
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL



Regional Planning Commission

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SEPTEMBER 2014

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I. OVERVIEW OF THE NEW ORLEANS MPO

Metropolitan Transportation Planning began in the early 1960's with the enactment of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962. Under federal requirements, a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) must be designated for each Urbanized Area (UZAs) with a population of 50,000 persons or more. These MPOs play an integral role in regionally implementing the strategies contained in the nation's transportation bill (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)). MPOs provide the vehicle to identify and evaluate regional problems, analyze alternatives, and facilitate community involvement when resolving difficulties. MPOs contribute information to state and federal transportation agencies, furnishing critical feedback in an iterative communication loop so further enhancements can be made.

The RPC was created in 1962 by the Louisiana state legislature (LA R.S. 33:135) and local governing body authorization to fulfill federal and state requirements for regional comprehensive and economic development planning. As mandated by its enabling legislation, the RPC is the legal entity whose mission is to:

“Promote the general welfare and prosperity of the entire region by harmonizing the activities of federal, state, parish, municipal and other governmental agencies in the region.”

The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) serves as the MPO for Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John, St. Tammany, and Tangipahoa Parishes. The RPC and its Transportation Policy Committee provides a forum in which the chief elected officials, community leaders, and modal agencies come together in partnership on the second Tuesday of each month to discuss the Big Picture. Since its inception, the RPC has served as a forum for discussion of regional planning issues, and over the years has often been the lone voice in support of a regional approach to problem-solving.

The RPC is the MPO for the New Orleans, Slidell, Mandeville-Covington, and Hammond-Ponchatoula urbanized areas. There are ten urbanized areas in the state of Louisiana and eight MPOs designated by the governor. The RPC is the only MPO in the state representing four urban areas. The Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) consists of the four urbanized areas (UZAs) as defined by the 2010 Decennial Census plus the area expected to become fully urbanized within the next twenty years, including sub area designated as “urban clusters” by the Census Bureau. A map showing the MPA and the New Orleans UZA is shown in Appendix A.

The New Orleans MPO's planning work program is supported by the activities of five working Committees including: the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC), and three citizens-based Advisory Councils, e.g., Complete Streets, Transit & Human Services, and Freight Planning. The TAC consists of individuals whose skills, training and professional status qualify them to take an active role in helping shape and oversee the transportation planning program for the region through review of documents and recommendations to the TPC.

The Commission established the Transportation Policy Committee in 1992. The TPC wields final decision-making authority concerning federal transportation policy and programs within the MPA. The Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) includes “representation of local elected officials,

officials of agencies that administer or operate major modes or systems of transportation, and appropriate State officials.” The 44-member TPC consists of the full Commission plus the Governor of the State of Louisiana or a designated representative, the Chairperson of the Regional Transit Authority or a designate, the Director of the Department of Transit Administration for Jefferson Parish or a designee, a representative of the Port of New Orleans, the Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission, two citizen members per parish, New Orleans Public Belt Railroad and Louisiana Motor Transport Association. The TPC takes review of documents and recommendations to the Commission (e.g. the Planning Commission adopts regional policy after it is recommended by the TPC). The committees operate under a one person, one vote policy.

The RPC retains a professional staff with expertise in transportation planning, program management, air quality conformity analysis, environmental planning, economic development, transportation modeling, and geographic information systems. The staff works closely with the TAC and the Advisory Councils to formally evaluate the transportation, environmental, and community sustainability needs of the urban area and make recommendations to the TPC. RPC staff also facilitates community input, assists in project management, and adheres to and guides the metropolitan planning process outlined in MAP-21.

The main agencies that provide guidance and oversight of the RPC’s transportation planning process include: the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Louisiana Department of Transportation and development (DOTD), the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and U.S. Department of Energy (U.S. DOE).

A copy of RPC’s Enabling Legislation is contained in Appendix B. Appendix C provides information on RPC by-laws as they pertain to commission membership, tenure, TPC membership, RPC officers and executive director positions, meeting quorum and voting requirements. The Transportation Policy Committee membership for fiscal year 2014-2015 can be found in Appendix D.

II. UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

The Regional Planning Commission undertakes its role in the planning process through a contractual relationship with the LADOTD and several funding administrations within the U.S. Department of Transportation. The tasks to be undertaken in this relationship are defined in a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) prepared each year by the RPC staff.

The UPWP provides a summary of identified planning priorities and of all federally-funded transportation planning activities within the metropolitan area for the fiscal year. The UPWP also includes a summary of products, program timelines, associated costs, and sources of funding. Tasks listed within any study design are carried out by participating agencies and/or their consultants identified in the UPWP, and may respond to specific needs or to broad policy issues. The UPWP considers a range of possible responses to transportation deficiencies with an emphasis on balanced, financially feasible solutions.

The RPC prepares the UPWP annually, and bases the budget on funds provided under Title 23 U.S.C. and Title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53. Over the last five years (2011-2015), the average annual Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration funding made available was, respectively, \$2,126,663 and \$521,035. In addition, RPC's member parishes typically contribute the region's 20% local share match.

In 2009, the U.S. Department of Transportation initiated a series of national outreach tours to solicit public input into the development and reauthorization of the nation's transportation bill. In addition to Safety, Economic Competitiveness, and State of Good Repair, the transportation bill directed resources to fostering Livable Communities and Environmental Sustainability. The New Orleans MPO's UPWP builds on these concepts by coordinating transportation, housing and commercial development investments with, place-based, and environmentally sustainable strategies.

ELEMENTS OF THE UPWP

The UPWP reflects RPC's transportation planning program, acting as a vehicle to address the transportation needs, deficiencies, or opportunities identified by the RPC's planning process and through extensive coordination with members of the commission, RPC's Federal, State, and local planning partners and transportation stakeholders, local governments, and a proactive public participation process. Current RPC planning emphasis areas, as derived from this process, include the following:

- Safety
- Environmental Sustainability
- Livable Communities
- Preservation of the Existing System
- Economic Competitiveness
- Congestion Management
- Air Quality

- Transit and Human Services Transportation Coordination
- Bicycle and Pedestrian
- Public Education and Involvement

The planning activities undertaken annually by the RPC, and described in the UPWP are also a direct reflection of the eight planning elements described in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) transportation funding and authorization bill of 2012:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and to freight.
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between all modes; for people and for freight.
7. Promote efficient system management and operation through the development of a congestion management plan.
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Specific required elements for a work program can be found in Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations. The following are the ways in which these, as well as other FHWA and State recommended elements are addressed in the Regional Planning Commission's UPWP:

- A discussion of planning issues and priorities facing the metropolitan area.
- A description and map of the planning area.
- A description of coordination efforts between the RPC and other regional and state agencies, including, though not limited to, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, local governments, and transit providers.
- Identification of anticipated work tasks, with defined goals and objectives for the fiscal year.
- A description of the relationship of each task to the eight planning elements of MAP-21 and to RPC's planning emphasis areas.
- A budget for each task, detailing sources and amounts of federal share and of local match.
- Identification of which agency will perform the work, or whether work will be conducted by a consultant.

- Summaries and, when possible, funding sources cost estimates for planning, economic development, and environmental planning activities conducted by the RPC with other Federal, State, and/or local funds, based on sound fiscal analysis.
- When/if localities are designated as non-attainment areas, a description of all anticipated metropolitan transportation or otherwise related air quality planning activities regardless of funding source.
- The schedule for estimated completion of the described work.
- A review of anticipated work products.
- A description of performance measures intended to track progress toward objectives and work products.

UPWP APPROVAL PROCEDURES

RPC begins preparation of a draft UPWP for the subsequent fiscal year in January. In March, the draft program is submitted to the Commission, FHWA, FTA, and to the public for review and comment. LADOTD serves as a facilitator in the UPWP approval process. LADOTD, the Louisiana Division of FHWA, FTA Region VI, the RPC Technical Advisory Committee, and other agencies, as appropriate, review the draft UPWP and provide comments to the LADOTD coordinator and MPO. Following any necessary review meetings scheduled by LADOTD, the MPO revises the UPWP to address any comments and submits a final UPWP for adoption to the Commission in April.

LADOTD then prepares and enters into an annual funding agreement with the MPO for transportation planning services for the fiscal year beginning July 1. All of these task are completed in a timely manner each spring to ensure a seamless and uninterrupted continuation of the RPC's planning activities into the subsequent fiscal year.

The LADOTD also participates in most of the MPO planning activities as a member of the region's Technical Advisory Committee or task specific Project Management Committee(s). Technical studies produced through the UPWP planning process are submitted to LADOTD in draft form for review prior to finalization. Following completion of the Stage "0" Feasibility Study, the LADOTD issues an approval letter allowing the project to be advanced to the next level which is normally the environmental determination process.

Both FHWA Planning (PL) funds and FTA Section 5303 funds require a 20% local share match. The MPO's matching funds are derived from the annual funding contributions made by the eight member parishes in the MPO planning area. The MPO reviews and approves the UPWP and, following review by RPC's legal consul, the RPC authorizes the local matching funds and empowers the Chairman and/or Executive Director to execute the necessary funding agreements with LADOTD. Local parish funding is based on the percent of parish population as reported and updated following the decennial census. These funding arrangements are described in the UPWP.

MONITORING OF UPWP ACTIVITIES

A full time member of the RPC professional staff serves as the Responsible Charge or Project Manager for tasks contained in the UPWP. Additionally, the RPC Technical Advisory Committee is briefed regularly on the status of the major UPWP planning activities. The Technical Advisory

Committee consists of representatives from LADOTD, local planning and public works professionals, modal agencies, including the port, airport, public transit and rail interests in the region. A copy of RPC's Technical Advisory Committee membership is found in Appendix E. In addition, LADOTD is a regular participant on the Project Management Committee which oversees RPC technical studies, particularly in such instances where state routes are involved.

In terms of financial monitoring, monthly progress reports are submitted by the RPC to LADOTD and FTA and quarterly to FHWA describing work activities completed during the reporting period. RPC's financial management division and senior planning staff prepare the reimbursement requests and supporting documentation. Requests for reimbursement of federal transit funds are submitted on a monthly basis to LADOTD for review and transmittal to FTA.

III. METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN (MTP)

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is the chief legal document reflecting the resources, the fundamental planning process, and the selection of projects for the region. The MTP describes the transportation needs and goals of the region over the next 30 years. It includes both long range and short range multi-modal strategies focusing at the systems level, including roadways, transit, non- motorized transportation, and intermodal connections. The MTP documents the planning process employed by the RPC and is intended to provide an improved mechanism for public understanding and therefore enhance the public's ability to participate in the planning process.

The transportation philosophy promulgated in MAP-21, and the best practices that have developed in subsequent years, reflect a trend towards a more holistic approach to transportation that acknowledges the need for more balanced planning that is well integrated with other important issues. Transportation systems should be safe and effective, but should also contribute to economic development, community livability, and environmental sustainability. Moreover, the decision-making process should include both objective measures of success and stakeholder input, with a constant emphasis on optimizing the efficient use of the existing system.

The RPC has sought to incorporate these values into the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and other initiatives, i.e., Regional Smart Growth Plan and the activities of the Complete Streets Advisory Committee. These RPC initiatives are intended to influence the development of the future transportation system in a manner that most effectively meets the wide variety of the region's current and future needs.

The MTP reflects the greater emphasis being placed on integrating transportation planning with other important policy areas, namely economic development, community livability, and environmental sustainability. The transportation system has a substantial impact on each of these, and vice versa, but until recently integrated policies have been limited and difficult to administer. In the near future transportation agencies will be expected to increase their cooperation and coordination with non- traditional yet critical partners, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Energy, and Economic Development Administration. The RPC is taking a leadership role in this area of policy development and inter-agency coordination.

MTP PLANNING PROCESS

The RPC is pro-actively involved in carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process which consists of the following steps or activities:

- Monitoring existing transportation system conditions;
- Development of performance measures and performance targets;
- Forecasting future population and employment growth;
- Assessing projected land uses in the region and identifying major growth corridors;

- Identifying transportation needs and deficiencies and analyzing, through detailed technical studies, various transportation alternatives and investment strategies to address those needs;
- Developing long-range plans and short-range capital improvements and operational strategies to improve safety, reduce congestion, and facilitate the movement of people and goods;
- Estimating the impact of the transportation system on the environment, including air quality within the region (see further description of air quality measures below);
- Developing a financial plan for securing sufficient revenues to cover the costs of implementation strategies, including operating costs, system maintenance, system preservation, and new capital investments (see further description of the MTP's financial plan and fiscal constraints below);
- Pro-actively engaging the public and other interested stakeholders in the planning and decision-making process, including, as appropriate, local, state, and/or federal agencies responsible for land management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation;
- Identifying and evaluating potential projects for social and environmental justice concerns and mitigation needs;
- Working with non-profits and other federal agencies i.e., HUD, EDA, EPA and DOE on methods to better integrate transportation with land use, affordable housing, job access and locations, and livable community concepts;
- Developing plans and programs to encourage transit usage and a seamless transit network within the region and establish transit linkages between affordable housing locations and major regional employment centers;
- Working with the mobility impaired community to address their transportation needs and accessibility concerns;
- Developing and support measures and facilities that enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety and walkability;
- Pro-actively developing with the state, local governments, and community organizations transit and other community enhancements (transit shelters, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, etc.) to enhance modal connectivity, livability, and improve the visual environment;
- Supporting a regional visioning process to educate elected officials and the public about the principles of Smart Growth, including the benefits of Transit Oriented Development, alternative fuels and energy reduction strategies, and other measures to foster livable communities and environmental sustainability;
- Supporting an on-going Congestion Management Process (CMP) which focuses on transportation and management strategies to relieve vehicular congestion, increase safety, and foster alternatives to single occupancy vehicle use i.e., transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities (see further description of the CMP below).

FIGURE 1: METROPOLITAN PLANNING PROCESS FLOWCHART

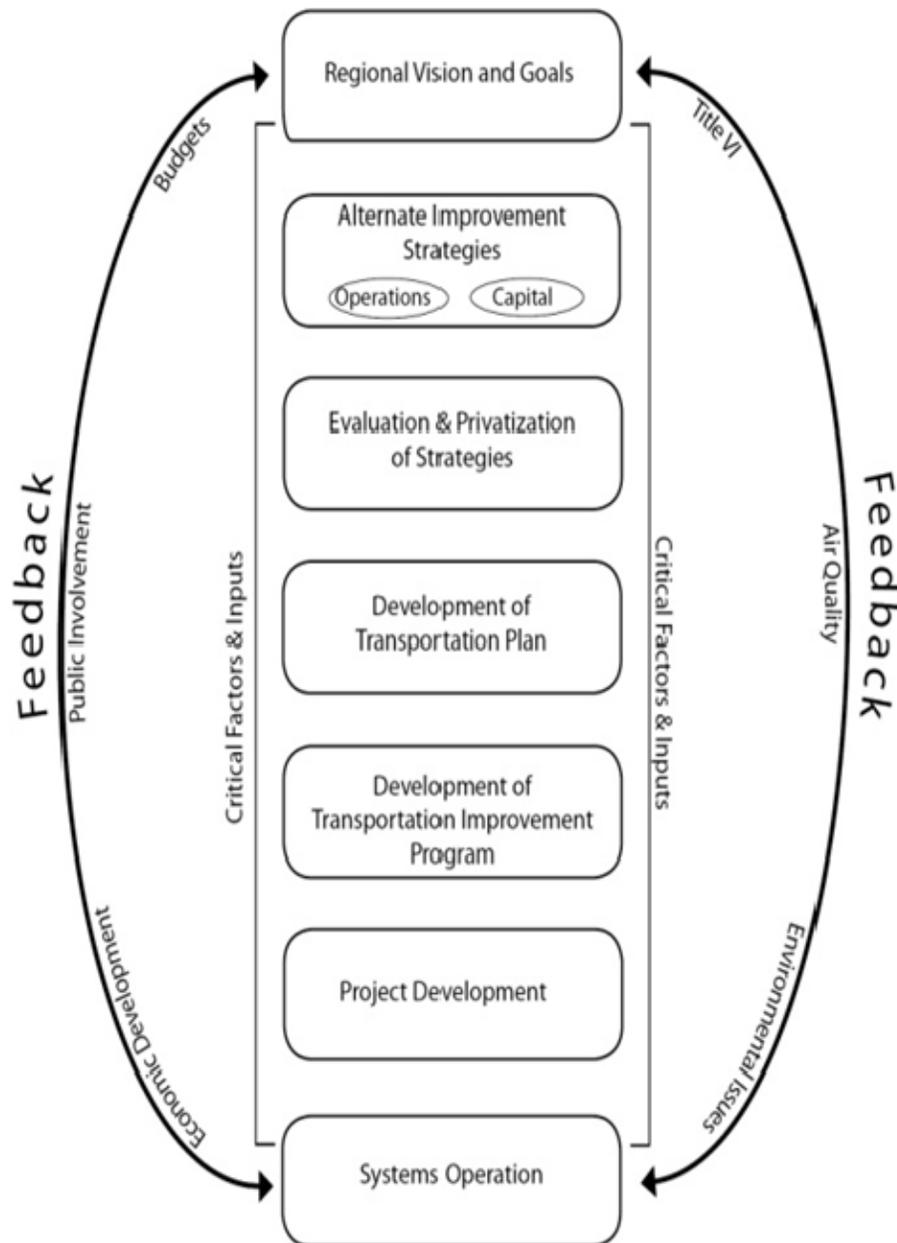


Figure 1 demonstrates how the planning process relates to the MTP, as well as the TIP, and illustrates how various agencies and public participation contribute to this process.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES IN THE MTP

Beginning in 2010, the RPC further clarified the goals and objectives of the MTP, and introduced clearly defined performance measures. The goals set forth in the MTP serve as guides for program and strategy selection. By orienting projects toward these goals, the RPC can ensure its efforts will achieve desired transportation outcomes.

Satisfying specific objectives will mark progress toward goal achievement, and pre-determined performance measures will serve as evaluation tools to measure the degree to which such objectives are being met through project initiatives. These clearly defined goals and objectives and measures will help the RPC better monitor the outcomes of regional work, as well as provide a greater measure of accountability to the public and to elected officials.

The goals, objectives, and performance measures in the MTP are developed through consultation with federal, regional, state and local agencies, the general public, and RPC staff. They are considered specific enough to state a clearly defined result, they can be quantitatively or objectively measured, they are realistic given the reasonable and practical constraints of the plan, and they bound by a specific time of measurement and achievement.

MTP PLANNING HORIZON, UPDATES, AND REVISIONS

The planning horizon of the New Orleans MTP is 30 years from its effective date. The effective date of the MTP is the date of its adoption by the Regional Planning Commission.

The RPC reviews and updates the plan every four years. The RPC completes the update in order to ensure that the updated plan is in line with current and forecasted transportation and land use trends and is firmly based on the latest assumptions for population, land use, travel, employment, congestion, and economic activity. The update further advances the effective date, and subsequently the horizon year, by 25-30 years.

On occasion, unexpected factors, such as the necessary inclusion of a new project, the identification of a regionally significant project, or the advancement in scheduling of an identified project, may require the revision of the MTP during interim years without fundamentally altering the general policy direction of the MTP. For such revision to take place, the project must meet federal funding eligibility requirements, fall within the projected, constrained budget for future years, adhere to the eight planning factors of MAP-21 and the planning emphasis areas of the RPC, be consistent the stated goals, objectives, and assumptions of the MTP, and meet local guidelines. Having met these criteria, the Transportation Policy Committee will vote as to whether or not to include the project in the MTP.

Should the revision fall within the first four years of the MTP, the Transportation Improvement Program will also be amended and submitted to the state for inclusion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. The RPC submits all updates and revisions to the MTP to the state to ensure consistency with the statewide transportation plan. The RPC also submits copies of the updated plan to FHWA and FTA for review.

MTP FISCAL CONSTRAINT AND FINANCIAL PLAN

The MTP is fiscally-constrained, i.e., activities are prioritized relative to realistic projections of available financial resources (federal, state, local, and in some cases, private) out to the MTP horizon year. In other words, the MTP cannot designate a spending program larger than the funds reasonably expected to accrue over the life of the plan.

To meet this requirement, the scope of projects included in the New Orleans MTP is based on a projection derived from historic revenue levels and inflationary adjustments. Revenue projections are further refined through coordination with LADOTD and with public transit agencies. Long-range projects, such as those scheduled beyond a fifteen-year horizon, may reflect aggregate cost ranges, as long as revenue projections indicate the reasonable likelihood that such funds will be available.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND INPUT INTO THE MTP

While a more detailed description of the RPC's Public Participation plan is provided in Chapter 6, it is worth noting the role that public input plays in the development and refinement of the MTP. Transportation systems that effectively serve the public cannot be developed without significant input and guidance from the affected stakeholders. For this reason, more sophisticated and robust public outreach methods are continually being developed and refined, and the importance of stakeholder input on program development and project selection continues to grow.

The RPC pursues multiple means of soliciting public input into the MTP's goals, objectives, and project inclusion, including a survey distributed via the RPC website and paper. The RPC also conducted a region-wide meeting and a series of neighborhood specific meetings that served both to inform the public as to the purpose and elements of the plan, as well as solicit opinions, advice, and concerns about the contents of the draft plan.

Additionally, during an update of the MTP, the RPC will publish the draft MTP on the RPC website for a minimum of 30 days for citizen review and comment. Following adoption, the Final MTP will be published and made available for public viewing on the RPC website on a continual basis.

AIR QUALITY PLANNING AND DETERMINATION

In 2005, the New Orleans region came into compliance with all conformity requirements under the Clean Air Act and was reclassified as an attainment area. However, due to an upcoming significant revision of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and a subsequent lowering of the eight hour ozone standard from 85 parts per billion to as low as 60 ppb, RPC anticipates the possibility of non-attainment status if and when these changes take place.

In the event the New Orleans area is reclassified as nonattainment, it would take EPA about a year to complete Quality Assurance of the data and publish a Federal Register notice of nonattainment designation for selected parishes within the New Orleans MSA. Under this scenario, the RPC would have one additional year to produce a detailed conformity analysis of the MTP and TIP, as well as some additional changes to the MTP policies as described in this document. Projects listed in the MTP will need to be evaluated prior to being adopted, approved and accepted in any air-quality nonattainment or maintenance areas.

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), continuously monitors local air quality at regional stations. The DEQ submits a State Implementation Plan (SIP) every three years to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) describing the intended air quality goals or air quality budget for each urbanized area of the state. The conformity analysis requires the estimation of total mobile source emissions. Of particular interest to New Orleans are smog precursors of hydrocarbon (a proxy for VOC) and oxides of nitrogen (NO_x).

The Clean Air Act (CAA) of 1990 identifies actions to be taken by States and MPOs to reduce transportation-related emissions. The MPO's role in air quality planning is to assess the impact of planned transportation projects on regional air quality and to identify programs and action measures that will help reduce emissions.

The general process for determining air quality conformity is initiated with the generation of travel forecasts (in particular, vehicle miles of travel) for the nonattainment area(s), and the subsequent application of per-vehicle emissions rates (as estimated by the latest-generation air quality model promulgated by the U.S. EPA) to derive regional emissions forecasts. In a non-attainment scenario, the development of the MTP must be done in coordination with the process of developing transportation control measures in the SIP. The SIP mobile source budget comes from LADEQ and LADOTD with U.S. EPA approval.

One role of computer modeling in the formation of the MTP (and, by extension, the TIP) is the development of the Air Quality Conformity Analysis. In the Conformity Analysis, cumulative mobile source emissions impacts of all projects proposed for inclusion in the MTP are analyzed based on their expected opening date and regardless of funding source.

The CAAA mandates that each urbanized area demonstrate a reduction in mobile source emissions, however small, in order to be in compliance. Ultimately, non-compliance may affect the amount of federal transportation funding received.

Once the Air Quality Analysis is accepted and approved by the RPC Policy Board, it is reviewed by the FHWA, FTA, and EPA who have 30 days to make a determination on whether the conformity requirements have been met. A critical point regarding air quality conformity is that any proposed amendment to the MTP involving regionally significant or capacity projects will trigger a new conformity analysis and finding. Additionally, the effective date of the MTP will be the date of conformity determination issued by FHWA and FTA, as opposed to the date of RPC adoption.

In the event that parishes in the RPC planning area are found to be in nonattainment, the appropriate measures to MTP and TIP development and refinement will be adjusted according to the regulations and procedures described above.

CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROCESS

One way in which the MTP project selection process takes place is through the Congestion Management System. MPOs that serve areas with populations exceeding 200,000, including the RPC, are called transportation management areas (TMAs). TMAs must have a congestion management process (CMP) that identifies actions and strategies to reduce congestion and increase mobility. In air quality nonattainment areas, projects that increase capacity for single occupancy vehicles (by adding new roads or widening existing ones) must conform to the area's CMP.

Federal legislation requires the RPC to maintain a Congestion Management Process (CMP) to identify and address traffic bottlenecks and to mitigate regional traffic congestion. The CMP was updated in 2010 and focuses on 4 main tasks:

- (1) Defining and Identifying Congestion,
- (2) Selecting Congestion Reduction Strategies,

- (3) Implementing Strategies, and
- (4) Monitoring and Evaluating Performance.

The CMP is an ongoing effort to establish policies and projects to reduce traffic congestion region-wide, focusing on regionally significant routes, i.e., state highways and major arterials essential to metropolitan mobility and regional economic competitiveness.

Relying heavily on stakeholder input and an ever-expanding data collection program, the process is an on-going effort by the RPC to formally document its efforts to maintain and improve the efficiency with which people and goods move throughout the region. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is charged with developing specific project and policy recommendations for consideration by the RPC for inclusion in the MTP and TIP. Representatives from the state, parishes, and transit operators are invited to participate in the TAC, which is also responsible for identifying the locations of severe congestion and evaluating the success of implemented congestion mitigation strategies.

IV. TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The highway and transit projects in the Transportation Improvement Program derive directly from the first four years of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. These projects are described best as those “next in the pipeline” for investment and implementation, and the TIP is thus utilized as a management tool and an aid for financial planning and implementation of the MTP, as well as a schedule by which to coordinate project implementation among federal, state, and local jurisdictions and agencies. The TIP also provides a public document for review

The TIP is adopted biennially by the Regional Planning Commission (RPC). This document is prepared cooperatively by the RPC, acting in its legal capacity as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the New Orleans urbanized area, and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and affected transit operators. The TIP is reviewed annually by the RPC and selected revisions are permitted, following formal amendment procedures.

Projects are first screened by RPC for technical merit and consistency with the region’s adopted transportation goals and the eight planning factors which guide the development and implementation of the nation’s transportation bill (MAP-21). Following this initial screening process, potential projects are accepted into the Plan for further evaluation and refinement. During the planning phase, projects undergo a series of rigorous technical analyses to determine overall feasibility, environmental consequences, project costs, and potential funding sources before being advanced into the TIP for final design, project letting, and construction implementation.

Ten key priorities guide the development of the MTP and TIP: 1) Safety, 2) Preservation of the existing transportation system, 3) Livable Communities where transportation is coordinated with land use, housing, and environmental policies to foster transit and the use of alternative transportation modes to encourage place-based communities, 4) Economic Competitiveness where transportation investments are used to enhance the nation’s and region’s overall economic position, 5) Environmental Sustainability to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gases and energy consumption, 6) Congestion Management, 7) Air Quality, 8) Transit, 9) Bike & Pedestrian, and 10) Public Education and Involvement.

The Transportation Improvement Program identifies transportation improvements being advanced towards implementation by state and local governments within the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) over a four year period. The primary purpose of the TIP is to facilitate the coordinated development of the region’s transportation system based on the prioritized allocation of federal, state and local financial resources. A second objective of the TIP is to help educate and inform the general public and other interested stakeholders about proposed transportation investments.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND THE UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM, AND THE STATEWIDE TIP

Projects contained in the TIP make up the first four years, or Phase I, of the 25 to 30 year planning horizon outlined in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), as described in the previous chapter.

As such, the projects in the TIP must meet the MTP standards of fiscal constraint, with funding identified as reasonably expected to accrue over the identified time frame.

Projects contained in the TIP have evolved through the transportation planning process and are incorporated into the state transportation improvement program (STIP) administered by LADOTD. Amendments to the TIP are also submitted to the LADOTD for inclusion in the TIP. The TIP must conform to the STIP for air quality standards.

The planning efforts undertaken through the UPWP often lead to conclusions that recommend projects for implementation in the region's highway or transit system. Depending on the relative prioritization of these projects and the availability of funding, such recommendations can be forwarded for RPC Board and TAC approval for inclusion into the MTP and TIP.

SCREENING OF PROJECTS FOR TIP INCLUSION

Candidate projects for Plan and TIP consideration come from various sources, including RPC's public outreach initiatives, input from business, civic, and community organizations, state and local governmental entities, and other transportation stakeholders.

In order to bring a greater level of objectivity to its project selection process, the RPC has developed a formal Project Ranking Scorecard for use in screening projects prior to inclusion in the Plan/TIP. The scorecard describes a project by quantitatively rating its potential impacts on a variety of criteria, such as safety or congestion. The actual factors considered by the Scorecard are derived from the variety of federal, state, and regional policies that help define the RPC's overarching planning priorities. It is intended to help simplify decision-making by providing a single, standardized tool for comparing projects. An example of the scorecard used in this process is provided in Appendix I.

Moreover, through use of the scorecard, planners can be assured that they have considered a comprehensive set of criteria in the project selection process. Following this initial screening, candidate projects formally enter the planning process and are analyzed as to their basic feasibility, benefits to costs, and potential community and environmental impacts. The Transportation Plan for Year 2044 contains comprehensive discussions as to how planning and other factors are being specifically applied in the New Orleans region to develop a transportation system that provides for transportation safety, system preservation, livable communities, environmental sustainability, and the efficient, economic movement of people and goods.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

A draft of the TIP document is prepared biennially by RPC in close consultation and cooperation with LADOTD. This document is widely distributed for public review and comment (See Public Involvement section) and is presented to the region's multi-parish Technical Advisory Committee for review, comment, and concurrence. Projects contained in the TIP are organized in accordance with the federal fiscal year, beginning October 1.

The RPC works very closely with LADOTD staff and local parish Departments of Public Works (DPW's) to establish realistic project priorities, based on where the project actually rests in the implementation pipeline. Meetings are held at least quarterly with LADOTD to monitor the actual

status of TIP projects and scheduled letting dates. This periodic review has helped this region to establish firm project priorities rather than “paper” priorities. This review takes into account important factors such as the status of environmental clearances, survey work, preliminary plans, right-of-way, utilities, advance check prints and final plan preparation.

When taken together, these criteria establish the relevant let date and, therefore, the priority order for implementation of TIP projects. The cost of the project, type of funding, and the availability of proposed funding are also taken into account in priority setting. The above project level information is made available to the Technical Advisory Committee, Transportation Policy Committee, and the general public upon request, and project work status is utilized extensively in establishing the priority program. The draft TIP, along with any public comments, is presented to the Transportation Policy Committee for review and consideration prior to finalization of project priorities and formal adoption of the TIP document.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FOR TIP

Copies of the draft TIP are made available on the RPC website, and at regional libraries throughout the MPA for citizen review, input, and comment. The public is also afforded the opportunity to express their comments directly to the Transportation Policy Committee (MPO) prior to adoption of the TIP document.

The public is provided with the opportunity to review the draft TIP during a 30-day comment period. The comment period is announced in the public notice section of the RPC’s website. The MPO staff accepts public comments in writing, via e-mail, in person or by phone. If comments necessitate a significant modification in the TIP, the matter is brought before the Technical Advisory Committee and Transportation Policy Committee for discussion prior to TIP approval. Public comment periods of seven days are also provided in the TIP amendment process, as described below, wherein significant comments may necessitate a delay in amendment approval pending technical advisory committee review.

TIP APPROVAL/ADOPTION

The draft TIP is provided to both the Technical Advisory Committee and Transportation Policy Committee in advance of the scheduled meeting at which the TIP is to be voted upon. The TIP is first presented to the Technical Advisory Committee for discussion and approval. Following TAC approval, and after the close of the public comment period, the TIP is then presented to the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) for approval. The TIP is provided to LADOTD for inclusion into the STIP.

TIP AMENDMENT PROCEDURES

The RPC amends the TIP as needed, in conjunction with the regularly scheduled Transportation Policy Committee meetings, which take place on the second Tuesday of each month and are open to the public. RPC’s goal is to follow the formal process outlined below in making amendments to the TIP. However, on rare occasions an administrative modification process is also used and, in extreme cases, an emergency amendment process is permitted. Administrative modifications and emergency amendment criteria and procedures are also described below.

FORMAL AMENDMENT PROCESS

A formal amendment is required to the MTP, TIP, or STIP for a major change involving the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in project cost, project/phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or scope (e.g., changing project termini or the number of through traffic lanes). Minor changes to existing projects that are already included in the TIP may not require a formal amendment.

The following TIP amendment procedures are followed in processing an Amendment or significant change to the TIP. In accordance with the provisions of 23 CFR 450.216(b), the TIP shall be included without change in the STIP following approval of the TIP by the MPO and the LADOTD, acting on behalf of the Governor.

RPC will follow the same screening and approval procedures for a formal amendment as they do for standard project inclusion in the TIP, as described above. Following these procedures, RPC staff will review all amendment requests to determine their funding impact, their alignment with the fiscal constraint of the TIP and their consistency with the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and other factors as appropriate. RPC will delay submitting the amendment for public review and/or TAC and policy committee approval if there is inadequate time for a thorough review of a proposed amendment.

A public comment period of at least seven days will be provided, wherein the proposed amendment will be posted on the RPC website. This comment period will end prior to the next regularly scheduled Transportation Policy Committee meeting to allow the RPC staff to report any significant comments, to delay submittal if necessary pending comments, and otherwise to forward their resolution to the Transportation Policy Committee prior to their vote. The public comment period will begin with the posting of the draft TIP amendment(s) on the RPC website.

RPC will provide the Technical Advisory Committee and Transportation Policy Committee a list of proposed amendment(s) at least seven days prior to the Transportation Policy Committee meeting. Pending comments from the Technical Advisory Committee, The TIP amendment(s) will be voted on for approval by the Transportation Policy Committee at its regularly scheduled meeting. These meetings are open to the public, who will provide with an opportunity for comment at that time prior to voting.

A copy of the TIP amendment(s) will be forwarded to LADOTD by mail and by email with the approving Transportation Policy Committee resolution within one week of the formal approval. The approved amendment will be posted on the MPO's website within one week after approval by the Transportation Policy Committee. An Amendment to the TIP must first be approved by the MPO before it can be added into the STIP by LADOTD. Once approved by LADOTD, on behalf of the Governor, the amendment will be incorporated into Louisiana's STIP.

ADMINISTRATIVE MODIFICATION PROCESS

Because there are situations that necessitate a minor modification to a project or corrections to the TIP that do not require the formal amendment process and Technical Advisory Committee review, there will be an opportunity to administratively modify the TIP under certain circumstances.

Once the MPO approves the Administration Modification, it will be documented via e-mail to the reviewing agencies (LADOTD, FHWA, FTA, etc.) as well as the requesting agency. Though no public comment period is required for administrative modifications, the RPC will post approved Administrative Modifications on its website within seven days of approval by the Transportation Policy Committee.

All administrative modifications must still conform to the current Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Any modification that may cause conflict with the established planning process will be considered only under formal amendment procedures. In short, occasions for RPC staff to consider administrative modifications occur on very specific occasions, summarized by this list below. Reasons outside of this list for such a modification must be justified and approved by the Transportation Policy Committee.

- Correction of obvious minor data entry/typographical errors;
- Splitting or combining projects without affecting the original project intent;
- Moving a project from one federal funding category to another ;
- Currently programmed projects or project phases requesting a change in fiscal year only;
- Proposed amendment does not involve a significant change in the use of competitive funds;
- Scope modification that does not change overall impact of project on capacity or overall intent of project;
- The project is considered minor in nature (bridge painting, signage, lighting, etc...) or safety related (guardrails, railroad crossing upgrade, etc.);
- For projects costing less than \$3,000,000, the funding adjustments is < to \$600,000 or 20% of total project cost;
- Moving any project phase programmed in a previous TIP into a new TIP.

V. FUNDING PROGRAMS

The funding for projects shown in the TIP and the MTP reflects a variety of sources. Many of the projects are defined and selected through separate processes. For example, Transportation Enhancement (TE), Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS), Highway Safety, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds are programmed through competitive application to LADOTD. LADOTD is also the lead agency on the use and programming of federal-aid funds for interstate and state highway projects. All federally funded transportation projects, including those funded with congressional earmarks or demonstration funds must be included in the TIP, and or subject to Air Quality Conformity Analysis, if the region is re- designated as nonattainment.

Based on financial data obtained from LADOTD, the New Orleans region has averaged about \$83 million annually in Federal and State funding under the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century, or TEA-21.

The projects contained in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) are derived from the region's overall 30 year Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Both the TIP and MTP have been financially constrained (based on past funding history) to reflect realistic and available levels of project funding.

Under SAFETEA-LU and now MAP-21, the nation's current transportation bill, the New Orleans region has experienced an overall increase in construction spending due to improved coordination of the planning and programming efforts of RPC and LADOTD. Financial constraint has resulted in a goals-oriented approach emphasizing traffic safety, state of good repair, and transit system recovery.

Projects identified for National Highway System (NHS) funding are part of DOTD's Priority Program and have been approved by the RPC, acting in its capacity as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), for the New Orleans region. The NHS funds shown in the TIP are primarily directed toward the elimination of traffic congestion at interchanges within the I-10 corridor. Projects shown for Surface Transportation Program funding (STP>200k) for urbanized areas greater than 200,000 in population are also financially constrained, reflecting the annual attributable amount (approximately \$18.5 million in FY15) plus 20% local (non-federal) match. The region has a positive balance of attributable funds that may be utilized on occasion to cover an increase in project costs due to environmental, construction or right-of-way needs.

On the transit side, the majority of project funding is based on Section 5307 formula funds which are announced annually in the Federal Register. Under MAP-21, Section 5307 funding has averaged about \$13.5 million annually for the New Orleans urbanized area. Additional FTA support comes from Section 5309 discretionary funds for high priority projects such as bus replacement or procurement. These funds are programmed based on current or pending Congressional authorizations. Matching funds for transit projects come from dedicated revenue sources, namely a 1% sales tax and a percentage of the Hotel/Motel Tax in Orleans Parish, and a property tax millage in Jefferson Parish.

In accordance with federal regulations, all transportation improvements located in the New Orleans MPA that use federal funds must appear in the TIP. Additionally, it is a prerequisite that all roadway projects that add capacity to the system (added travel lanes or new roadways) must be in the

Metropolitan Transportation Plan before they may be programmed in the TIP. Note that most transportation improvements use an 80% federal and 20% local funding formula.

Local matching funds are provided by the implementing agency that has jurisdiction over the geographic area in which the specific improvement resides. For example, LADOTD implements projects on Interstates, U. S. Highways and State Roads, and thus provides State funds as the 20% local match. Each parish or municipality provides their own local share match for transportation improvements that they implement. The TIP also includes projects from other public entities such as New Orleans Louis Armstrong International Airport, the Port of New Orleans, the Regional Transit Authority as well as quasi-public organizations such as the New Orleans Downtown Development District. There may also be private sector funding that supplements State and locally implemented projects.

The primary funding source for plans and transportation improvements is the Federal Highway Trust Fund. The local match for improvements on the state system is provided through the Louisiana Highway Trust Fund which is a motor fuels tax of 20 cents/gallon of gasoline. In recent years, the Louisiana Legislature has also authorized the use of State General Funds to finance an expanded program of highway repairs, maintenance and drainage types of improvements.

Federal financing is procured by congressional enactment of the nation's transportation bills. Current enactments include the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), and the most recent transportation bill reauthorization in 2012- Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). Federal transportation funds are normally sent directly to and administered by LADOTD which then allocates the money to urban and rural areas. Most transit funds for urban areas are sent directly from the FTA to the transit entity.

Federal funds are made available to the New Orleans MPO and its planning partners through a specific process:

- **AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION:** Congress enacts legislation that establishes or continues the existing operation of a federal program or agency, including the amount of money it will have to spend. Congress re-authorizes federal transportation programs (known as the Federal-aid Highway Program) over a multi-year period.
- **APPROPRIATIONS:** Each year, Congress decides on the federal budget for the next fiscal year. This process is known as the appropriation process. The amount appropriated to a federal program is often less than the amount authorized for a given year and is the actual amount available to federal agencies to spend.
- **APPORTIONMENT:** The distribution of funds among states using a formula provided in law is called an apportionment. An apportionment is usually made on the first day of the federal fiscal year (October 1) for which the funds are authorized. At that time, the funds are available for obligation (able to be spent) by the State, in accordance with the approved Louisiana Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).
- **SPENDING AUTHORITY:** Only a portion of a fund's apportionment is eligible to be programmed for transportation projects and programs in the TIP. This limitation is the spending authority. During the years of TEA-21 and SAFETEA-LU transportation bills,

the spending authority has been approximately 90% and, hence, for an apportionment of \$10 million in a given funding category only \$9 million may be programmed in the TIP.

- **DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY:** Federal transportation funding is eligible to be spent only on certain specific projects and activities, these determinations are made by Federal guidelines.
- **MATCH:** Most federal transportation programs require a non-federal match. State or local governments must contribute some portion of the project cost. Legislation establishes the required percentage for local match, as well as appropriate sources for that match. For almost every federal funding category, the amount that the state or a specific local government has to contribute is 20 percent of the project cost for most transportation improvements, with higher non-federal match required for major transit capital investments.

The remainder of this section lists the specific federal funding categories considered by the MPO. It should be noted that some funding sources are directly programmed by the MPO, while others are programmed or allocated by the State. All federally-funded transportation projects must be listed in the MPO's TIP (and potentially the UPWP) before funds can be utilized. Projects which are considered to be "regionally significant" (generally those that add capacity to the transportation system) must also be included in the TIP, regardless of funding source. In non-attainment areas, these projects must be modeled for air quality conformity and included in the MPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

FHWA FUNDING

Regardless of programming responsibilities, FHWA funding is administered by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD). Any approved project will therefore involve a grant agreement between the local agency and LADOTD.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (STP)

This funding category is shared with the State, as well as the other urban and rural jurisdictions throughout Louisiana. It can be used for a variety of transportation projects, including roadway maintenance, new construction, or expansion; alternative transportation (bicycle-pedestrian projects); intelligent transportation systems; and it can even be "flexed" for transit capital acquisition. This is the funding source that is directly programmed by the MPO.

TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT (TE) GRANT PROGRAM

TE grant funds give local government agencies and neighborhood organizations opportunities to enhance local transportation and also provide amenities to the community such as safe bicycle and pedestrian trails/facilities, transit shelters, landscaping and lighting enhancements, historic building restoration, and even transportation museums. Twelve categories exist within this statewide competitive funding process.

Louisiana uses a biennial TE application process. Application forms are made available beginning May 1st. (in odd number years) and may be found on the LADOTD and MPO web sites. Applications must be submitted to the LADOTD Enhancement Office by July 31st. The local sponsor is required to coordinate project feasibility with the MPO prior to submitting a request for TE funding. Many but not all applications are written with the support of MPO staff at the request of the jurisdiction.

For projects within the Urbanized Area, review copies are distributed by the Enhancement Office to both the MPO and LADOTD District 02 Office. A TE Review Committee comprised of MPO and District 02 staff review the submissions and recommend a short-list of applications. Recommended applications (in priority order and suggested funding levels) will be submitted by the MPO/District 02 Office to the LADOTD Enhancement Office in mid-September. Once the projects are found eligible by LADOTD/FHWA, the LADOTD Enhancement Office notifies the applicant Local Public Agencies and the MPO of the TE awards by letter and places the approved list of projects on the DOTD website. Generally selections are completed by the end of October or early November. The MPO will amend the approved TE projects into the Transportation Improvement Program at the next appropriate opportunity.

Projects lying outside the Urbanized Area but within the Metropolitan Planning Area are submitted directly to the LADOTD TE coordinator. More specific information concerning the TE application process can be found in the LADOTD Transportation Enhancement Guide, a document that is prepared and updated biennially by LA DOTD and found at www.DOTD.la.gov/planning/tep.

TE funding distribution across Louisiana is predicated on the eligibility of applications, the amount of funds available and the size of the projects submitted. DOTD strives to equally allocate funding across the eight DOTD Planning Districts. Should a jurisdiction have a worthy large scale project in mind they are encouraged to discuss the project with the LA DOTD early in the feasibility analysis to determine if the project should be phased in logical segments over multiple years.

Federal legislation and the State of Louisiana encourages the participation of citizen groups and not-for-profit corporations interested in enhancement projects; however, please note that only a city, parish or town may apply for the TE funds. Neighborhood groups, trail groups or other non-governmental organizations may not apply directly for TE funds. However, a Local Public Agency could apply on behalf of these organizations and would be the local sponsor with all applicable responsibilities.

The highest local elected official or Public Works Department Director having jurisdiction and responsibility for project implementation must approve projects and sign the application prior to submittal to LADOTD Enhancement Office. In addition, and when submitting more than one application an applicant must include a prioritization of the applications.

A minimum 20% local match is required for each TE project recommended to LADOTD by the MPO. Evidence of an existing local match will be considered in the review of applications by the TE Review Committee.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

The Louisiana Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program is a dedicated federally funded program to enable and encourage children to walk and bicycle to school. Walking and bicycling are viable transportation alternatives for travel to and from school with significant potential health and

environmental benefits including healthy and active lifestyles, improved safety, reductions in motor vehicle traffic, associated fuel consumption, and improved air quality. Following is a list of program highlights:

- 70-90 percent of funds will be available for eligible infrastructure projects;
- 10-30 percent of funds will be available for education, enforcement, and other non-infrastructure activities to increase safe biking and walking to school;
- Children in kindergarten through 8th grade are the primary targets for this program;
- Projects should help improve access for children with physical disabilities;
- Older children, adults, residents, children traveling to school by bus, and motorists may be considered secondary beneficiaries;
- Trips for non-school purposes are only secondary considerations;
- Construction improvements must be located within a two-mile radius of the intended school or schools;
- Funding is available for private and public schools;
- Eligible applicants include individual schools, school districts, local government agencies, and state agencies;
- Non-profit organizations can partner with eligible applicants (MPOs), but cannot directly receive SRTS project funding; and
- Project sponsorship by traditional transportation partners is strongly encouraged.

LADOTD administers this program. Funds are only available on a reimbursement basis for approved projects or activities. All applications received by LADOTD are reviewed and evaluated by a selection committee consisting of representatives from LADOTD, the FHWA, the Louisiana Department of Education (LADOE), the Louisiana State Department of Health (LASDH), and a representative from one of Louisiana’s MPOs. Recommendations from the selection committee will go to the LADOTD Secretary. Applicants will be informed of which projects are selected and the list of approved projects is posted on LADOTD’s website.

The MPO will accept applications, and after reviewing them to assure they are complete and consistent with existing plans, will sign them and forward the applications to LADOTD. All applications for projects located in the New Orleans MPA must be signed by the MPO.

FTA FUNDING

FTA funds are distributed to eligible grantees (denoted as “designated recipients”). Within the New Orleans Metropolitan Planning Area, there are currently two designated recipients– RTA and the MPO.

SECTION 5307 (URBANIZED AREA FORMULA GRANTS)

Nationwide, Section 5307 funds are available for transit improvements for 34 urbanized areas with populations greater than one million, 91 urbanized areas with populations between 200,000 and

one million, and 280 urbanized areas with populations between 50,000 and 200,000. For urbanized areas with populations greater than 200,000, the funds are distributed directly to the designated recipients. For areas with populations less than 200,000, the funds are apportioned to the recipient state's governor for distribution.

Section 5307 funds must be matched by state and local funds. Local matching funds can be cash or cash-equivalent, depending upon the expenditure. Non-cash shares, such as donations, volunteered services or in-kind contributions are eligible to be counted toward the local match only if the value of each share is documented formally. Refer to 49 CFR, part 18 for more information.

The Section 5307 program provides funding for capital and planning at 80 percent of costs and for operating up to 50 percent of costs. Funds are apportioned to urbanized areas utilizing a formula based on population, population density, and other factors associated with transit service and ridership. Section 5307 program grants are governed by CFR 20.505, Title 49, United States Code 5303. The program is funded from general federal revenues and federal trust funds.

SECTION 5309 CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The Transit Capital Investment Program (49 U.S.C. 5309) is an FTA discretionary program that provides capital funds for three primary categories: Bus and Bus Related Equipment and Facilities (for new and replacement buses and facilities), Fixed Guideway Modernization Program (for modernization of an existing rail system), and New Starts (for new fixed guideway systems). The application process is formally structured and, in many cases, with multiple steps requiring FTA clearance before each subsequent phase can begin.

SECTION 5310 PROGRAM (FOCUSED ON TRANSPORTATION FOR THE ELDERLY AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES)

Section 5310, as authorized by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), provides capital assistance for projects that serve the transportation needs of the elderly and disabled. The FTA distributes Section 5310 funding based on each State's share of the number of elderly persons and persons with disabilities within the United States, based on the latest Census data. These funds are available for distribution on an 80% federal basis and 20% local (applicant) matching basis. 5310 projects are awarded annually by the LADOTD on a competitive basis. LADOTD may use up to 10% of the state's annual Section 5310 allocation for state administration and technical assistance. MAP-21 requires 5310 projects to derive from the locally developed Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, which has been developed and is regularly updated by the Regional Planning Commission.

STATE FUNDING

INTERSTATE AND STATE HIGHWAY

LADOTD maintains jurisdiction over all interstates and state and U.S. highways. Projects are planned, designed, programmed, and implemented by LADOTD in cooperation with the MPO and local officials, using a combination of federal and state funds. Projects within the MPO planning area must be reflected in the TIP and, if deemed regionally significant, in the Regional Plan regardless of funding source.

RURAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION (RURAL STP)

The Rural STP Program is the rural counterpart to the STP funds programmed by the MPO for urban areas. Projects are funded using 80% federal funds with applicants providing the remainder. More information and application forms are available on LADOTD's website. Because of the use of federal funding, if a Rural STP project is located in the New Orleans MPA (which is possible because the planning area extends beyond the urbanized area), these projects must be reflected in the TIP and, if deemed regionally significant, in the Regional Plan.

VI. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

A participation process for transportation planning must be explicitly set forth and adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which receives transportation funds from the Federal Highway Administration and from the Federal Transit Administration. The actions and processes described in this section apply to transportation planning done by the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission. The standards for this process are to be found in Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 450, Subpart C, especially Section 316(b)(1) and in Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 613, Subpart A, Section 100.

In general, the federal regulation cited above had required “a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs (Transportation Improvement Programs).” With the passage of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), enacted on July 6, 2012, additional emphasis has been placed on extensive stakeholder participation. MAP-21 expands the public involvement provisions by requiring MPOs to develop and utilize “participation plans” that are developed in consultation with an expanded list of “interested parties,” which the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission refers to as the Interested Citizens/Agencies list. Specific MAP-21 requirements include:

- Providing timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizen, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects;
- Holding public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- Providing a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public involvement process is initially adopted or revised;
- Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, and providing reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans;
- Making public information available in electronically accessible format and means (such as the World Wide Web);
- Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes by including written and oral comments received on the draft transportation plan or TIP as a result of the public involvement process, as an appendix of the plan or TIP;
- Consistency with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which ensures that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, national origin, or physical handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program receiving Federal assistance from the United States;
- In accordance with U.S. Department of Transportation requirements, inform, seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including, but not limited to, low income and minority households; and

- Identify actions necessary to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Presidential Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice.

GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

RPC's public involvement plan has a single comprehensive goal: to allow the public opportunities throughout the planning process to influence decisions.

In order to meet this goal the RPC has established the following objectives and strategies:

OBJECTIVE 1: IDENTIFY THE MOST APPROPRIATE METHODS FOR REACHING THE PUBLIC

Strategies:

- A. RPC will keep a database of neighborhood organizations, homeowner associations, environmental organizations, school organizations, faith-based organizations as well as other non-profit and for-profit entities
- B. In addition to the databases of formally organized associations RPC allows the public the opportunity to self-identify through its website, and "request for information" form in the rear of the RPC Citizen Involvement Guide
- C. RPC will work directly with leaders in traditionally underserved populations to determine the most appropriate channels of communication to reach individuals

OBJECTIVE 2: KEEP THE PUBLIC INFORMED THROUGH EFFECTIVE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Strategies:

- A. RPC will distribute quarterly newsletters that are available in both hard-copy and electronic formats
- B. The agency will utilize its website as an interactive means of communication and offer multi-media capabilities
- C. RPC will publicize information about projects and programs of significant interest through the use of media (radio, TV, and print)
- D. Copies of the MTP, TIP, and other significant plans are made available in public libraries
- E. RPC will work with leaders of minority and underserved populations to determine that the most effective mediums of communication are employed

OBJECTIVE 3: WORK TO ACTIVELY INVOLVE THE PUBLIC IN PROGRAMS, POLICY-MAKING AND PROJECTS

Strategies:

- A. Educate the public as to the general purpose and function of the RPC in its role as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and how the transportation planning process works

- B. Be sensitive to locations of meetings and times of meetings based upon the culture and needs of populations
- C. Provide opportunities for citizen membership on advisory councils, the policy commission, and project level TACs

OBJECTIVE 4: ENSURE THAT THE RPC'S PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM IS DYNAMIC AND RESPONSIVE

Strategies:

- A. RPC will work with the community to tailor outreach techniques based upon the diverse and unique needs of the public
- B. RPC provides for two-way communication, and is responsive to all comments and inquiries
- C. RPC's public involvement plan is a living document that evolves based upon changes in communication technology and needs of the public

OUTREACH TECHNIQUES

Strategies and techniques for public involvement are tailored based upon whether RPC is working on a conceptual plan, policy development, or buildable project. However, in order to actively involve the public in transportation planning, it is important to first identify the most appropriate stakeholders based upon the task at hand. Once the audience has been identified, then the most effective means to inform the public can be determined. Below is a list of outreach techniques that the RPC employs to actively solicit public input in the transportation planning process.

CITIZENS' GUIDE TO TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Educating citizens about transportation planning and the role of the MPO in transportation planning is essential to have meaningful discussions and truly engage the public in the planning process. The Citizens' Guide to Transportation Planning provides citizens with a description of how the planning process works in layman terms, so that non-planning professionals can easily understand how projects enter the planning process and move from an idea to construction. The citizens' guide also provides the public with an understanding of the purpose and function of the MTP, the TIP, and the UPWP. Finally, the document provides a synopsis of how citizens can become more actively engaged in the transportation planning process. The citizens' guides are distributed at public meetings, available at public facilities, such as libraries, community centers, and the Regional Transportation Management Center, as well as available on the RPC website.

NEWSLETTERS

Quarterly newsletters are available in both print and e-formats. The public is invited to register for RPC newsletters both online at the RPC website as well as by detaching and mailing in the form on the rear cover of the Citizens' Guide to Transportation Planning. Newsletters provide the public and local government partners with progress updates on RPC studies, projects, programs, and

initiatives. These newsletters provide a more frequent channel of information with the public and allow the public to stay informed.

NEWS MEDIA

RPC will utilize the news media for projects and issues of special interest to the public. RPC maintains a database of contacts at local newspaper, radio, and television stations. Maintaining an active list of contacts, allows RPC to easily deploy press releases and public service announcements on an as needed basis.

WEBSITE

A well organized and engaging website is a cornerstone of RPC's communication strategy. RPC's website accommodates a variety of users. RPC's redeveloped website offers a user-friendly structure and linguistic style understandable to lay people interested in the transportation planning process and projects. The website offers multi-media format with PowerPoint presentations accompanied by audio for special presentations made to the commission. In addition, the web site was developed following the guidelines of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, so that it able to accommodate disabled users.

The revamped website offers the public the ability to communicate with RPC by offering interactive capabilities, with features such as an online comment form that allows the public to submit feedback and/or ideas for both the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program. In addition, the website offers the ability to survey the public for specific purposes, as well as the ability to register for regular communication from the RPC, such as newsletters, public meeting notices, etc. The website also offers a calendar, where the general public can view all public meetings, events, and other important dates.

Finally, the website features a library, which provides public access to all technical studies, policies and transportation plans, such as the MTP (RPC's long range transportation plan), the Transportation Improvement Plans (TIPs), Unified Work Program (UPWP), as well as other feasibility and technical studies.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

RPC both hosts its own public meetings to discuss topics/projects of interest with the public and makes presentations as requested at civic meetings and to other public agencies. When hosting public meetings RPC provides adequate notice to the public when hosting public meetings, and follows all federally prescribed guidelines regarding public comment periods for documents such as the MTP and TIP.

SURVEYS

Depending upon the scope of a project, RPC utilizes surveys for public input to projects. When surveys are developed, formats and distribution strategies are created based upon the unique needs of the community from which input is being sought.

PUBLIC OUTREACH LIAISONS

Trust is a critical component to gaining input, particularly from minority and traditionally underserved communities. In order to help build relationships with these communities and attract input, RPC works with trusted leaders in traditionally underserved communities to learn of needs, concerns and solicit input to the planning process. In addition, Public Outreach Liaisons assist RPC by alerting the public about public meetings and providing advice as to the most appropriate times to schedule meetings and events. In addition, public outreach liaisons assist RPC in identifying the most appropriate places to hold meetings, and place materials.

ADVISORY COUNCILS

RPC provides opportunities for citizen involvement through standing advisory councils, such as the Complete Streets and Regional Livability Advisory Councils, as well as seats on project level TACs. Advisory Councils work closely with members of RPC's TAC to ensure a collaborative and informed process. In addition to membership on advisory councils and project level TACs, citizens are included on the RPC transportation policy committee, which has ten seats reserved for citizen members. Citizen members on the RPC policy committee have full voting power.

PERFORMANCE METHODS & MEASURES FOR EVALUATION

On an annual basis, the RPC undertakes an internal review of its public involvement plan's effectiveness of engaging the public, by examining criteria, such as:

- Records of invitations to speak at civic engagements, such as event programs, email correspondence, etc.,
- Records of responses to citizen emails,
- Sign-in sheets of event participants,
- Records of press releases, and new stories.

Annually, staff is asked to provide comments as to how the public involvement may be improved to increase public participation in the planning process. In addition, RPC solicits input from the general public on an on-going basis to further refine and bolster its public outreach and engagement in the transportation planning process.

In addition, RPC actively solicits input to the public involvement plan and the most effective means of communication by working directly with communities to discuss the most appropriate means of disseminating information and garnering input to the process. RPC also provides the general public a comment period of 45 days prior to adoption of its revised public involvement plan. All comments received taken into consideration and implemented when plausible. All comments will receive direct responses.

VII. TITLE VI/ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

TITLE VI – NONDISCRIMINATION IN FEDERALLY ASSISTED PROGRAMS

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act provides that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance (23 CFR 200.9 and 49 CFR 21).

The Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 broadened the scope of Title VI coverage by expanding the definition of terms “programs or activities” to include all programs or activities of Federal Aid recipients, sub-recipients, and contractors, whether such programs and activities are federally assisted or not (Public Law 100259 (2.557) March 22, 1988).

The purpose of the law is to insure that all persons, regardless of their race, color, national origin, gender, age or handicap/disability, are allowed to participate without discrimination in any federally funded program. To insure the MPO and its sub-recipients meet their compliance responsibility, a Title VI Plan and Complaint Procedures has been adopted by the MPO. The day-to-day administration of the Plan lies with the Title VI Coordinator under the direct supervision of the Executive Director of the Regional Planning Commission.

The Title VI Coordinator is charged with the responsibility for implementing, monitoring, and ensuring the MPO’s compliance with Title VI Regulations. Title VI responsibilities are as follows:

- Process the disposition of Title VI complaints received by the MPO.
- Conduct annual Title VI reviews to determine the effectiveness of program activities at all levels.
- Conduct Title VI reviews of consultant contractors, suppliers, and other recipients of federal-aid highway and transit fund contracts administered through the MPO.
- Prepare a yearly report of Title VI accomplishments and goals, as required.
- Develop Title VI information for dissemination to the general public and, where appropriate, in languages other than English.
- Identify and eliminate discrimination.
- Establish procedures for promptly resolving deficiency status and reducing to writing the remedial action agreed to be necessary, all within a period not to exceed 90 days.

The MPO also includes non-discriminatory assurances in all of its consultant contracts that are binding on them, any sub-contractors that may become involved, to assure that all planning activities are carried out in accordance with Title VI. Also, in keeping with Title VI and the Brooks Act, the consultant selection process is competitive and qualification based.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

In 1994 President Clinton passed Environmental Justice Orders that serve to further define and amplify Title VI by providing that “...each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health of environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low income populations.”

The concept of environmental justice includes the identification and assessment of disproportionately high and adverse effects of programs, policies, or activities on the minority and low-income population groups. Within the context of regional transportation planning, environmental justice considers the relative distribution of cost and benefits from transportation investment strategies and policies among different segments of society.

When RPC adopts new planning documents, or substantively amends existing documents, the agency is required to comply with federal environmental justice requirements. When this occurs, a systematic process is used to study and evaluate all necessary environmental aspects of the proposed action(s). Depending on the scope, complexity, and impacts of the project, the agency’s Title VI Coordinator oversees the process, and ensures all federal and state requirements are met, and that the public has been involved to participate.

In order to help implement the 1994 Environmental Justice Orders, the RPC follows the process summarized below:

1. Identify low income and minority populations.
2. Define and map the target population in the New Orleans urbanized area.
3. Define stakeholders that represent the targeted populations.
4. Use this data to determine where these populations are with respect to planned projects.
5. Determine goals, policies and approaches that further Title VI/Environmental Justice compliance.
6. Coordinate RPC’s activities with other agencies to ensure compliance with Title VI, including community and neighborhood groups; health, welfare and other community service organizations; government agencies (federal, state, and local); and faith-based organizations.
7. Develop a Public Involvement Plan with strategies for engaging low income and minority populations in the planning process.
8. Communicate data and information about the distribution of benefits and burdens as well as suggested changes to more equitably address Title VI/Environmental Justice concerns.

See Appendix J for more details on RPC’s Title VI/Environmental Justice Plan, policies and procedures.

VIII.PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The RPC adheres to a state and federally approved contracting process. Since RPC contracts are funded through LADOTD, federal and state contracting requirements apply, and deviations from established policies, procedures, and contracting language are normally not allowed. Federal and state requirements are passed on by RPC to contractors and local planning agencies under contract to RPC. All third party contracts are assigned an RPC Project Coordinator who oversees and manages the work effort and reports to RPC's Deputy Director.

STANDARD CONTRACTING FORM

The RPC uses a standard contract document that incorporates all necessary federal and state policies. In general, RPC's standard contract provisions are non-negotiable, owing to the multiple requirements that the form must satisfy.

All contracts are reviewed by RPC's legal counsel and are approved by the MPO/RPC board. Contracts are then submitted to LADOTD for review and concurrence. Pending favorable review and board approval, the RPC Chairman or Executive Director is authorized to execute the agreement. Three original contracts are executed, one of which goes to the consultant, the second going to the RPC files, and the third to the LA DOTD.

FEE TYPE

The RPC generally utilizes a lump-sum contract based on an in-house estimation of project man-hours and costs which is submitted to LADOTD for review and approval. Other types of fee structures such as negotiated lump sum and cost-plus-fixed fee are utilized on larger or more complex service contracts such as environmental impact studies. RPC recognizes that unanticipated changes to project scope and schedule may occur, however, any request for a change in fee must be strongly justified and requires review and approval of LADOTD.

BILLINGS

Contractor billings are generally submitted on a monthly basis for RPC review and approval. All contractor invoices must be reviewed and approved in writing by RPC's Responsible Charge, Finance Director, and RPC's Executive Director prior to being submitted to the RPC board for review and approval. The contractor is required to submit a written narrative detailing work efforts during the invoice period and a completed RPC Progress Report Evaluation Form which includes the following:

1. Contract number
2. Project Budget
3. Cumulative Invoiced Amount
4. Amount Previously Invoiced
5. Amount Invoiced this Period

6. Task Allocation Balance
7. Percentage of Task Completed this Period
8. Cumulative Percentage of Task Completion

RPC requires its contractors, sub-contractors, and sub-recipients to ensure that MBE/WBE/DBE businesses as defined in Title 49 CFR, Part 26 will have the maximum opportunity to compete for procurement of materials and services in connection with the awarded contract; and that contractors, sub-contractors, and sub-recipients shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, sex, or national origin in its own employment policies and procurement of materials and services. Separate MBE/WBE/DBE registration requirements exist with the State of Louisiana which must be met for qualifying with the RPC as a MBE/WBE/DBE firm.

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)/REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

RPC uses Request for Qualifications (RFQs) as its basic method for securing technical services. Request for Proposals (RFPs) will be used in cases where a more complicated work scope is involved and a detailed project approach is required, or the subject matter is unfamiliar to RPC project staff. RPC's Consultant Evaluation Team includes the Directors of Planning and Finance as well as the RPC Executive Director. In certain instances where additional expertise may be needed, representatives from LADOTD, the local governmental entity or other senior RPC staff members may be invited to participate in the review process. The following criteria are used in evaluating submittals:

- Firm's Overall Experience in Performing Comparable Work
- Demonstrated Experience of Key Staff
- Prior RPC Work Performance
- Current Work Load
- Firm Size Relative to Work Requested
- Location and Familiarity with Project Area
- Criteria Special to Work Advertised

RPC utilizes DOTD Standard Form 24-102 (available thru RPC's website) for statement of qualifications. The MPO's Consultant Selection Procedures have been reviewed and approved by both LADOTD and FHWA. A copy of these procedures is available on RPC's website.

PROGRESS REPORTING/TRACKING

Contractors will be provided with an electronic copy (Microsoft Word file format) of a progress report form. This form will be filled out and submitted with each invoice. The form asks for status, percent completion, dates of invoice period, amount of previous invoice, amount of current invoice and report narrative for the work task or activity.

Prior to submission to the RPC Board for approval, all invoice undergo a detailed review for financial accuracy and consistency determination between the amount of the invoice and the percentage of work completed during the invoice period. If there are any questions or further documentation is required, the RPC Project Coordinator will arrange a meeting with the consultant to review the invoice, work status, and other project support information as part of RPC's in-house review. All invoices are reviewed and signed off on in writing by the Project Coordinator, Finance Director, and RPC Executive Director before being submitted to the RPC board for approval.

DELIVERABLES

Upon completion, unless otherwise specified in the scope of work, the contractor will provide RPC with a minimum of ten full copies of the final report, a camera-ready original with maps, and one electronic copy of the final report in PDF format. PowerPoint presentations, display boards, handouts and other requested support materials will also be turned over to the RPC in hardcopy and electronic format. All reports and graphics should be written and prepared in a manner that is clear and facilitates understanding of the project and related issues by the public. The RPC retains the right to make corrections for both content and grammar, and to make the document available to other public entities upon request.

CONTRACT TIMING AND SCOPE

Contracts are scoped by senior RPC staff members in May of June, just prior to the start of the fiscal year. The majority of PL contracts are executed early on with the goal of completing all work within the fiscal year. Studies that are expected to take more than one fiscal year to complete should be phased. Contract balances at the end of a particular grant cycle are obligated to the following year's PL grant and shown in the UPWP as "continuing contractual."

QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA)/QUALITY CONTROL (QC)

An RPC Project Coordinator is assigned to oversee the day to day work activities of each consultant contract. Project Management Committees are formed to guide technical work efforts and to work through project-related issues. In addition, the RPC Planning Director or a Principal Planner (not associated with the project) conducts a Quality Assurance (QA) check at approximately the 50% level and at the submission of the draft deliverables (about 85% level). The QA check will review the status of all work activities including adherence to work scope, schedule, and project budget, and review of interim work products and draft final deliverables for project completeness as well as report content, grammar, and ease of understanding by the public.

DOCUMENT STANDARDS

RPC has established standards for report reproduction consisting of the following items:

- Cover sheet with title of project, date of final submittal, and RPC logo
- State and Federal Project Number and (UPWP Task No.)
- Table of Contents with Page Numbers

- An Executive Summary
- A Purpose and Need Statement, explaining the study and its relationship to Metropolitan Transportation Plan goals and UPWP objectives.

Note that the size of the contractor logos are generally not allowed to exceed that of the MPO on any interim or final documents, including PowerPoint presentations, display boards, or handouts. All final deliverables should be developed with the viewing public in mind. While not required for all documents, projects of significant scope that have a large potential for public review should be developed using desktop publishing software.

Final reports are normally posted on RPC's website. Hence, consultants need to consult early on with RPC staff to establish proper file size for downloading of text and images. Images intended for direct display on RPC's website should be no larger than 50k and 90 dpi. Images which are embedded in PDF documents may have higher resolution, but they may need to be compressed.

If there are any questions, please contact the RPC Project Coordinator or GIS Manager for further guidance. All documents including handouts, display graphics, PowerPoint presentations need to be developed in a clear and easy to understand format for public review, input, and comment. Also, contractor logos are generally not permitted to exceed that of the MPO on interim or final reports and PowerPoint presentations.

MAP STANDARDS

Project maps should be clearly legible and understandable by the public. All hardcopy and electronic map versions, regardless of interim or final status, should have the following elements:

- a. Title
- b. A listed scale, either by use of a scale bar or a text scale
- c. North arrow
- d. Data source credits
- e. Legend (for thematic maps)
- f. Disclaimer (Appendix M)

IX. ADMINISTRATION

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The MPO staff typically utilizes a team approach to organization, rather than relying on a rigid hierarchical structure, but formal relationships do exist. Reporting lines of the MPO staff are shown in the RPC Organizational Chart found in Appendix K. A separate RPC office policy manual describes all staff policy and procedure.

AGREEMENTS

RPC maintains Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the region's transit operators (or parishes, if transit is operated by the parish government) as well as with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD).

The MOUs define individual and mutual responsibilities of the agency or government and RPC, including how entities will contribute to the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Applicable planning responsibilities, data coordination and data sharing agreements, funding reimbursement, and fiscal contribution amounts are also defined in the MOUs.

BUDGETARY PROCESS

The RPC fiscal year begins July 1st and ends June 30th.. The UPWP uses line items to budget funding to specific transportation planning tasks or work activities. LADOTD does permit the MPO to transfer funds between line items as long as the overall adjustment is not more than 25% of the task budget. In cases where the request exceeds 25% of the task amount, a formal request to amend the UPWP is made to LADOTD for their review and concurrence. The general policy of the RPC is to minimize the number of fiscal amendments to the UPWP in a fiscal year. However, substantial changes such as the receipt of a new grant agreement will require a formal amendment to the UPWP and MPO Board approval.

LOCAL MATCH CONTRIBUTIONS

Typically the MPO work program consists of 80% federal funds and 20% non-federal local share match. While local match for planning activities can be obligated across fiscal years, federal planning (PL) monies cannot. PL funded work activities or contracts that carry across from one year to the next must therefore be obligated out of the grant from the second year. These surplus or rollover PL funds are available in subsequent program years.

X. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

COMPUTER EQUIPMENT

As of the time of this document's preparation, Microsoft Exchange Server with an Outlook 2007 PC client is used for email, Internet Explorer for internet use, and the 2007 Microsoft Office Suite (i.e., Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.) is used for the vast majority of clerical work. Computers in the RPC office run on a Windows operating system and in-house staff performs day-to-day maintenance and upkeep.

Microsoft Server 2003 is used to provide network communications and storage. Due to the computational intensity and storage needs of MPO software applications, individual user data is backed up daily to the back-up storage array locally, and then replicated to the Baton Rouge Disaster Recovery Site in real time.

Dreamweaver software is used to manage the MPO's web environment.

GIS ENVIRONMENT

MPO staff utilizes GIS software from an Enterprise license to the ESRI Corporation's ArcGIS software suite. The MPO also uses GIS software from the Caliper Corporation. Caliper's products, including TransCAD provide specific transportation modeling software routines the MPO uses in its transportation modeling work. The following list describes what is currently in use and is subject to change as technology and MPO needs and responsibilities change.

- ArcGIS is used for general mapping, Traffic Impact Studies, the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the TIP, as well as custom applications as needed.
- TransCAD is used for Travel Demand Modeling. Further discussion of RPC's transportation modeling can found below.

DATA SOURCES

One of RPC's most important roles is as a repository of data to support both MPO level planning, as well as the planning efforts of agencies throughout the region. Through the cultivation of relationships with these agencies, a forum for the reciprocal exchange of data between the RPC and our local, state, and federal planning partners exists, and is the source of much of the RPC data.

The RPC also purchases economic, demographic, and travel data required for planning. Such data is critical for supporting the planning efforts of the RPC and of our planning partners. It is of particular importance when conducting forecasts for use in land-use mapping and travel demand forecasting.

The primary data source for demographic data is the U.S. Decennial Census of the Population and the short form American Community Survey (ACS). The MPO uses a special aggregation of Census data called the Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP), purchased on behalf of the transportation community by AASHTO (the American Association of State of Highway

Transportation Officials). The CTPP is being modified to accommodate the changes in content of the ACS.

Economic and employment data are gathered from a number of entities: these include the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the U.S. Census Department's Longitudinal Employer Household Dynamics program, the InfoUSA employment database, and other sources.

The MPO also uses forecasts of population produced for the State of Louisiana by Louisiana Tech University, projections of economic variables from Woods & Poole Economics, and a number of other data sets. These data sets are largely used as parish-level control totals, which are then allocated to smaller geographic areas such as Traffic Analysis Zones.

The MPO in 2010 completed the consolidation of two existing travel models into a single regional comprehensive modeling system. The MPO has also begun work on two significant travel data studies that will be used extensively in updating the model's required input data. The first is a partnership project between the MPO and the region's transit properties to conduct a Comprehensive Operational Analysis of the transit system. The second project is a Household Travel Survey to collect detailed data on trip making characteristics for up to 3,000 households in the MPA. Data from these two surveys will be used extensively in updating the MPO's travel demand model in 2010-2011.

Transportation network data are collected from a variety of sources, including the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD), parish and municipal engineering departments, and original data collection (both field and from aerial photography). Types of network data currently collected include traffic counts, travel speeds, centerline locations, lane widths, facility types, and posted speeds. During 2008, the MPO began full-time collection of traffic counts, finishing the third year of a three-year system traffic count cycle.

TRAVEL MODEL REQUESTS AND PROCEDURES

Community stakeholders may ask that MPO staff run the model to test various scenarios. Generally, the MPO will try to accommodate these requests, but significant staff and computer time is utilized in running the model and, therefore, the MPO reserves the right to re-scope, or even reject requests based upon resource availability. This is staff time-intensive and stakeholders should expect a turnaround time of no less than ten weeks.

EXTERNAL USE OF THE TRAVEL MODEL

Consultants and other external parties are generally permitted to directly run the travel model, with the following caveats, which constitute requirements for use of the model. Any violation of these caveats may result in the suspension of the stakeholder's permission to use the model:

- The travel model is the property of the MPO. The MPO needs to be properly credited in any report;
- Final model results for major investment studies, feasibility studies, environmental impact statements; et cetera must be verified by the MPO. This verification requires the submittal of the networks and, if applicable, zones to the MPO for an independent run of

the model. In its review and verification, the MPO reserves the right to alter any network or zonal coding that it feels is unsupportable or misleading. The MPO will provide written electronic notice of the verification or rejection of the stated model results after sufficient time for review. Verification of the results will require the final document to include the following sentence: “Model results have been verified by the staff of the MPO”;

- No alterations to model parameters may be implemented without the express consent of the MPO. Generally, unless the contract is for general travel model update work that is not specific to a particular network project proposal(s), customization of model parameters and output will not be allowed;
- All presentation of model results must be comprehensive, and relative to a base scenario. This base scenario must use the MPO’s latest planning assumptions, including the latest population and employment estimates. Deviations from planning assumptions in the alternate scenarios must be properly documented and with written concurrence of the MPO; and
- The MPO reserves the right to review and re-test any third party’s use of the regional travel model, using the latest network and socio-economic input data available for trip modeling purposes.

DATA REQUESTS

PROTOCOL

Requests for data that is not already available for download on the website will be handled by RPC’s Principal Planner/GIS Coordinator. If data are available in the format needed, then the requester may expect a seven-day turnaround time. Alternately, if customization or analysis of data is required, a 30- day response time is the target. The RPC retains the right to turn down customization or analysis requests based upon resource availability. Any document or report developed by a third party using MPO data must properly credit the RPC as the data source.

APPROPRIATENESS

Data that are purchased and/or developed by the MPO will be freely available, provided that their release does not raise privacy or security issues. The RPC maintains its ownership over the data, however, and datasets may not be altered without RPC permission, nor may a third party sell them.

Distribution of licensed data is subject to the terms of the license agreement with the vendor. In most cases, this license agreement prohibits the free distribution of data. Datasets that are developed using licensed data, however, are considered MPO-developed data, and will be made freely available but on a limited request basis.

PRIVACY

As part of the information development process, the MPO sometimes handles data that either by location, name, or some other marker, identifies individual persons or businesses. Such data will not be made available to the public.

For example, travel survey data is sometimes collected that identifies individual trip origins and destinations. The origin and destination data will not be included in the public distribution of such a dataset, although any calculated trip length data may still be included. Another example is point-level employment data; in addition to being licensed and therefore prohibited from secondary release, the distribution of these data violates business privacy. These data may be compiled into zonal summaries, which may then be released; however, any summation by employment code (e.g., by North American Industrial Classification System, or NAICS) may have too few firms in any employment category to secure the privacy of any individual firm; therefore, NAICS codes will not be publicly released.

SECURITY

Only MPO staff and other authorized individuals, such as technical support personnel will be allowed direct access to MPO computing resources such as hard drives, network storage, and raw data. All data released as a result of public data and information requests will be made available via website downloads, burned to CDs or DVDs, or other appropriate storage device that will not allow access to data not directly included in the request.