
<p>Going forward under MAP-21, the review team recommends a more collaborative, comprehensive and data-driven (CTDOT's CDIP safety data project which will offer more timely and accessible data) approach to transportation safety planning in order to identify the most critical opportunities, strategies, and projects to enhance safety in the region.</p>	<p>The MPO is utilizing the UConn Crash Database. CTDOT reporting regularly to the MPOs to assist in development of MPO safety plans (urban and rural templates). The Safety Circuit Rider program has presented to the Board.</p>
<p>The review team highly recommends that the MPO continue to work with encouragement and support by CTDOT to be an active stakeholder in the update and implementation of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), which is currently underway by CTDOT.</p>	<p>CTDOT and the MPO are working collaboratively in the update of the SHSP and regional safety plans.</p>
<p>The review team recommends that the MPO identify projects, strategies, and activities to promote traffic operations and management in its region, under close cooperation with and guidance of CTDOT. Specific highway traffic-oriented operations and management needs and implementation strategies (such as traffic signal timing of existing municipal traffic signal systems) should be identified and strategies and projects should be considered for inclusion in the long range plan, the TIP, and other transportation plans to implement operations improvements in the region.</p>	<p>Because the portion of the MPO in the New Haven TMA is predominately rural, there are no systems of signals that require timing coordination. Signal operation is a component of corridor studies in the region.</p>
<p>A series of recommendations are also available in FHWA/CTDOT's program report on "Local Agency Traffic Signal Operations and Maintenance" report, dated May 2012, and by reference in this report are also considered recommendations for this certification review. This program report is being provided separately to the MPO by FHWA.</p>	<p>Because the portion of the MPO in the New Haven TMA is predominately rural, there are no systems of signals that require timing coordination. Signal operation is a component of corridor studies in the region.</p>
<p>The review team recommends that the MPO, in concert with leadership and cooperation of CTDOT, request training in ITS and planning for operations for its region, including training on the use and implementation of the statewide ITS architecture and systems engineering for ITS projects.</p>	<p>MPO will coordinate with the CTDOT on ITS projects and architecture. MPO works with DEMHS on traffic flow for evacuations and ITS elements.</p>
<p>The MPO should continue to integrate freight planning into their regular transportation planning program and coordinate with locally-based shippers and distributors on TMA-wide and statewide freight planning issues to understand the implications to the Region, with close cooperation, leadership and consultation with CTDOT.</p>	<p>Long-range plan discusses expansion of freight planning activity in the region.</p>



Recommendations from 2013	Disposition
The MPO should continue to take advantage of training opportunities to broaden staff capabilities, especially in light of MAP-21 data requirements for performance management.	CTDOT, FHWA and the LTAP Center coordinate with the MPO to take advantage of training and other state agencies provide training opportunities.
The MPO should explore the feasibility of highway data collection technology and /or transducers for the needs of traffic counting compared to traditional equipment.	MPO has several ATRs, and the Region does not do many traffic counts, but has explored use of other technologies that are too expensive for limited use.
The MPO should explore technical resource sharing with SCRCOG to accomplish TMA-wide tasks.	Transit planning and CMAQ work is shared with SCRCOG.
GPS and ADL as tools to assist in transit planning should be explored.	Tablets and routing manifests are used at Estuary Transit District now.
The latest self-certification resolution, which certifies that the MPO is a qualified agency to adopt the TIP, must be included in the TIP document.	The resolution was produced, but not inserted in TIP, but the latest resolution will appear in the new TIP.
When the Region's Long-Range Transportation Plan is updated, and needs are identified through plan development and data compilation/analysis, the MPO should develop projects to address deficiencies, regardless of identified funding sources or unfunded sources.	The 2015 LRTP contained both projects with identified funding as well as those unfunded future projects.
The Region should remember to discuss CMAQ project development with freight shippers and carriers.	Not many shippers in the region. CMAQ projects have not had freight components.
The MPO should continue to identify methods to increase public participation.	Current public participation activities reveal more outreach strategies.
LEP and EJ strategies should follow an updating of demographic mapping based on 2010 Census results.	All demographic mapping has been updated to latest data.
The MPO, during the reconstruction of its new website, should consider a focus group to help develop ease of navigation through the site to required elements such as meeting notices, the UPWP, the LRTP, the TIP, and the Public Participation Plan.	Core documents are available on the web site. Plans are underway to migrate to new system and core documents will be easily available.
The Region should continue to work with SCRCOG to produce a TMA-wide CMP and should look toward the state for related data such as V/C ratios over or forecasted to exceed 1.0 on state roads to geographically identify regional choke points. Mapping of high crash incident sites could help support that effort to promote improvement projects.	The latest TMA CMP includes the all of the New Haven urbanized area.



1.2 Summary of Current Findings

As a result of this review, FHWA and FTA are certifying the transportation planning process conducted by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Estuary Transit District.

There are recommendations in this report that warrant close attention and follow-up, as well as areas that MPO is performing very well in that are to be commended.

Review Area	Finding	Recommendations/ Commendations
MPO Structure and Agreements	The MOUs between the MPO and neighboring MPOs are out-of-date, and in some cases, obsolete, due to recent MPO redesignations. The Prospectus also needs to be reviewed for inclusion of new requirements from USDOT.	Recommendation: All MOUs should be updated. The CTDOT has agreed to coordinate with the MPO on an update of all agreements under which the MPO operates.
Metropolitan Transportation Plan	The 2015 MTP is a comprehensive view and analysis of the current transportation conditions and challenges. The MTP contains recommendations to address the challenges and considers the federally required elements of an MTP.	Commendation: The MPO is commended for a thoughtful and action-oriented MTP structure that creates a logical bridge to the UPWP and a direction for the 2019 update. The recommendations in the MTP reveal an understanding of the regional issues and the MPO’s responsibilities under Federal regulations. It is noteworthy that the MTP contains a detailed comments section that includes disposition of comments.
Transit Planning	The MPO and ETD have a strong relationship shown through the MPO’s involvement in creating a Needs Assessment for an upcoming Bus Maintenance and Operating Facility in addition to assisting with site selection. While the region has a locally coordinated plan in place, it has not been updated on a regular basis.	Commendation: The MPO shows active collaboration with the transit agencies within its boundaries, clearly shown through ETD’s growing expansion coordination as well as the ability to effectively absorb MTD due to the MPO’s restructuring. Recommendation: The region should evaluate its LOCHSTP and consider updating it in concert with the next MTP update cycle, as allowed for in FTA Circular 9070.1G.



Transportation Improvement Program	The MPO's TIP meets the general requirements of 23 CFR 450.326; however, the financial plan could be better documented. The financial plan does not contain a clear comparison of anticipated revenues versus programmed costs and does not identify any gaps, although it does include some projects in an "FYI" category.	Recommendation: The TIP should include a clear depiction of the amount of revenue estimated to be available for the region, along with discussion of the assumptions made to determine that figure. This revenue figure can then easily be compared to the programmed costs to clearly demonstrate financial constraint.
Public Participation	The Plan is comprehensive in scope and detail in outreach strategies and required notifications. The Plan is compliant with Federal regulations.	Commendation: The Public Participation Plan is thoughtfully constructed and has detailed performance measures to gauge the success of the adopted strategies. The MPO has also developed actions that seek to improve the Plan, and the Plan is reviewed annually for effectiveness.
Civil Rights	The MPO has developed demographic profiles and updates them, but has not developed a benefits and burdens analysis of projects in the TIP because most projects are small in nature. The MPO has reviewed cost investments to help determine equity for TIP projects in the region. There have not been reviews of social impacts of projects (during construction and post-construction).	Recommendation: The MPO should develop some strategies to measure Title VI, EJ, LEP or ADA impacts of a targeted project in a selected population cluster, and conduct a pilot social impact report in an attempt to determine the benefits and burdens of a particular project on a particular neighborhood in either urban or rural setting.
Freight	There are no studies that analyze the local nature of freight in the region.	Recommendations: While the MPO is assisting in the State's freight plan, it is recommended that the MPO initiate a series of smaller studies that focus on one or more of their unique situations, such as movement of farm products, commercial marine concerns, freight pattern route shifts, freight accommodation in complete streets, and/or conflicts between freight movements and residential land uses. The National Performance Management Research Data Set (NPMRDS) could assist in identifying truck patterns and volumes.



Transportation Safety – Performance Management	<p>The Highway Safety Unit at CTDOT is reaching out to the MPOs to develop safety plans. Some of the MPO’s towns have been involved in Roadway Safety Assessments (RSAs) through the state-funded Community Connections program, although none of the participating towns are in the New Haven TMA.</p> <p>The MPO has not participated in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) update process directly, but is supportive of a number of the emphasis areas within the Plan. Safety is a major criterion in the MPO’s project selection process for Transportation Alternatives program proposals. Performance management for safety goals have not yet been incorporated into the planning program.</p>	<p>Recommendations: The MPO should review the regional safety data available to begin a preliminary look at specific data at particular sites and work with the CTDOT to pinpoint any trends and to review countermeasures for these locations. The MPO should work with the CTDOT to coordinate the development and documentation of safety targets, per 23 CFR 490.209(c).</p>
Nonmotorized Planning/Livability	<p>The draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan does not currently include any specific actions to achieve the stated objectives. Good public input was obtained in the development of the plan.</p>	<p>Recommendations: Tangible actions should be developed in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to support the stated objectives. The MPO should take advantage of RSA training through the LTAP center or FHWA Resource Center, so staff can provide assistance to towns not participating in the state’s Community Connectivity program and to support actions developed in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. A gap analysis study, to identify network and facility needs, should be undertaken as an action of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and such analysis should be folded into the 2019 update to the MTP.</p>
Congestion Management Process	<p>The 2015 Congestion Management report for the New Haven TMA reveals areas of concern within the lower Connecticut River Valley region.</p>	<p>Recommendations: The MPO should combine the congestion data from the 2015 Congestion Management report with safety data from recommendations from major corridor plans and the CT Crash Data Repository to present evidence for priority roadway projects for the next MTP in 2019 and for CTDOT project consideration in the near term. Such a process may help the MPO utilize performance management data from both the CMP and safety data compilations to inform the next MTP and support project development.</p>



TMA Coordination Efforts	The MPO effectively coordinates with neighboring MPOs on matters that require larger regional cooperation, whether it is on the basis of TMA boundaries or based on transportation corridors. However, the MOUs between RiverCOG and neighboring MPOs are out-of-date and, in some cases, obsolete due to recent MPO redesignations.	Recommendation: RiverCOG should work with the other appropriate agencies to update its UZA-based MOUs. They should be updated to reflect changes to COGs and MPOs that have occurred due to restructuring in recent years. They should also incorporate changes to processes since 2002 as well as requirements identified in the US DOT's final planning rule published in 2016, including 23 CFR 450.314(e) and (g).
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Details of the certification findings for each of the above items are contained in this report.



2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 134(k) and 49 U.S.C. 5303(k), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning process in Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) at least every four years. A TMA is an urbanized area, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, with a population of over 200,000. After the 2010 Census, the Secretary of Transportation designated 183 TMAs – 179 urbanized areas over 200,000 in population plus four urbanized areas that received special designation. In general, the reviews consist of three primary activities: a site visit, a review of planning products (in advance of and during the site visit), and preparation of a Certification Review Report that summarizes the review and offers findings. The reviews focus on compliance with Federal regulations, challenges, successes, and experiences of the cooperative relationship between the MPO(s), the State DOT(s), and public transportation operator(s) in the conduct of the metropolitan transportation planning process. Joint FTA/FHWA Certification Review guidelines provide agency field reviewers with latitude and flexibility to tailor the review to reflect regional issues and needs. As a consequence, the scope and depth of the Certification Review reports will vary significantly.

The Certification Review process is only one of several methods used to assess the quality of a regional metropolitan transportation planning process, compliance with applicable statutes and regulations, and the level and type of technical assistance needed to enhance the effectiveness of the planning process. Other activities provide opportunities for this type of review and comment, including Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) approval, the MTP, metropolitan and statewide Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) findings, air-quality (AQ) conformity determinations (in nonattainment and maintenance areas), as well as a range of other formal and less formal contact provide both FHWA/FTA an opportunity to comment on the planning process. The results of these other processes are considered in the Certification Review process.

While the Certification Review report itself may not fully document those many intermediate and ongoing checkpoints, the “findings” of Certification Review are, in fact, based upon the cumulative findings of the entire review effort.

The review process is individually tailored to focus on topics of significance in each metropolitan planning area. Federal reviewers prepare Certification Reports to document the results of the review process. The reports and final actions are the joint responsibility of the



appropriate FHWA and FTA field offices, and their content will vary to reflect the planning process reviewed, whether or not they relate explicitly to formal “findings” of the review.

To encourage public understanding and input, FHWA/FTA will continue to improve the clarity of the Certification Review reports.

2.2 Purpose and Objective

Since the enactment of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, the FHWA and FTA, are required to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process in all urbanized areas over 200,000 population to determine if the process meets the Federal planning requirements in 23 U.S.C. 134, 40 U.S.C. 5303, and 23 CFR 450. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), extended the minimum allowable frequency of certification reviews to at least every four years. Such frequency has not changed in subsequent Federal transportation legislation, and the latest Federal law, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, signed in 2015, continues this requirement for certification reviews.

The Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG) is one of the two designated MPOs for the New Haven urbanized area. CTDOT is the responsible State agency and Middletown Transit District and Estuary Transit District are the responsible public transportation operators. Current membership of the RiverCOG MPO consists of elected officials and citizens from the political jurisdictions in the City of Middletown and the towns of Chester, Clinton, Cromwell, Deep River, Durham, East Haddam, Essex, Haddam, Killingworth, Lyme, Middlefield, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Portland, and Westbrook as well as the Chamber of Commerce, CTDOT, and the transit districts.

Certification of the planning process is a prerequisite to the approval of Federal funding for transportation projects in such areas. The certification review is also an opportunity to provide assistance on new programs and to enhance the ability of the metropolitan transportation planning process to provide decision makers with the knowledge they need to make well-informed capital and operating investment decisions.



3.0 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Review Process

Participants in the review included representatives of FHWA, FTA, CTDOT, Estuary and Middletown Transit Districts, and MPO staff. A full list of participants is included in Appendix A. Additionally, public involvement was invited on the day of the review site visit, March 23, 2017, and input from MPO members was also solicited.

A desk audit of current documents and correspondence was completed prior to the site visit. In addition to the formal review, routine oversight mechanisms provide a major source of information upon which to base the certification findings.

The certification review covers the transportation planning process conducted cooperatively by the MPO, State, and public transportation operators. Background information, current status, key findings, and recommendations are summarized in the body of the report for the following subject areas selected by FHWA and FTA staff for on-site review:

- Transit Planning
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Long-Range Transportation Plan and Financial Planning
- Public Participation
- Civil Rights (Title VI, EJ, LEP, ADA)
- Freight Planning
- Transportation Safety
- Nonmotorized Planning/Livability
- Congestion Management Process / Management and Operations
- TMA Coordination

The other subject areas included in this report were primarily reviewed through the desk audit.

3.2 Documents Reviewed

The following MPO documents were evaluated as part of this planning process review:

- MPO Agreements, By-Laws, MPO Designation, MOUs



- FY 2016-17 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- MPO Long-Range Transportation Plan, 2015
- MPO FY-2015 TIP and Self-Certification
- Public Participation Plan
- Title VI documents
- Project Selection Criteria and processes
- CMP reports
- TAP project selection criteria
- LOTCIP project selection criteria
- Draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2017



4.0 PROGRAM REVIEW

4.1 Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries

4.1.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(e) and 23 CFR 450.312(a) state the boundaries of a Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) shall be determined by agreement between the MPO and the Governor. At a minimum, the MPA boundaries shall encompass the entire existing urbanized area (as defined by the Bureau of the Census) plus the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within a 20-year forecast period for the MTP.

4.1.2 Current Status

Satisfactory documentation of boundaries exists. Since the last review, the two MPOs (Estuary and Midstate Regions) operating under the host of RiverCOG have received Governor approval of their redesignation.

4.1.3 Findings

The MPO complies with requirements of 23 CFR 450.312(a).

4.2 MPO Structure and Agreements

4.2.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(d) and 23 CFR 450.314(a) state the MPO, the State, and the public transportation operator shall cooperatively determine their mutual responsibilities in carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process. These responsibilities shall be clearly identified in written agreements among the MPO, the State, and the public transportation operator serving the MPA.

4.2.2 Current Status

Roles and responsibilities of the MPO, CTDOT, and the transit district are spelled out in the Prospectus which accompanies the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) in effect. Other



Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) exist between the MPO and other MPOs which share TMAs.

4.2.3 Findings

The MOUs between the MPO and neighboring MPOs are out-of-date, and in some cases, obsolete, due to recent MPO redesignations. The Prospectus also needs to be reviewed for inclusion of new requirements from USDOT.

Recommendation: All MOUs should be updated. The CTDOT has agreed to coordinate with the MPO on an update of all agreements under which the MPO operates.

4.3 Unified Planning Work Program

4.3.1 Regulatory Basis

23 CFR 450.308 sets the requirement that planning activities performed under Titles 23 and 49 U.S.C. be documented in a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The MPO, in cooperation with the State and public transportation operator, shall develop a UPWP that includes a discussion of the planning priorities facing the MPA and the work proposed for the next one- or two-year period by major activity and task in sufficient detail to indicate the agency that will perform the work, the schedule for completing the work, the resulting products, the proposed funding, and sources of funds.

4.3.2 Current Status

At the time of review, the MPO was operating under an approved UPWP that includes the required tasks, national focus areas, and regional concerns.

4.3.3 Findings

The UPWP in effect at the time of the on-site review is compliant with 23 CFR 450.308. The work program includes regional priorities developed through a collaborative process. The MPO demonstrates adherence to the tasks in the UPWP through regular quarterly reports.



4.4 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

4.4.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(c), (h) & (i) and 23 CFR 450.324 set forth requirements for the development and content of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Among the requirements are that the MTP address at least a 20 year planning horizon and that it includes both long and short range strategies that lead to the development of an integrated and multi-modal system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand.

The MTP is required to provide a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive multimodal transportation planning process. The plan needs to consider all applicable issues related to the transportation systems development, land use, employment, economic development, natural environment, and housing and community development.

23 CFR 450.324(c) requires the MPO to review and update the MTP at least every four years in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas and at least every 5 years in attainment areas to reflect current and forecasted transportation, population, land use, employment, congestion, and economic conditions and trends.

Under 23 CFR 450.324(f), the MTP is required, at a minimum, to consider the following:

- Projected transportation demand
- Existing and proposed transportation facilities
- Operational and management strategies
- Congestion management process
- Capital investment and strategies to preserve transportation infrastructure and provide for multimodal capacity
- Design concept and design scope descriptions of proposed transportation facilities
- Potential environmental mitigation activities
- Pedestrian walkway and bicycle transportation facilities
- Transportation and transit enhancements
- A financial plan

4.4.2 Current Status

The 2015 MTP is currently in effect and is scheduled for an update in 2019.



4.4.3 Findings

The 2015 MTP is a comprehensive view and analysis of the current transportation conditions and challenges. The MTP contains recommendations to address the challenges and considers the federally required elements of an MTP.

Commendation: The MPO is commended for a thoughtful and action-oriented MTP structure that creates a logical bridge to the UPWP and a direction for the 2019 update. The recommendations in the MTP reveal an understanding of the regional issues and the MPO's responsibilities under Federal regulations. It is noteworthy that the MTP contains a detailed comments section that includes disposition of comments.

4.5 Transit Planning

4.5.1 Regulatory Basis

49 U.S.C. 5303 and 23 U.S.C. 134 require the transportation planning process in metropolitan areas to consider all modes of travel in the development of their plans and programs. Federal regulations cited in 23 CFR 450.314 state that the MPO in cooperation with the State and operators of publicly owned transit services shall be responsible for carrying out the transportation planning process.

4.5.2 Current Status

Currently the MPO coordinates with both Estuary Transit (ETD) and Middletown Transit District (MTD). MPOs that serve TMAs are required to include a transit representative on the MPO's policy board, and both ETD and MTD are currently full voting members of the MPO policy board. The former continues to operate four flexed bus routes as Nine Town Transit between Chester, Clinton, Deep River, Durham, Essex, East Haddam, Haddam, Killingworth, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook and Westbrook. ETD has recently become a 5307 direct recipient and is adjusting to the associated implications for operating and capital funding levels as well as other administrative requirements. The MPO also spearheaded an effort for the region to receive CMAQ funding for the establishment of fixed service along Route 81.

Middletown Transit District now falls under the boundaries of the MPO since the last certification review. The MPO fills the role of planners for both transit organizations since neither have planners on staff. As a result, RiverCOG coordination efforts produced a bus rider



count program and a system-wide operations study for both transit districts. The MPO also worked to put all the transit routes on Google Transit providing more accessibility to the public along with GIS planning. The MPO's 2015 MTP identified a number of recommendations and transit needs including expansion of ETD bus routes including an additional 20 passenger buses, establishing Sunday Service for both fixed routes and Dial-A-Ride programs, and conducting a Comprehensive Operations Analysis for improved cooperative service between the two districts over the next 10 years. Additionally, RiverCOG continues coordinating with the transit agencies to address concerns with placing projects on the STIP and TIP.

The Locally Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan, which in Connecticut is referred to as LOCHSTP, was developed originally through a statewide coordinated effort. The plan was most recently updated in 2009.

4.5.3 Findings

The MPO and ETD have a strong relationship shown through the MPO's involvement in creating a Needs Assessment for an upcoming Bus Maintenance and Operating Facility in addition to assisting with site selection. While the region has a locally coordinated plan in place, it has not been updated on a regular basis.

Commendation: The MPO shows active collaboration with the transit agencies within its boundaries, clearly shown through ETD's growing expansion coordination as well as the ability to effectively absorb MTD due to the MPO's restructuring.

Recommendation: The region should evaluate its LOCHSTP and consider updating it in concert with the next MTP update cycle, as allowed for in FTA Circular 9070.1G.

4.6 Transportation Improvement Program

4.6.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(c), (h) & (j) set forth requirements for the MPO to cooperatively develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Under 23 CFR 450.326, the TIP must meet the following requirements:

- Must cover at least a four-year horizon and be updated at least every four years.



- Surface transportation projects funded under Title 23 U.S.C. or Title 49 U.S.C., except as noted in the regulations, are required to be included in the TIP.
- List project description, cost, funding source, and identification of the agency responsible for carrying out each project.
- Projects need to be consistent with the adopted MTP.
- Must be fiscally constrained.
- The MPO must provide all interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed TIP.

4.6.2 Current Status

The current TIP is the FY 2015-2018 TIP, adopted in October 2014. The RiverCOG TIP includes project listings in a format consistent with the CT STIP as well as an appendix that provides information on regional FHWA-funded projects that includes a map with the location of the project. MPO staff discussed the process by which the MTP, state capital plan, and TIP are connected and stated that the process for projects to advance from one document to another is much more seamless than it has been in the past. This supports consistency between the planning products as required by regulation.

The TIP's financial plan briefly discusses anticipated revenues but includes outdated references to TEA-21 as the basis for revenue estimates. While there are tables summarizing the costs of projects programmed in the STIP, by year and by funding source, there are no comparable tables that identify revenues.

4.6.3 Findings

The MPO's TIP meets the general requirements of 23 CFR 450.326; however, the financial plan could be better documented. The financial plan does not contain a clear comparison of anticipated revenues versus programmed costs and does not identify any gaps, although it does include some projects in an "FYI" category.

Recommendation: The TIP should include a clear depiction of the amount of revenue estimated to be available for the region, along with discussion of the assumptions made to determine that figure. This revenue figure can then easily be compared to the programmed costs to clearly demonstrate financial constraint.



4.7 Public Participation

4.7.1 Regulatory Basis

Sections 134(i)(5), 134(j)(1)(B) of Title 23 and Section 5303(i)(5) and 5303(j)(1)(B) of Title 49, require a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to provide adequate opportunity for the public to participate in and comment on the products and planning processes of the MPO. The requirements for public involvement are detailed in 23 CFR 450.316(a) and (b), which require the MPO to develop and use a documented participation plan that includes explicit procedures and strategies to include the public and other interested parties in the transportation planning process.

Specific requirements include giving adequate and timely notice of opportunities to participate in or comment on transportation issues and processes, employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, making public information readily available in electronically accessible formats and means such as the world wide web, holding public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times, demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input, and a periodically reviewing of the effectiveness of the participation plan.

4.7.2 Current Status

The 2015 edition of the Public Participation Plan is the latest Plan in effect.

4.7.3 Findings

The Plan is comprehensive in scope and detail in outreach strategies and required notifications. The Plan is compliant with Federal regulations.

Commendation: The Public Participation Plan is thoughtfully constructed and has detailed performance measures to gauge the success of the adopted strategies. The MPO has also developed actions that seek to improve the Plan, and the Plan is reviewed annually for effectiveness.



4.8 Civil Rights (Title VI, EJ, LEP, ADA)

4.8.1 Regulatory Basis

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibits discrimination based upon race, color, and national origin. Specifically, 42 U.S.C. 2000d states that “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” In addition to Title VI, there are other Nondiscrimination statutes that afford legal protection. These statutes include the following: Section 162 (a) of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 (23 U.S.C. 324), Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973/Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. ADA specifies that programs and activities funded with Federal dollars are prohibited from discrimination based on disability.

Executive Order #12898 (Environmental Justice) directs federal agencies to develop strategies to address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs on minority and low-income populations. In compliance with this Executive Order, USDOT and FHWA issued orders to establish policies and procedures for addressing environmental justice in minority and low-income populations. The planning regulations, at 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(vii), require that the needs of those “traditionally underserved” by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and/or minority households, be sought out and considered.

Executive Order # 13166 (Limited-English-Proficiency) requires agencies to ensure that limited English proficiency persons are able to meaningfully access the services provided consistent with and without unduly burdening the fundamental mission of each federal agency.

4.8.2 Current Status

The MPO’s Title VI Plan has been reviewed by CTDOT, and the CTDOT has offered Title VI training to all of the MPOs. The MPO has ensured that public meeting facilities comply with ADA laws. Opportunity for translation services are provided to the public.

4.8.3 Findings

The MPO has developed demographic profiles and updates them, but has not developed a benefits and burdens analysis of projects in the TIP because most projects are small in nature. The MPO has reviewed cost investments to help determine equity for TIP projects in the region.



There have not been reviews of social impacts of projects (during construction and post-construction).

Recommendation: The MPO should develop some strategies to measure Title VI, EJ, LEP or ADA impacts of a targeted project in a selected population cluster, and conduct a pilot social impact report in an attempt to determine the benefits and burdens of a particular project on a particular neighborhood in either urban or rural setting.

4.9 Freight Planning

4.9.1 Regulatory Basis

The MAP-21 established in 23 U.S.C. 167 a policy to improve the condition and performance of the national freight network and achieve goals related to economic competitiveness and efficiency; congestion; productivity; safety, security, and resilience of freight movement; infrastructure condition; use of advanced technology; performance, innovation, competition, and accountability, while reducing environmental impacts.

In addition, 23 U.S.C. 134 and 23 CFR 450.306 specifically identify the need to address freight movement as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process.

4.9.2 Current Status

The MPO reported that, while freight concerns touch many other elements of their planning processes, the nature of freight in the region is pass-through. A new FedEx facility in Middletown will affect some freight patterns. The region reports involvement with the NYMTC freight plan development, based on the heavy truck freight traffic generated in NY and NJ that travels I-95. Many elements of freight traffic occur in the region including truck, marine and pipeline. The multi-region freight plan is on hold, due to parallel work at the state level. The region foresees involvement with the state Port Authority in the future. Results of the Valley Railroad study were useful for understanding future freight movements. The rural nature of much of the MPO implies the need for a review of farm freight movements and the public education responsibility of helping freight to be a “good neighbor” to residential areas. The region is home to a variety of freight modes and various freight-related issues that are both common among the State’s regions and unique to this MPO. The MPO is assisting the state with their freight plan and collecting important region-specific data at the same time. Past efforts include a marine vessel counting program.



4.9.3 Findings

There are no studies that analyze the local nature of freight in the region.

Recommendations: While the MPO is assisting in the State's freight plan, it is recommended that the MPO initiate a series of smaller studies that focus on one or more of their unique situations, such as movement of farm products, commercial marine concerns, freight pattern route shifts, freight accommodation in complete streets, and/or conflicts between freight movements and residential land uses. The National Performance Management Research Data Set (NPMRDS) could assist in identifying truck patterns and volumes.

4.10 Transportation Safety – Performance Management

4.10.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(h)(1)(B) requires MPOs to consider safety as one of ten planning factors. As stated in 23 CFR 450.306(a)(2), the planning process needs to consider and implement projects, strategies, and services that will increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

In addition, SAFETEA-LU established a core safety program called the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) (23 U.S.C. 148), which introduced a mandate for states to have Strategic Highway Safety Plans (SHSPs). 23 CFR 450.306 (d) requires the metropolitan transportation planning process should be consistent with the SHSP, and other transit safety and security planning.

Per 23 CFR 490.209(c), Establishment of Performance Targets, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) shall establish performance targets for each of the measures identified in § 490.207(a), where applicable, in a manner that is consistent with the following:

- (1) The MPOs shall establish targets not later than 180 days after the respective State DOT establishes and reports targets in the State HSIP annual report.
- (2) The MPO target shall represent performance outcomes anticipated for the same calendar year as the State target.
- (3) After the MPOs within each State establish the targets, the State DOT must be able to provide those targets to FHWA, upon request.



(4) For each performance measure, the MPOs shall establish a target by either:

(i) Agreeing to plan and program projects so that they contribute toward the accomplishment of the State DOT safety target for that performance measure; or

(ii) Committing to a quantifiable target for that performance measure for their metropolitan planning area.

(5) The MPOs that establish quantifiable fatality rate or serious injury rate targets shall report the VMT estimate used for such targets and the methodology used to develop the estimate. The methodology should be consistent with other Federal reporting requirements, if applicable.

(6) The MPO targets established under paragraph (c)(4) of this section specific to the metropolitan planning area shall represent the anticipated performance outcome for all public roadways within the metropolitan planning boundary regardless of ownership or functional class.

4.10.2 Current Status

The MPO incorporates safety into many planning processes and programs. The MPO has been involved in Transportation Incident Management and evacuation planning activities through the state Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS). The Route 81 study will be focusing on safety concerns.

4.10.3 Findings

The Highway Safety Unit at CTDOT is reaching out to the MPOs to develop safety plans. Some of the MPO's towns have been involved in Roadway Safety Assessments (RSAs) through the state-funded Community Connections program, although none of the participating towns are in the New Haven TMA.

The MPO has not participated in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) update process directly, but is supportive of a number of the emphasis areas within the Plan. Safety is a major criterion in the MPO's project selection process for Transportation Alternatives program proposals. Performance management for safety goals have not yet been incorporated into the planning program.

Recommendations: The MPO should review the regional safety data available to begin a preliminary look at specific data at particular sites and work with the CTDOT to pinpoint any



trends and to review countermeasures for these locations. The MPO should work with the CTDOT to coordinate the development and documentation of safety targets, per 23 CFR 490.209(c).

4.11 Nonmotorized Planning/Livability

4.11.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 217(g) states that bicyclists and pedestrians shall be given due consideration in the comprehensive transportation plans developed by each MPO under 23 U.S.C. 134. Bicycle transportation facilities and pedestrian walkways shall be considered, where appropriate, in conjunction with all new construction and reconstruction of transportation facilities.

23 CFR 450.306 sets forth the requirement that the scope of the metropolitan planning process "will increase the safety for motorized and non-motorized users; increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users; and protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life.

4.11.2 Current Status

The MPO has a draft bicycle and pedestrian plan. Nonmotorized planning is considered within the MPO's MTP and in the project selection process for the Transportation Alternatives program. The MPO has participated in the development of the State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan update.

4.11.3 Findings

The draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan does not currently include any specific actions to achieve the stated objectives. Good public input was obtained in the development of the plan.

Recommendations: Tangible actions should be developed in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to support the stated objectives. The MPO should take advantage of RSA training through the LTAP center or FHWA Resource Center, so staff can provide assistance to towns not participating in the state's Community Connectivity program and to support actions developed in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. A gap analysis study, to identify network and facility needs, should be undertaken as an action of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and such analysis should be folded into the 2019 update to the MTP.



4.12 Elements of the 3-C Process

4.12.1 Regulatory Basis

23 CFR 450.306(b) states that metropolitan planning organizations shall employ a planning process that is continuous, cooperative and comprehensive (3Cs) and that considers, what is now, ten planning factors (formerly eight planning factors from the period that this review covers). Many of these planning factors are covered separately in this review (i.e., safety).

4.12.2 Current Status

The MPO considers the planning factors within its planning process through coordination with other regional organizations that focus exclusively on subjects such as economic vitality, security and the environment, especially in their role as the state-established regional planning organization for the Lower Connecticut River Valley region.

4.12.3 Findings

Through the desk review, the MPO responded to the question of 3-C planning with evidence of cooperative activities that effectively encompass the planning factors and comply with the intent of 23 CFR 450.306(b).

4.13 Project Selection Process

4.13.1 Regulatory Basis

Under 23 CFR 450.326(n) “As a management tool for monitoring progress in implementing the transportation plan, the TIP should:

(1) Identify the criteria and process for prioritizing implementation of transportation plan elements (including multimodal trade-offs) for inclusion in the TIP and any changes in priorities from previous TIPs;...”



4.13.2 Current Status

The MPO presently employs project selection criteria to establish eligibility for the Transportation Alternatives program and the State-funded Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP). That process contains a point-based structure to establish regional priorities.

4.13.3 Findings

The project selection process utilized by the MPO establishes eligibilities and priorities in a transparent and deliberate method.

4.14 Congestion Management Process

4.14.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(k)(3) and 23 CFR 450.322 set forth requirements for the congestion management process (CMP) in TMAs. The CMP is a systematic approach for managing congestion through a process that provides for a safe and effective integrated management and operation of the multimodal transportation system. TMAs designated as non-attainment for ozone must also provide an analysis of the need for additional capacity for a proposed improvement over travel demand reduction, and operational management strategies.

4.14.2 Current Status

The 2015 Congestion Management report produced through consultants by South Central Connecticut Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG), the partner MPO of RiverCOG in the New Haven TMA, shows evidence of inclusion of the RiverCOG portion of the TMA. This inclusion was originally a recommendation from the 2013 certification review for both MPOs.

4.14.3 Findings

The 2015 Congestion Management report for the New Haven TMA reveals areas of concern within the lower Connecticut River Valley region.

Recommendations: The MPO should combine the congestion data from the 2015 Congestion Management report with safety data from recommendations from major corridor plans and the CT Crash Data Repository to present evidence for priority roadway projects for the next MTP in



2019 and for CTDOT project consideration in the near term. Such a process may help the MPO utilize performance management data from both the CMP and safety data compilations to inform the next MTP and support project development.

4.15 TMA Coordination Efforts

4.15.1 Regulatory Basis

In accordance with 23 U.S.C. 134 and 23 CFR 450, MPOs must carry out a planning process that is "continuing, cooperative and comprehensive" (3C). This includes establishing agreements to address the responsibilities and situations arising from there being more than one MPO in a metropolitan area.

In 2014, U.S. DOT outlined three Planning Emphasis Areas. These are not regulations, but rather are topic areas that MPOs and State DOTs are encouraged to focus on when conducting their planning processes and developing their planning work programs. One of these Emphasis Areas is Models of Regional Planning Cooperation, which reads:

"Promote cooperation across MPO boundaries and across State boundaries where appropriate to ensure a regional approach to transportation planning. This is particularly important where more than one MPO or State serves an urbanized area or adjacent urbanized areas. The cooperation could occur through the metropolitan planning agreements that identify how the planning process and planning products will be coordinated, through the development of joint planning products, and/or by other locally determined means."

4.15.2 Current Status

The New Haven TMA, as defined by the 2010 Census, is currently served primarily by two MPOs - RiverCOG and the South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG). A small portion of the TMA in the town of Cheshire is served by a third MPO, the Central Naugatuck Valley MPO. In addition to the New Haven TMA, RiverCOG's planning area includes portions of two other TMAs (Norwich-New London and Hartford). Coordination between RiverCOG and the other MPOs serving the New Haven TMA, as well as other neighboring MPOs, happens on an ongoing and often informal basis. As a newly merged MPO, RiverCOG inherited the TMA coordination MOUs from its predecessor MPOs, but they have not yet been updated.



Coordination across regional boundaries occurs on a variety of transportation issues. RiverCOG and SCRCOG share a mobility manager, and the transit agencies actively lead coordination efforts with neighboring transit districts. RiverCOG's portion of the New Haven UZA is incorporated into the CMP developed and managed by SCRCOG, and its portion of the Hartford UZA is similarly incorporated into the CMP maintained by the Capitol Region Council of Governments. Along the Shoreline East corridor, regions support each other's work on resiliency and coordinate to avoid duplication of efforts. Other examples of larger regional planning include the I-95 corridor work and the NYMTC-led freight coordination.

4.15.3 Findings

The MPO effectively coordinates with neighboring MPOs on matters that require larger regional cooperation, whether it is on the basis of TMA boundaries or based on transportation corridors. However, the MOUs between RiverCOG and neighboring MPOs are out-of-date and, in some cases, obsolete due to recent MPO redesignations.

Recommendation: RiverCOG should work with the other appropriate agencies to update its UZA-based MOUs. They should be updated to reflect changes to COGs and MPOs that have occurred due to restructuring in recent years. They should also incorporate changes to processes since 2002 as well as requirements identified in the US DOT's final planning rule published in 2016, including 23 CFR 450.314(e) and (g).



APPENDIX A – ON-SITE MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET

New Haven TMA 2017 MPO Certification Review
March 23, 2017 RiverCOG

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New Haven TMA 2017 MPO Certification Review

March 23, 2017 RiverCOG

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APPENDIX B – ON-SITE MEETING AGENDA

NEW HAVEN
TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT AREA (TMA) CERTIFICATION REVIEW

AGENDA

MARCH 23, 2017

LOWER CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 9:00 – 9:30 | Introduction
- Regional Presentation |
| 9:30 – 10:00 | Review Recommendations from 2013 Federal Transportation Management Area (TMA) Certification Review |
| 10:00 -10:30 | Congestion Management Process (CMP)
- Performance-Based Planning and Programming |
| 10:30 – 10:45 | Freight Planning |
| 10:45 - 11:00 | Break |
| 11:00 -11:30 | Financial Planning and TIP Development |
| 11:30 – 12:00 | TMA Coordination Efforts – Discussion with program managers: SCRCOG and others |
| 12:00 – 1:00 | Lunch |
| 1:00 – 2:00 | Update on Title VI Activities since State/Federal Review
Environmental Justice & Limited English Proficient (LEP) Activities
- Public Involvement |
| 2:00 – 2:30 | Transit Planning
o Discussion with partnering agencies
o Coordination with ConnDOT, CT Transit, Transit District |
| 2:30 – 2:45 | Break |
| 2:45 – 3:45 | Safety Planning
- Performance Management
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning |
| 3:45 – 4:30 | Transportation Policy Board (PB) and Public Input
- Discussion with PB members and other interested persons regarding LCRVCOG's planning process |



APPENDIX C - LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act
AMPO: Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
CAA: Clean Air Act
CFR: Code of Federal Regulations
CMP: Congestion Management Process
CO: Carbon Monoxide
DOT: Department of Transportation
EJ: Environmental Justice
FAST: Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
FHWA: Federal Highway Administration
FTA: Federal Transit Administration
FY: Fiscal Year
HSIP: Highway Safety Improvement Program
ITS: Intelligent Transportation Systems
LEP: Limited-English-Proficiency
M&O: Management and Operations
MAP-21: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century
MPA: Metropolitan Planning Area
MPO: Metropolitan Planning Organization
MTP: Metropolitan Transportation Plan (also called Long-Range Transportation Plan)
NAAQS: National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide
O₃: Ozone
SHSP: Strategic Highway Safety Plan
STIP: State Transportation Improvement Program
TDM: Travel Demand Management
TIP: Transportation Improvement Program
TMA: Transportation Management Area
U.S.C.: United States Code
UPWP: Unified Planning Work Program
USDOT: United States Department of Transportation





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