
2015 Transportation Management Area Certification Review

Memphis Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

FINAL REPORT

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Preface

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), signed into law on July 6, 2012, and Titles 23 and 49 of the United States Code (U.S.C.) uniformly direct the statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes across the country. The United States Department of Transportation issued the "Statewide and Metropolitan Planning Final Rule" on February 14, 2007 to establish the Federal requirements for the statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes in Titles 23 and 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

The regulations in 23 CFR Part 450 and 49 CFR Part 613 establish the national policy that each urbanized area, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, shall have a designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) to carry out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive multimodal transportation planning process. MPOs are responsible for considering and implementing transportation projects, strategies, and services that address eight planning factors:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the safety 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 accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
7. Promote efficient system management and operation; and
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 134(k)(5) and 49 U.S.C. 5303, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process conducted in each transportation management area (TMA), an urbanized area with a population over 200,000 people, no less than once every four years. This TMA Certification Review includes an assessment of the degree to which the MPO in each TMA meets the requirements of the metropolitan planning regulations. The TMA Certification Review is comprised of a desk review, an on-site visit, a public involvement opportunity, and a final report.

Upon completion of each Certification Review, FHWA and FTA (the Federal Review Team) can take one of three Federal actions:

1. **Jointly certify** the metropolitan transportation planning process,
2. **Jointly certify** the metropolitan transportation planning process subject to certain specified corrective actions being taken, or
3. **Jointly certify** the metropolitan transportation planning process as the basis for approval of only those categories of programs or projects that FHWA and FTA jointly determine, subject to certain specified corrective actions being taken.

If FHWA and FTA do not certify the metropolitan transportation planning process, or cannot certify within a four-year period, the Secretary of Transportation may issue corrective actions, restrict funding, and withhold up to 20 percent of the funds attributable to the metropolitan planning area under Title 23 U.S.C. and Title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53.

The Memphis Urban Area MPO, initially designated in 1977, is one of two federally designated MPOs for the Memphis TMA, which includes portions of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas. The Memphis Urban Area MPO covers the Tennessee and Mississippi portions and the West Memphis MPO covers the Arkansas portion. FHWA and FTA first certified the Memphis Urban Area MPO in July 1995 and most recently in October 2011. This report represents the seventh Certification Review for the Memphis Urban Area MPO and includes a summary of the Federal Review Team's observations, corrective actions, commendations, and recommendations:

- **Observations** are statements of fact that describe the conditions found during the data-gathering phases of the TMA Certification Review and provide the primary basis for determining corrective actions, recommendations, and commendations.
- **Corrective actions** denote items that do not meet the requirements of the applicable Federal rules and regulations. FHWA and FTA expect MPOs to address corrective actions in accordance with prescribed timelines to achieve specific outcomes.
- **Recommendations** concern the state of practice or technical improvements that would enhance existing processes and procedures. FHWA and FTA expect MPOs to give due consideration to the implementation of recommended actions.
- **Commendations** highlight noteworthy practices that demonstrate innovative, highly effective, or well-thought-out procedures for implementing the planning requirements.

The Federal Review Team did not identify any corrective actions during the 2015 TMA Certification Review. The recommendations in this report reflect national trends and best practices. Action on the recommendations will not affect the status of the 2015 TMA Certification Review; however, the suggestions would help the Memphis Urban Area MPO enhance the metropolitan transportation planning process. The report also highlights commendations that can serve as examples to other States and planning organizations. The conclusion of this report provides the final certification determination, and the Appendixes deliver additional technical information.

Executive Summary

The 2015 Memphis TMA Certification Review is comprised of a desk review, an on-site visit, a public involvement opportunity, and a final report. Since October 2011, the FHWA and FTA joint Federal Review Team (see Appendix B) has continuously reviewed the Memphis Urban Area MPO's planning process and products to assess consistency with 23 CFR Part 450, 49 CFR Part 613, and other Federal rules and regulations. The Federal Review Team's desk review included the MPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Public Participation Plan (PPP), Congestion Management Process (CMP), Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Architecture, and other elements of the organization's continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive multimodal transportation planning process.

On May 19-21, 2015, the Federal Review Team organized an on-site visit with the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT), Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA), and the Memphis Urban Area MPO's Staff, Engineering and Technical Committee (ETC), and Transportation Policy Board (TPB). The on-site visit focused on the MPO's metropolitan transportation planning process and major federal initiatives (see Appendices A and C).

On May 19, 2015, the Federal Review Team held a public meeting to invite public comments and feedback on the Memphis Urban Area MPO's metropolitan transportation planning process (see Appendix D). The Memphis Urban Area MPO advertised the public meeting in accordance to the procedures established in the MPO's PPP, including public notices in regional newspapers and on the MPO's website – <http://www.memphismpo.org/>. On May 21, 2015, the Federal Review Team held a listening session for the MPO's TPB and ETC.

The Federal Review Team collected 97 verbal and written comments regarding the MPO's metropolitan transportation planning process and incorporated this feedback into the Team's decisions on observations, commendations, recommendations, and corrective actions. The Federal Review Team responded to the comments under its range of authority and forwarded all 97 comments to TDOT, MDOT, MATA, and the Memphis Urban Area MPO for additional review and consideration. In summary, stakeholders are interested in the MPO's organizational structure and Bylaws, public participation efforts, long-range transportation planning activities, and involvement in the project development process.

The Federal Review Team's previous TMA Certification Review in October 2011 did not identify any corrective actions; however, the 2011 Review identified eight recommendations. The Memphis Urban Area MPO has adequately addressed all eight recommendations since October 2011. Overall, the Memphis Urban Area MPO has demonstrated a strong commitment to meeting the letter and intent of all applicable Federal rules and regulations.

In conclusion, the Memphis Urban Area MPO substantially meets the requirements of 23 CFR 450 and 49 CFR 613. FHWA and FTA jointly certify the MPO's metropolitan transportation planning process. The Federal Review Team did not find any corrective actions.

Summary of Commendations

Overview of Recent Activities

- Embracing the Partnership for Sustainable Communities' livability principles and seeking ways to improve access to affordable housing, increase transportation options, and lower transportation costs while protecting the environment.
- Participating in the latest update of Tennessee's Strategic Highway Safety Plan and staying involved in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan Committee.

Organizational Structure

- Providing MPO 101 training to local partners and other interested parties, including the National Freight Advisory Committee.
- Organizing the Planning and Land Use Advisory Committee to integrate land use considerations into the transportation planning process.
- Using the Active Transportation Advisory Committee to integrate non-motorized transportation, transit, public health, and community interests into the transportation planning process.

Unified Planning Work Program

- Enhancing multimodal and intermodal freight movement by organizing a Freight Advisory Committee with public and private sector stakeholders, creating regional freight profiles, and exploring a truck route master plan.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan

- Conducting a comprehensive data collection effort for the Livability 2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and travel demand model updates, including the household travel survey, on-board transit survey, freight stakeholder survey, and bicycle and pedestrian counts.
- Designing the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan as a tool to enhance quality of life by improving public health, reducing environmental impacts, promoting transportation efficiency, protecting public safety, and increasing economic development and other opportunities for prosperity.

Transportation Improvement Program

- Working with Federal, State, and local partners in Tennessee and Mississippi to obligate projects and reduce the balances of unexpended federal funds.
- Developing an interactive online mapping application to help stakeholders find information on projects.

Interested Parties, Participation, and Consultation

- Developing multimedia outreach tools, like the MPO's website, livability videos, Community Remarks tool, and online project map, to engage the public and other interested parties in the planning process.
- Employing technologies, like handheld computer tablets, screen reading software, and digital mapping resources, to enhance public engagement, increase productivity, and achieve cost savings.
- Engaging Title VI and Environmental Justice communities with an array of outreach techniques, including public meetings at transit stations, presentations at schools and neighborhood events, advertisements on public buses and in community newspapers, and translation services for documents, meetings, and websites.
- Including Title VI assurance statements in publications.

Transit

- Designating transit representation on the TPB prior to the MAP-21 requirement and continuing a strong partnership with MATA through alternatives analyses, on-board transit surveys, transit route profiles, and the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan.

Congestion Management Process

- Using a steering committee, Mobility Summit, and public outreach campaign to better understand the Memphis region's congestion and mobility issues.
- Administering safety and operational audits to identify congestion and mobility needs and before-and-after analyses to evaluate the effectiveness of congestion management strategies.

Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems Architecture

- Engaging local, State, and Federal agencies to ensure the Regional ITS Architecture and Deployment Plan reflect cohesive long-range planning among regional stakeholders.

Summary of Recommendations

Overview of Recent Activities

- Explore available resources for scenario planning to help foster a collaborative approach for evaluating demographics, employment, land use, funding, and transportation system performance.

Unified Planning Work Program

- Explore resources to help MPO members maintain transition plans consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Metropolitan Planning Agreements

- Continue to update agreements with provisions from recent Federal legislation, regulations, and rulemakings, including responsibilities for air quality conformity and MAP-21's performance measures and performance targets.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan

- Work with State and local partners on developing a process for documenting planning analysis results that project sponsors can carry forward into the environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- Continue formalizing relationships with TDOT and MDOT to ensure the Livability 2040 RTP aligns with each State's Strategic Highway Safety Plan and to facilitate the continuous sharing of safety information related to goals, strategies, countermeasures, and projects.
- Continue to involve TDOT in the development of the Livability 2040 RTP to integrate the results of the Tennessee Extreme Weather Project.

Transportation Improvement Program

- Consider developing a web-based TIP to support the MPO's efforts to map projects and track obligations, amendments, and administrative adjustments.
- Coordinate with State and local partners on developing standard inflation rates for the next TIP.
- Continue to collaborate with State and local project sponsors during the development of the next TIP to evaluate each project's timeline, cost estimates, and constructability.
- Continue to work with TDOT and MDOT to enable the continuous sharing of obligations and expenditures so the MPO has the best available information for programming decisions.

Performance Based Planning and Programming

- Continue to engage TDOT, MDOT, and MATA on MAP-21 requirements, especially the transportation performance management elements on performance measures and performance targets.

Interested Parties, Participation, and Consultation

- Continue to publish public meeting notices, agendas, meeting minutes, and draft documents in accordance to the MPO's PPP so the general public and other interested parties can prepare for participation.
- Continue to educate the MPO's members, partner agencies, and public stakeholders on the organization's policies, procedures, and programs, especially key decision points and opportunities for public involvement.
- Maintain a historic archive (beyond 2014 and 2015) of meeting minutes, agendas, and presentations on the MPO's website to ensure that stakeholders have reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes.

Congestion Management Process

- Integrate the biannual congestion management report, before-and-after analyses, and safety and operational audits into the UPWP and continuously use the congestion performance measures to monitor the geographic extent, duration, recurrence, and socio-economic impacts of congestion and identify the most effective congestion management strategies for implementation.
- Ensure that the Livability 2040 RTP discusses the role of the CMP in evaluating corridors, congestion management strategies, and individual projects and documents the MPO's analyses of travel demand reduction and operational management strategies for the projects that will result in a significant increase in capacity for single occupant vehicles (i.e. new general purpose highways at new locations or adding general purpose lanes).

Air Quality

- Establish a regular meeting schedule for the Interagency Consultation Committee so members can share timely information and better understand the MPO's needs for MTPs, TIPs, and associated amendments.

Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems Architecture

- Continue to explore the regional connections with the State of Arkansas and the West Memphis MPO and consider developing a unified Regional ITS Architecture for both MPOs to enhance interoperability, leverage investments, and maximize resources.
- Ensure that the Livability 2040 RTP discusses the role of the Regional ITS Architecture in matching ITS solutions with regional needs, generating new ITS projects, screening proposed ITS projects for consistency, and prioritizing planned ITS projects for implementation.