



1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On September 6, 2019, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Tennessee Division and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Region IV issued the certification review report of the transportation planning process for the Memphis Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) which serves the Tennessee and Mississippi portions of the Memphis, TN-MS-AR urbanized area (TMA). The West Memphis MPO serves the Arkansas portion of the Memphis, TN-MS-AR TMA. Individual TMA certification reports were completed for the two MPOs. Both reviews occurred on similar timelines with a focus on collaboration and coordination in the tri-state TMA. Staff of both MPOs were present at the two individual site visits.

In the Memphis MPO portion of the urbanized area, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) are the responsible State agencies and Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) is the responsible public transportation operator. Current membership of the Memphis Urban Area MPO consists of elected officials, officials of public agencies, public transportation representation, and state officials from the political jurisdictions in the Tennessee and Mississippi portions of the Memphis urbanized area.

1.1 Previous Findings and Disposition

The previous certification review for the Memphis Urban Area MPO was conducted in October 2015. This certification identified 18 commendations and 19 recommendations. The 2015 Certification Review findings and their disposition are provided in Appendix C.

1.2 Recent Activities

The MPO undertook several significant activities and meaningful accomplishments since the last Federal Certification Review in October 2015. Since that time, the MPO has received the following awards and accolades:



| Year | Award/Recognition | Awarding/Recognizing Entity | Description |
|-------------|---|---|--|
| 2018 | National Award for Excellence in MPO Coordination and Partnership | Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) | AMPO awarded the Memphis MPO the National Award for Excellence in MPO Coordination and Partnership for strong collaborative projects and practices, such as the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, Regional Freight Plan and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) tri-state Performance Targets. |
| 2017 | Transportation Planning Excellence Awards (TPEA) | FHWA | The Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan established a process to address the transportation needs of disadvantaged populations covering the tri-state area. This extensive and cooperative effort was named as one of the ten winners of the 2017 TPEA. |
| 2017 | Transportation Planning Capacity Building (TPCB) Case Study | FHWA and FTA | The MPO's public involvement efforts for the Livability 2040: RTP were recognized as a Case Study by FHWA's & FTA's TPCB Program. Strategies highlighted include the Livability YouTube Video Series and Public Transit Advertisements, as unique ways of reaching a larger and broader range of residents. |
| 2016 | Transportation Safety Planning Recognition | FHWA | The MPO's 2014 Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was recognized in FHWA's Resource Guide, Building Links to Improve Safety: How Safety and Transportation Planning Practitioners Work Together. The Resource Guide noted the crash analysis conducted by the MPO that ensured current and future bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure became safer. |



Partners from across the Nation have requested the Memphis MPO to share their experiences in delivering the metropolitan transportation process. Below is a selection of events and reports where the MPO has contributed to the state of the planning practice:

| Year | Event | Topic(s) |
|------|---|--|
| 2018 | FHWA Peer Exchange | Safety |
| 2018 | Tennessee Chapter of the American Planning Association Conference | Automated Vehicles |
| 2017 | Arkansas Transportation Planning Conference | Bus Stop Design & Accessibility Guidelines |
| 2017 | American Traffic Safety Services Association | Bicycle Safety |
| 2017 | AMPO National Conference | Active Transportation, Regional Freight Plan, Public Involvement |
| 2016 | FHWA Mid-South Megaregions Conference | Regional Freight Plan |
| 2015 | EDC3 Regional Models of Cooperation Webinar | Air Quality Planning |

In addition to these awards and events, the MPO achieved a variety of accomplishments since October 2015, including, but not limited to:

- Adopted the following Plans:
 - 2040 Livability Regional Transportation Plan
 - FY2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program
 - Tri-State Greater Memphis Regional Freight Plan
 - Tri-State Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Plan
 - Title VI Report & Limited English Proficiency Plan
 - CMAQ Performance Plan with Tri-State CMAQ targets
- Established a robust online presence with narrated videos, active social media accounts, interactive maps, etc.
- Developed State of the MPO Reports to document regional trends, outreach activities, significant milestones, and future projects in the next calendar year.



1.3 Summary of Current Findings

The current review found that the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted in the Tennessee and Mississippi portion of the Memphis urbanized area meets Federal planning requirements.

As a result of this review, FHWA and FTA are certifying the transportation planning process conducted by Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT), Memphis Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA). There are several commendations throughout this report to acknowledge successful practices, as well as, recommendations that should be strongly considered and that support continued enhancement of the planning process in this region.

Summary of Commendations

- **Agreements, Consultation, and Coordination:** The MPO consistently executes a high level of coordination in carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process. As a bi-state MPO serving a tri-state TMA, the Memphis MPO proactively coordinates with multiple State Departments of Transportation (DOTs), additional State agencies, the West Memphis MPO, the Memphis Area Transit Authority, regional and local agencies, and the public. Through this coordination, the MPO has led regional tri-state planning efforts that exceed the minimum requirement of planning for the bi-state metropolitan planning area.
- **Transportation Improvement Program:** The MPO actively supports project delivery and timely obligation of sub-allocated STBG funds by maintaining and sharing project status information handouts, strategically programming funds based on project status/obligations data, and participating in Tennessee and Mississippi project tracking meetings. The Memphis MPO area has seen a reduction in the amount of unobligated sub-allocated STBG funds from the use of these monitoring and reprogramming tools and open communication with members about project status.
- **Public Participation:** The MPO utilizes a data-driven approach to public engagement by documenting engagement metrics (i.e., web analytics, social media presence, and media appearances) in the annual State of the MPO Report which informs future public involvement strategies. The MPO is commended for leveraging in-house expertise to translate Plan summaries into Spanish and utilizing innovative outreach methods such as bus advertisements, visualization-focused fact sheets, and videos.



- **Safety:** In 2015, FHWA identified Memphis as a Pedestrian-Bicycle Focus City due to high nonmotorized fatalities. The MPO is commended for developing a Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and subsequent Bicycle and Pedestrian Reports which informed their prioritization of bike and pedestrian investments in the TIP and RTP. This report documents and supports an increase the number of bicycle and pedestrian projects funded in their area.
- **Performance Based Planning and Programming:** The MPO is commended for their technology-driven approach and coordination strategy in establishing tri-State CMAQ performance measures and development of the CMAQ Performance Plan.

Summary of Recommendations

- **Metropolitan Transportation Plan:** The MPO should consider advancing and integrating PEL linkages principles in future RTP updates and corridor/feasibility studies. Specifically, study documenting and analyzing the proposed project's purpose and need, range of reasonable alternatives, effects analysis, and applicable mitigation strategies.
- **Metropolitan Transportation Plan:** The MPO should consider participating in the micro-simulation transportation demand model pilot to allow for the regional model to be used at the corridor scale. This approach would maximize utility of the regional model for project analyses and reduce the risk for inconsistencies in model projections at the project level. This effort also would support PEL initiatives.
- **Congestion Management Process:** In the next CMP update, the MPO should closely follow FHWA's Congestion Management Process Guidebook and engage FHWA, TDOT and MDOT staff to identify opportunity areas which support enhanced application of the CMP.
- **Performance Based Planning and Programming:** The MPO should continue coordinating with MATA, TDOT, and MDOT to verify that the TIP and MTP includes the anticipated effects towards achieving the PM1, PM2, PM3, and Transit Asset Management targets set by the MPO. Additionally, the MTP must continue to include the system performance report which evaluates the performance and condition of the transportation system with respect to the performance measures and targets.

Details of the certification findings for each of the above items are contained in this report.