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16. Abstract <b>While a formal planning and programming process is established for urbanized areas through Metropolitan Planning Organizations, no similar requirement has been established for rural areas. Currently, under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, states are required to consult with non-metropolitan local officials in transportation planning and programming. The consultation process between state Departments of Transportation (DOT) and non-metropolitan local officials is not prescribed in the planning rules, and consultation practices vary widely among each state’s DOT.</b>  <b>Historically, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has worked in cooperation with each individual rural county to plan and program projects. This has often resulted in a county-by-county project list that the TxDOT districts must try to fashion into a regional strategy or plan. A need exists to examine the concept of rural planning organizations and research their use in Texas to determine if a formal rural planning organization may offer a means to improve transportation planning and programming. The objective of this research is to identify and examine rural planning organizations, their structure and operation, and their role in transportation planning and programming. The project will include a review of current processes used by TxDOT and other agencies to plan and program transportation projects in rural areas.</b>					
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**RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS – THEIR ROLE IN  
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT IN  
TEXAS: TECHNICAL REPORT**

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## **DISCLAIMER**

This research was performed in cooperation with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors, who are responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official view or policies of the FHWA or TxDOT. This document is disseminated under the sponsorship of the Department of Transportation, University Transportation Centers Program, in the interest of information exchange. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.

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## **CHAPTER 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **PROJECT OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this research project was to examine the potential role of rural planning organizations (RPOs) in Texas to determine if these types of organizations can offer a means for improving the transportation planning and programming process. Additionally, the project proposes example scenarios for RPO organization and implementation in Texas.

In addition to this research report, two additional research products were prepared for this project. The first, *Texas Rural Planning Organization Guidebook*, was prepared to provide a basic guide on rural transportation planning and RPOs. It includes an overview of the transportation-planning process and requirements and addresses how RPOs can fit into the overall transportation-planning process. The second additional research product was the development of an RPO workshop with accompanying instructor guide and participant notebook. The pilot RPO workshop was conducted on June 30, 2010, at the annual Texas Transportation Planning Conference in Bastrop, Texas.

### **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF WORK**

Under the current federal legislation, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), states are required to consult with non-metropolitan local officials in transportation planning and programming. SAFETEA-LU planning rules require that transportation projects outside of metropolitan planning areas, undertaken on the National Highway System with Title 23 funds, and under the Bridge and Interstate Highway Maintenance Programs should be selected by the state in consultation with the affected local officials. The consultation process between state departments of transportation (DOTs) and non-metropolitan local officials is not prescribed in the federal planning rules, and consultation practices vary widely among state DOTs.

For transportation planning purposes, an area outside of metropolitan areas that has 50,000 or less in population is considered to be rural. This rural definition includes incorporated areas that are outside of metropolitan area planning boundaries.

RPOs are generally defined as a voluntary association of local governments that plans rural transportation systems and advises each state's DOT on rural transportation policy. In general, most RPOs assist state DOTs in the development and prioritization of short- and long-range transportation plans, provide a forum for rural transportation interests, and establish a link to other regional transportation planning organizations and providers. However, there is considerable variance among the states with regard to jurisdictional structures and RPO functions.

## **TEXAS TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

The Texas transportation system encompasses all modes: highway, rail, air, and water. Transportation planning in Texas is a cooperative effort to promote the safe and efficient management, operation, and development of the state's transportation system.

The Texas Department of Transportation currently operates a decentralized organizational structure using 25 regional districts to carry out rural transportation planning objectives. Decisions about transportation in areas outside the metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) boundaries are made by TxDOT district engineers with informal input from local leaders such as county judges, county commissioners, mayors, and city council members. RPOs offer a potential method for Texas to provide formal inclusion into the transportation planning process to local leaders and citizenry in rural areas.

Partners in the transportation planning effort include TxDOT, MPOs, public transportation providers, councils of government (COGs), regional mobility authorities (RMAs), RPOs, coordinated public transit-human services planning agencies, and other stakeholders such as freight operators and economic development agencies. These partners must work together since no single agency has sole responsibility for the entire transportation system.

In metropolitan areas with a population over 50,000, the MPO is responsible for transportation planning. The MPO coordinates the process with TxDOT, local elected officials, and other transportation providers/stakeholders. Transportation planning in rural areas (areas not located within an MPO) is largely conducted by the TxDOT district offices in consultation with county and city elected officials and the public, and recently, with RPOs.

This report presents the results of a study of RPOs and their role in transportation planning in Texas. The report is consistent with current practices and Texas' newly adopted transportation planning and programming rules (Title 43 TAC, Chapter 16). The report was constructed based on information obtained from:

- A literature review of RPOs nationally.
- Stakeholder outreach and comparisons with similar transportation planning efforts.
- A national scan of RPOs funding, duties and responsibilities, and the role of state DOTs.
- A review of bylaws from RPOs in Texas and other states.
- A review of TxDOT's transportation planning and programming rules.

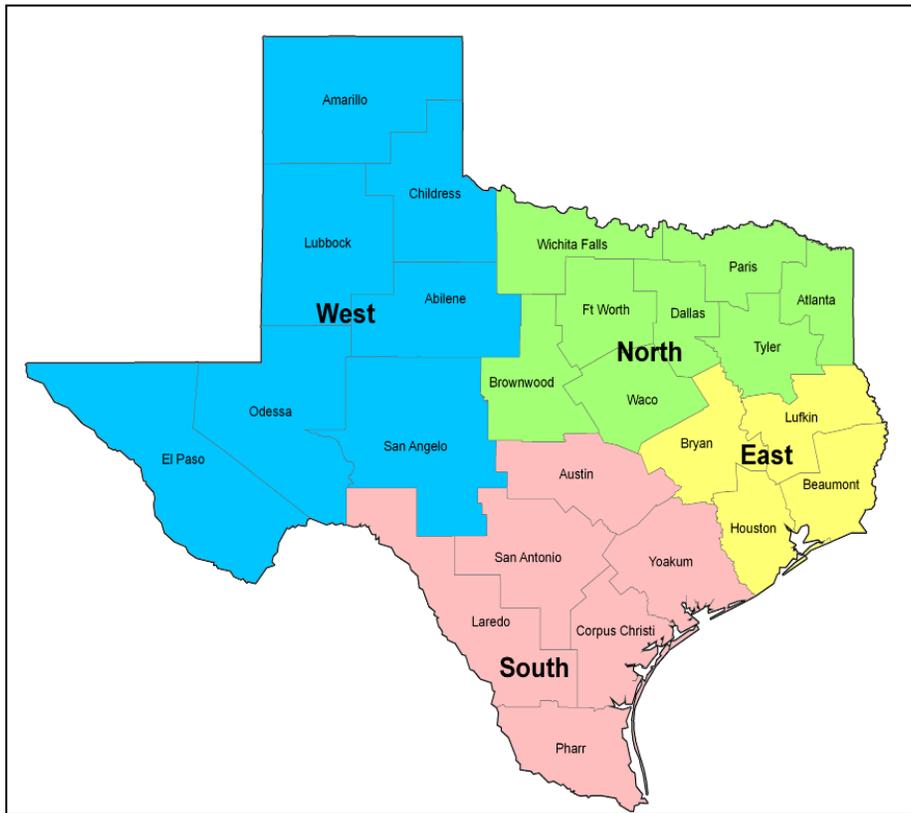
This report is intended for a wide audience interested in rural transportation that includes TxDOT district planners and engineers, COG planners, rural county stakeholders, small urban area officials, and city policy makers. It includes an overview of the transportation planning process and requirements and addresses how RPOs can fit into the overall transportation planning process.

TxDOT is the agency responsible for state-level transportation planning, programming, and project implementation. Specifically, TxDOT's Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP) and each of its 25 district offices are responsible for transportation planning. TPP coordinates the efforts of and cooperates with the district offices, MPOs, COGs, RPOs, as well

as the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, local elected officials, the public, and other interested stakeholders to conduct transportation planning. TPP and the 25 district offices coordinate with the MPOs on metropolitan transportation planning.

Figure 1 shows how TxDOT has historically operated a decentralized organizational structure using 25 regional districts to carry out rural transportation planning objectives. Each district has considerable latitude in setting priorities for design and construction projects, maintenance, and operations activities. Since 2009, a new “regionalization process” seeks to centralize certain business operation aspects of the 25 districts. The state has been divided into four regions.

- **North:** Fort Worth, Dallas, Tyler, Wichita Falls, Paris, Atlanta, Waco, Brownwood.
- **South:** San Antonio, Yoakum, Pharr, Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Laredo, Austin.
- **East:** Houston, Beaumont, Bryan, Lufkin.
- **West:** Lubbock, Abilene, Childress, Amarillo, El Paso, Odessa, San Angelo.



**Figure 1. TxDOT Regions and Districts.**

### **Rural Planning and TxDOT’s District Offices**

The district offices manage rural transportation planning directly. District engineers make planning decisions with formal and informal input from local leaders such as county judges, county commissioners, mayors, and city council members. Each district has a published rural public involvement process that details how rural consultation is conducted.

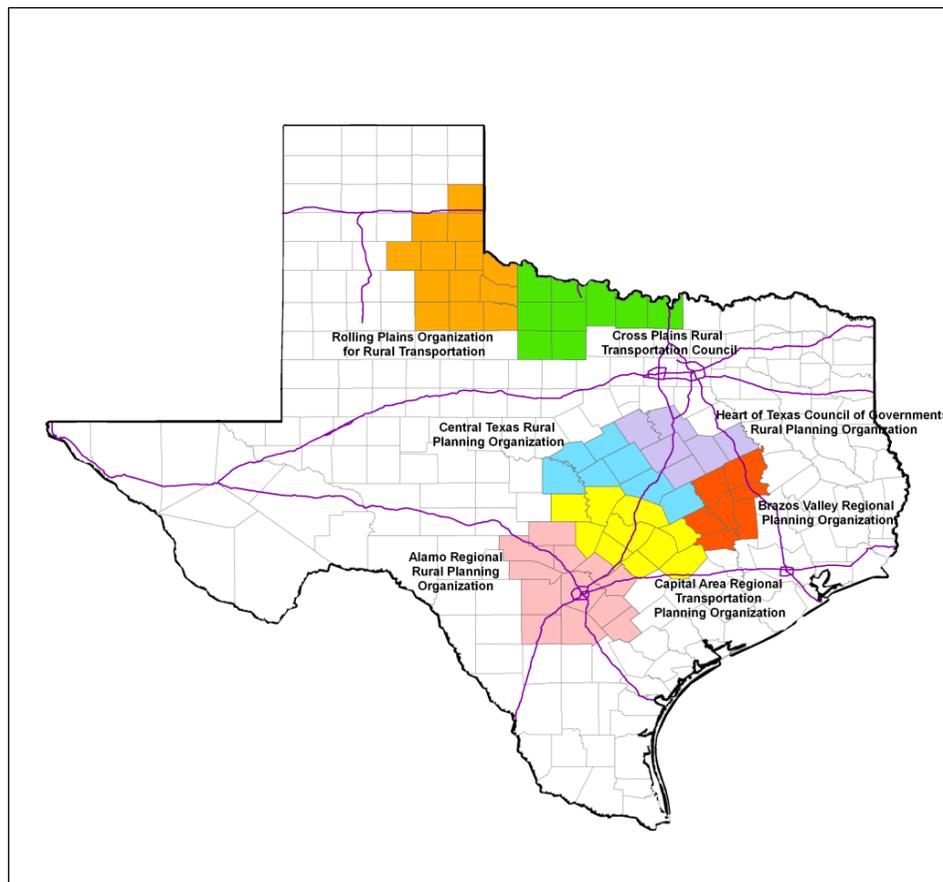
## TEXAS TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

The following section provides an overview of the key organization involved in transportation planning in Texas. These include RPOs, COGs, MPOs, RMAs, regional Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Lead Agencies, and rural, urban, and metropolitan transit agencies.

### Texas RPOs

In Texas, RPOs are voluntary organizations created and governed by local elected officials organized to address rural transportation priorities and planning and provide recommendations to TxDOT for areas of the state not included in MPO boundaries. RPOs in Texas are organized on a volunteer basis with no dedicated funding. The status of RPOs in Texas is dynamic. New RPOs were beginning to organize as this report was being prepared. This report has attempted to identify RPOs in existence from the beginning of the project in March 2009 through its conclusion in August 2010.

TxDOT districts, in cooperation with local rural stakeholders, perform RPO-like functions. Rural consultation occurs throughout the entire state, but in some regions RPO have formed to formalize the process. The following regions in Texas have been identified as current examples for having established rural transportation planning functions. At the time this report was prepared, there were seven RPOs established in Texas as voluntary organizations. A description of these RPOs is provided below. Figure 2 presents the location and boundaries of each.



## **Figure 2. Texas Rural Planning Organizations.**

### *Capitol Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CARTPO)*

The Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) formed CARTPO in 1999 to address the transportation planning needs of the rural areas within the COG. CARTPO is organized to include the entire COG boundary. CARTPO was originally created as a response to federal legislation (TEA-21), which called for state DOTs to work with officials in non-metropolitan areas for transportation decision-making. CARTPO reevaluated its role in the transportation planning process in 2006, and formalized its structure and objectives into an adopted set of bylaws in April 2007 (see Appendix C for bylaws).

CARTPO membership is composed of voting, non-voting ex-officio, non-voting associate, and staff members. Each county in the 10-county CAPCOG region may choose three elected officials to serve as voting members. Individual counties are encouraged to include at least one municipal representative in their voting membership. Nine other stakeholder organizations participate as non-voting members. CAPCOG provides staff and administrative support for all CARTPO activities.

CARTPO serves as a forum for elected officials to come together on transportation issues to recommend changes in policy and practice, recommend legislation, recommend regional priorities, direct certain planning and data initiatives, oversee the federally-prescribed local consultation process, and collaborate with the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO). CARTPO has developed a project evaluation and priority establishment processes enabling them to evaluate and recommend projects with a regional impact to TxDOT.

### *Cross Plains Rural Transportation Council (CPRTC)*

CPRTC provides advice, strives to influence the planning and development of rural transportation projects, participates in the planning of important transportation corridors passing through the region, and acts as a cohesive entity, communicating those needs and recommendations to all levels of government. This process allows counties, cities, and rural communities the opportunity to be involved in the early stages of transportation planning. Non-metropolitan areas of nine counties and more than 50 incorporated municipalities in North Texas are represented by the council.

TxDOT and local officials have realized significantly improved mutual understanding of future rural transportation planning needs and have improved the ability to modify plans and project construction schedules to meet the needs of the rural areas represented by CPRTC. Identifying locally important projects outside of major metropolitan areas and creating regional unity for priority projects through the development of a regional consensus are positive products of CPRTC. A project prioritization process was developed and is being used for project selection recommendations. CPRTC has provided effective assistance to TxDOT regarding public involvement in decision-making within the planning and programming processes. Members of CPRTC coordinate with their constituents, chambers of commerce, and business leaders to make representative decisions for their local areas. This RPO effectively communicates and

coordinates with the local MPO (Wichita Falls MPO).

#### *Brazos Valley Regional Planning Organization*

Brazos Valley Council of Governments (BVCOG) established itself as an RPO four years ago to support transportation planning. The COG Board (Policy Committee) combines with the Regional Transportation Planning Committee (staff-level representatives from participating counties, municipalities, and resource agencies) to administer the RPO process. BVCOG furnishes support staff for the rural planning effort and considers COGs to be the logical centers to conduct this planning inside their boundaries. Most actions taken by the RPO have been in the form of resolutions and agreements. They have not engaged in any formal transportation planning or project prioritization processes.

BVCOG supports a formal rural transportation planning process similar to the MPO planning process. It is their desire to produce a 25-year rural transportation plan that is coordinated with the local MPO plan (Bryan-College Station Metropolitan Transportation Plan). BVCOG does not have dedicated funding supporting the current RPO.

#### *Rolling Plains Organization for Rural Transportation (RPORT)*

RPORT is a newly formed RPO that was established in October 2007. It is located in the Childress District encompassing 13 counties. The RPO boundaries coincide with the Childress District boundaries, which include four COGs: NORTEX to the East, Panhandle RPC (Amarillo), South Plains Area COG (Lubbock), and Western Central Texas COG. The RPO was formed following the success in neighboring Wichita Falls District and the Cross Plains Rural Transportation Council. The membership structure includes an elected Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson that serve a two-year term. There are currently no structured bylaws, no funding, and TxDOT provides all of the administrative functions. The group does not have any published goals or strategies. There are 13 County Judges (voting) and 1 member from each of the 26 municipalities (non-voting).

#### *Central Texas Rural Planning Organization*

In the Waco District, The Central Texas Council of Governments (CTCOG) established the Central Texas Rural Planning Organization (CTRPO) in April 2002. Central Texas COG includes Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Mills, and San Saba Counties. The RPO has consistently been involved in program development and was one of the first to organize an RPO-like structure in 2002.

#### *The Heart of Texas Council of Governments*

The Heart of Texas Council of Governments (HOTCOG) executive committee established an RPO in August 2008. The RPO serves in an advisory capacity to the HOTCOG executive committee and includes the planning areas of Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, and Limestone Counties. The RPO planning area excludes McClennan County, which is the exclusive right and responsibility of the Waco MPO. The stated purpose of the RPO is to identify and recommend projects to address regional mobility issues and statewide connectivity; coordinate on project

prioritization with TxDOT; provide technical assistance to conduct/support planning for jurisdictions and counties; and coordinate multi-year plan development.

### *Alamo Area Rural Planning Organization (AARPO)*

The Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) established AARPO in the spring of 2010. The RPO includes all counties of the AACOG area located outside the MPO planning area, which is comprised of Bexar County and a small portion of Guadalupe and Comal Counties. The board of directors comprises elected officials from member counties and municipalities, the TxDOT district engineer, and a MPO policy board representative (non-voting). A chair and vice-chair are elected annually by the board. Other non-voting members include the AACOG executive director and any AARPO region government or non-government agency, business, or organization stakeholder. The AARPO has adopted bylaws and is meeting on a regular basis.

### **Councils of Governments**

Regional Councils and COGs, also named regional planning commissions and development councils, are voluntary associations of governments formed under Chapter 391 (Regional Planning Commissions) of the Texas Local Government Code. Figure 3 shows 24 COGs. They address problems and planning needs that cross the boundaries of individual local governments or that require regional attention. While regional councils do not have a defined role in rural transportation planning, some regional councils serve as the organizational or fiscal agent of an MPO.<sup>1</sup> Regional councils cooperate with member governments, the private sector, and state and federal partners to:

- Plan and implement regional homeland security strategies.
- Operate law enforcement training academies.
- Provide cooperative purchasing options for governments.
- Manage region-wide services to the elderly.
- Maintain regional 9-1-1 systems.
- Promote regional economic development.
- Operate specialized transit systems.
- Provide management services for member governments.

In addition, Texas' COGs are responsible for regional planning activities that may differ from region to region, but typically include planning for economic growth, water supply, water quality, air quality, transportation, emergency preparedness, and the coordinated delivery of various social services. Many councils of government establish and host region-wide geographical information systems as well as databases on regional population, economics, and land-use patterns.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/> for Chapter 391 of Local Government Code.



**Figure 3. Texas Regional Councils of Government.**

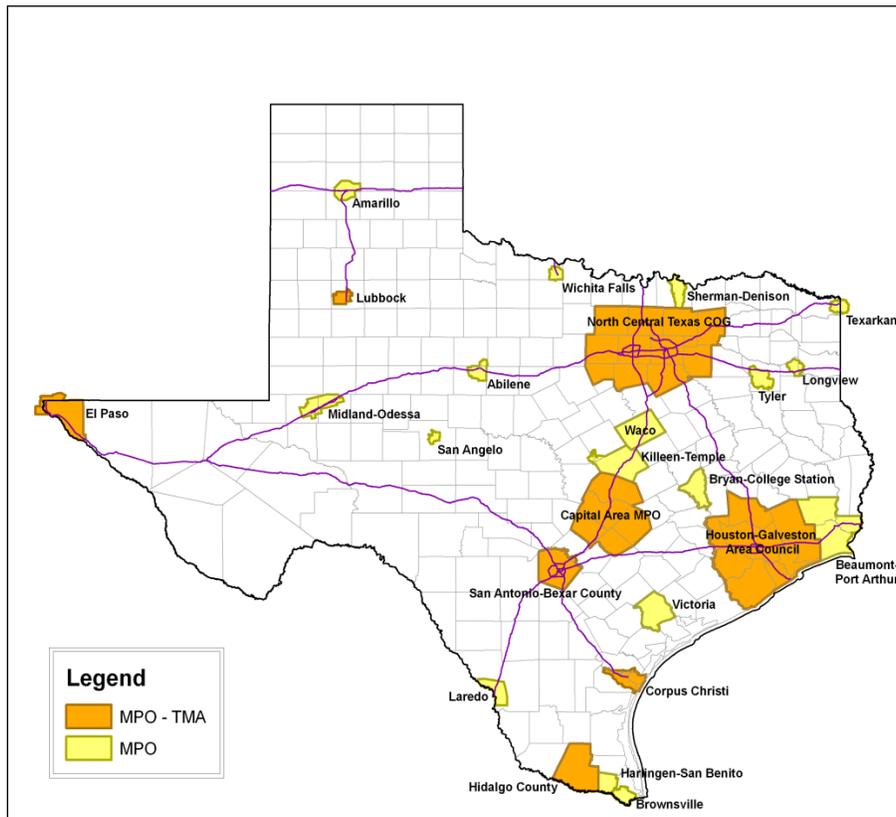
*Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Program*

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Program is a regional planning program under the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA). The CEDS process replaced the former Overall Economic Development Program, or OEDP, in 1999 when EDA was re-authorized under new legislation. CEDS are created by regional planning organizations to guide regional economic development. CEDS is a continuous planning process with diverse public and private sector participation similar to processes intended for transportation planning.

With the passage of SAFTEA-LU and subsequent statewide and metropolitan transportation planning rules, there is increased emphasis on integrating transportation planning into regional planning processes such as economic development (1). Within the CEDS program there are potential linkages and opportunities for improving the continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C) transportation planning process.

## Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Metropolitan Planning Organizations are transportation policy- and decision-making organizations made up of representatives from local government and in some areas transportation authorities. The federal government requires a regional transportation planning process in urbanized areas with populations over 50,000. The process is carried out by MPOs that have been designated by local governments and the state's governor. The MPO boundaries are determined by agreement between the MPO and the governor. At a minimum, the boundaries are selected to encompass the entire existing urbanized area (as defined by the United States Census Bureau) plus the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within a 20-year forecast period. The responsibilities and funding resources are specifically designated by federal surface transportation law. Federal funding for transportation projects and programs are channeled through MPOs. Figure 4 shows the current 25 MPOs in Texas' urbanized areas. Eight MPOs in Texas are defined as Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) because they have a population of greater than 200,000.



**Figure 4. Texas Metropolitan Planning Organizations.**

## **Regional Mobility Authority**

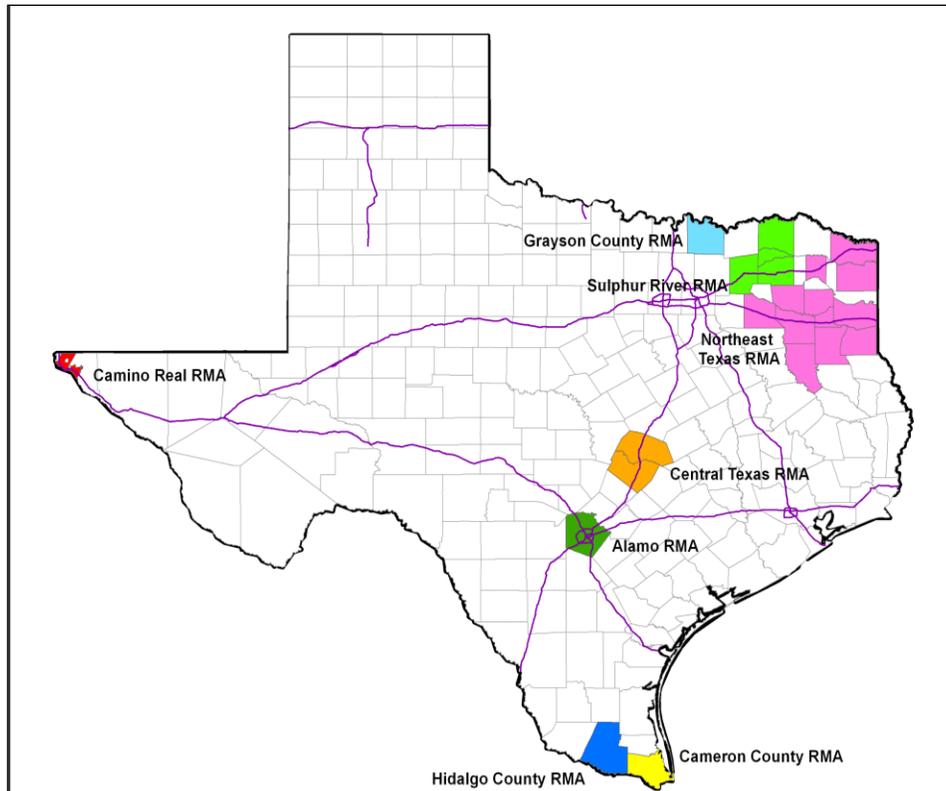
A Regional Mobility Authority is an independent local government agency authorized by state statute (Chapter 370) with a primary function of project development, finance, and implementation. RMAs were authorized by the Texas Legislature and voters approved a constitutional amendment in 2001. While RMAs may have little or no involvement in early transportation planning, they could potentially play a greater role in strategies or alternatives to address rural transportation planning needs in the state.

An RMA is a multi-modal transportation authority that can be formed by one or more counties to finance, design, construct, operate, maintain, and expand a transportation facility or service. It is authorized to implement a wide range of transportation projects, to include highways (tollled or untollled), ferries, airports, bikeways, and intermodal hubs. Projects can be financed using a wide range of methods including the sale of tax-exempt revenue bonds, private equity, public grants, government loans, and revenue generated from existing transportation facilities. RMAs can acquire or condemn property for projects, enter into public-private partnerships, and set rates for the use of transportation facilities.

RMAs have the same powers and duties as TxDOT with regard to the condemnation and acquisition of real property for transportation projects (Section 370.162 of Transportation Code). This means that with regard to acquiring property through eminent domain, RMAs must follow the same process and procedures that guide TxDOT.

As shown in Figure 5, the state of Texas has eight RMAs. Each is designed to study, evaluate, design, finance, acquire, construct, maintain, repair, and operate transportation projects within their respective regions:

- The Camino Real RMA represents the City of El Paso. Camino Real is the only RMA in the state of Texas that represents a city instead of a county or counties.
- The Alamo RMA represents Bexar County. The Central Texas RMA represents Travis and Williamson Counties. The Cameron, Grayson, and Hidalgo RMAs represent their respective counties.
- The Northeast Texas RMA is the largest in terms of land area and number of member counties. The Northeast Texas RMA represents Bowie, Cass, Cherokee, Gregg, Harrison, Panola, Rusk, Smith, Titus, Upshur, Van Zandt, and Wood Counties.
- The Sulphur River RMA represents Delta, Hopkins, Hunt, and Lamar Counties.



**Figure 5. Regional Mobility Authorities.**

### **Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Planning**

Coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans are also required by SAFETEA-LU planning rules. Texas established 24 regional lead entities generally coinciding with COG boundaries to help oversee the regional service coordination planning process. Figure 6 shows the 24 regions and lead agencies. These lead agencies currently have functions similar to RPOs with regard to planning, prioritizing projects, preparing work programs, and providing a public involvement forum. In addition, the lead agencies act as the fiscal agent for state and federal grant funds. Each region generally has a regional coordination steering committee composed of local representatives that advises the lead agencies on its actions and priorities. In some cases the COG is the lead agency, and in some other cases the lead agency is a regional planning commission, a transit provider, or a TxDOT office.



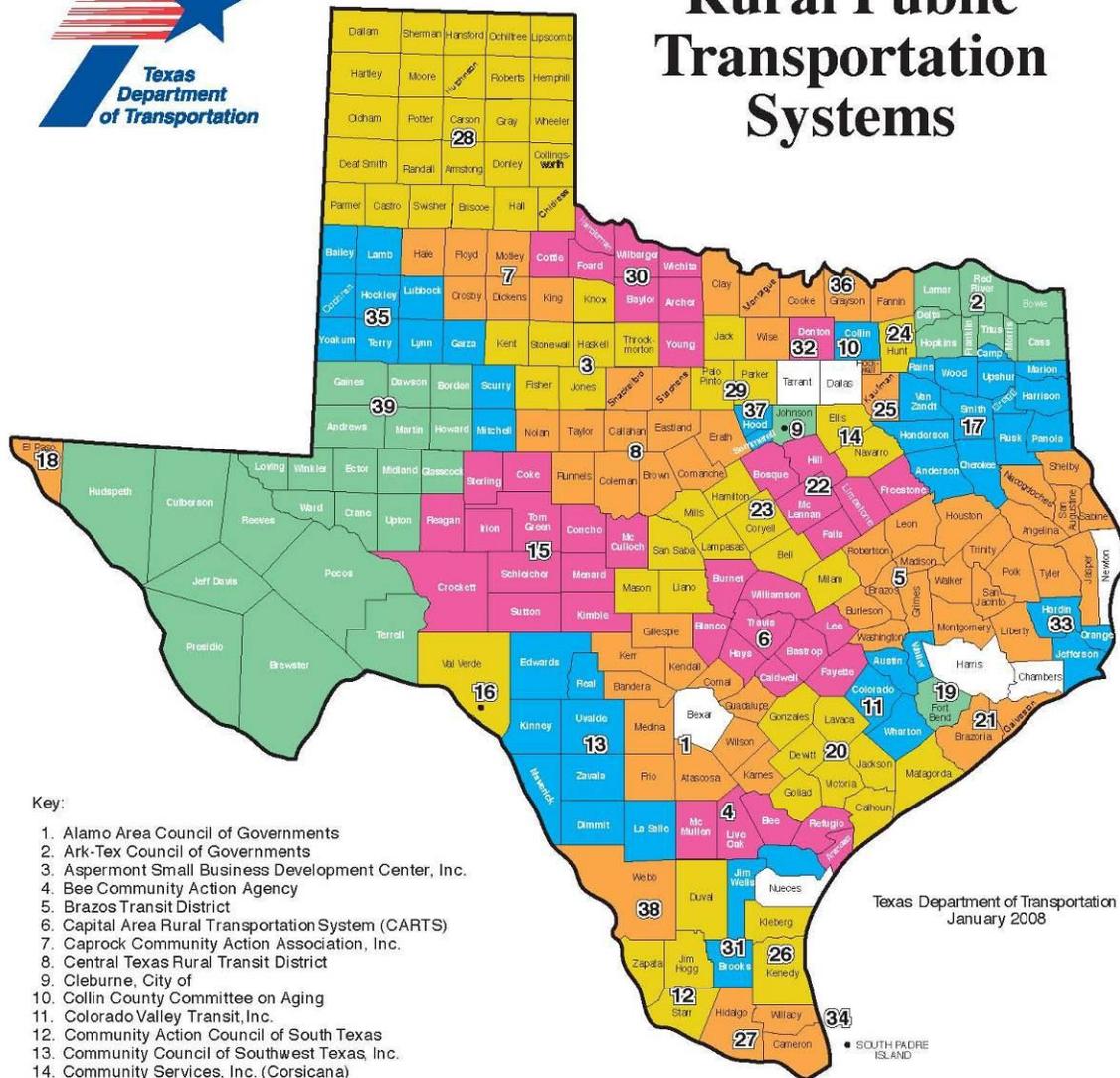
**Figure 6. Lead Agencies for Human Service Coordination.**

### **Rural Transportation Providers**

Figure 7 delineates the 39 rural public transportation systems in the state. The white counties are served by urban transit agencies, with the exception of Newton County, which is not served by a rural transit provider.



# Rural Public Transportation Systems



**Figure 7. Rural Public Transportation Systems.**

## **Metropolitan Transit Providers**

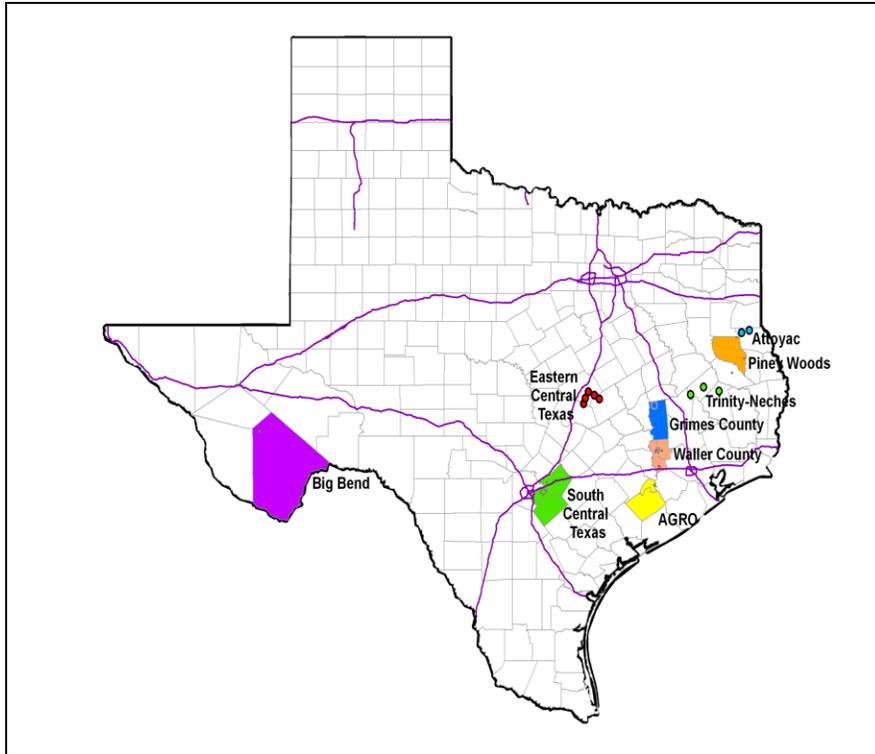
There are eight metropolitan transit authorities (MTAs) in Texas. All MTAs serve urbanized areas with a population greater than 200,000. They are organized under specific state laws and granted authority to levy a dedicated sales tax. None of the MTAs are eligible to receive state funding through TxDOT; all receive federal funds directly from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 formula program. MTAs work primarily with MPOs to address regional metropolitan transportation planning and programming issues in the urbanized area. Although MTAs are a key partner for transportation planning and programming within MPO boundaries, they are not routinely involved in rural planning issues. The eight MTAs in Texas include:

- Austin – Capital Metro.
- Corpus Christi – Regional Transportation Authority (The B).
- Dallas – Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART).
- Denton – Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA).
- El Paso – Sun Metro (City of El Paso).
- Fort Worth – Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T).
- Houston – Metropolitan Transit Authority.
- San Antonio – Via Metropolitan Transit.

## **Sub-Regional Planning Commissions**

Sub-regional planning commissions may be lawfully organized under Chapter 391 of the Local Government Code, but the statute does not specifically reference the formation of sub-regional planning commission. These commissions may be formed by local governments (typically counties and municipalities) to cooperate, coordinate, and plan for transportation systems, utilities and health, education and recreation facilities. These sub-regional commissions may review projects that involve federal and state funding to determine if the project has region-wide significance and whether the project is consistent or in conflict with a regional plan or policy. Additionally, state agencies are required to coordinate with the local commissions to promote effective and orderly implementation of state programs at the regional level.

In past years, several sub-regional planning commissions were established by local officials. These included: the Eastern Central Texas, Trinity Neches Texas, Piney Woods, Waller County Texas, Attoyac, South Central Texas, AGRO, Big Bend, and Grimes County Sub-Regional Planning Commissions. Table 1 and Figure 8 present the composition of the sub-regional entities. A review of the minutes of past meetings held by these commissions revealed that many were formed to provide coordinated input, and in some cases opposition, to the planning, project development, and construction of the Trans Texas Corridor. The role of sub-regional planning commissions in transportation planning is controversial, and they would not likely affect rural transportation planning since the Trans Texas Corridor project was terminated in 2009.



**Figure 8. Texas Sub-Regional Planning Commissions.**

**Table 1. Sub-Regional Planning Commissions.**

<b>Sub-Regional Planning Commission</b>	<b>Member Agencies</b>
AGRO Sub-Regional Planning Commission	City of East Bernard, and East Bernard ISD Formed June 2008
Attoyac Sub-Regional Planning Commission	City of Tenaha, TX and City of Timpson, TX Formed June 2008
Big Bend Sub-Regional Planning Commission	Brewster County and City of Alpine Formed July 10, 2008
Eastern Central Texas Sub-Regional Planning Commission (ECTSRPC)	Cities of Bartlett, Holland, Little River-Academy, Rogers, and Buckholts
Grimes County Sub-Regional Planning Commission	City of Iola and Grimes County Formed July 14, 2008
Piney Woods Sub-Regional Planning Commission	Cities of Garrison, Chireno, and Huntington, and Nacogdoches County
South Central Texas Sub-Regional Planning Commission	Formed June 2008 by City of St. Hedwig and Wilson County. In November/December 2008 City of Marion, Guadalupe County, and East Central ISD joined
Trinity-Neches Texas Sub-Regional Planning Commission (TNTSRPC)	Cities of Groveton, Trinity, and Corrigan
Waller County Texas Sub-Regional Planning Commission	Waller County, Cities of Waller, Pine Island, and Prairie View June 30, 2008. Since then the City of Pattison, Waller ISD, and the Brookshire Katy Drainage District have joined. Invitations extended to Cities of Brookshire, Hempstead, and Katy

## RPO FUNDING AND ORGANIZATION SCENARIOS

Presented below is a summary of key findings on RPO funding and organization followed by recommendation on potential funding needs and sources for two RPO scenarios. Chapter 5 contains more in-depth information on TxDOT funding categories, and background on surface transportation funding. The two RPO scenarios and recommendations are based on different levels of involvement in the planning, programming, public involvement, and work product responsibilities that an RPO might undertake. *RPO Scenario I* is an RPO functioning primarily as a decision making forum and public involvement vehicle. *RPO Scenario II* adds a technical planning and programming capability to *Scenario I*.

## KEY FINDINGS

Listed below are selected key findings from a review of funding needs, sources, and scenarios:

- There are no dedicated funds for rural planning organizations from federal sources.
- RPOs in Texas are voluntary organizations and do not currently receive dedicated state funding.
- Rural planning activities in other states are generally funded using State Planning and Research (SPR) funds. The level of funding for RPOs varies among states.
- The most likely source for funding RPOs in Texas is from an existing source such as SPR funds or State Highway funds.
- The possible funding categories that RPOs can use for projects under the TxDOT Unified Transportation Program (UTP) are:
  - Category 4: Rural Connectivity.
  - Category 8: Safety.
  - Category 11: District Discretionary.
  - Category 12: Strategic Priority (pass-through toll).
- Funding for RPOs in Texas should include a combination of sources:
  - State funding.
  - RPO member contribution, dues, or in-kind contributions.
  - In-kind contributions from partnering and host organizations such as COGs.
- The level of funding in Texas for RPOs should be commensurate with the preparation of planning and programming work products, and meeting planning requirements.
  - Most rural planning and programming duties and responsibilities are currently conducted by TxDOT Districts and Divisions.
  - An RPO's estimated need would be \$10,000–\$25,000 per year to accomplish RPO *Scenario I*. This scenario would include policy board meetings, public involvement, and coordination activities with TxDOT districts performing the required technical planning and programming functions. The RPO *Scenario I* would function as primarily as a volunteer decision making forum and public involvement venue and vehicle.
  - An RPO's estimated need would be \$25,000–\$75,000 per year for RPO *Scenario II*. This scenario includes having the RPO conduct technical planning, programming, and public involvement functions in addition to functioning as a decision making forum. Planning work products would need to be approved by TxDOT.
- RPOs should continue to be voluntary organizations.

- RPOs should be composed of local elected officials, TxDOT district engineers, and public transportation representation.
- RPO boundaries should be flexible and honor existing and historical rural transportation planning relationships and jurisdictions. The geographic and demographic diversity in Texas would not support a one-size-fits-all approach for jurisdiction and administration.
- RPOs should be:
  - Decision making forum.
  - Policy committee with elected representatives.
  - Public involvement vehicle.
  - Elevate the RPO's role from consultation with TxDOT to cooperation with TxDOT in the development of transportation plans and programs.

## **RPO SCENARIOS AND RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the research to date, the researchers recommend flexibility for RPO structure, governance, and funding. The organizational flexibility is needed to accommodate the geographic and demographic diversity of the state. Additionally, flexibility would allow for respecting the history of well-established transportation planning relationships in many parts of the state. Finally, similar planning and organizing efforts have demonstrated that one-size-does-not-fit-all.

There are two recommended scenarios for RPOs in Texas. The two scenarios are consistent with the new transportation planning rules discussed in Chapter 3. The new rules do not provide funding for RPOs, but allow for RPO flexibility by providing for minimum standards for rural transportation planning and programming. As such, the possibility exists that RPOs may evolve and have a greater level of involvement and responsibility in transportation planning and programming in the future.

### **Transportation Planning Context**

There are essentially four transportation planning organizations involved in the planning, programming, design, and construction of surface transportation infrastructure.

- The U.S. DOT, including FHWA and FTA.
- The state DOT (TxDOT).
- The MPO, representing urbanized areas.
- Rural stakeholders (sometimes represented by RPOs).

The primary role of the U.S. DOT is to administer funding and provide guidance for state DOTs and MPOs. State DOTs and MPOs have specific federal requirements for planning and programming, whereas RPOs do not currently have federal or state level planning requirements.

The federal planning rules require the following basic planning products:

- A long-range plan.
- A transportation improvement program (TIP/STIP).

- A work program for tasks undertaken by the RPO/MPO (the equivalent of an MPO’s Unified Planning Work Program UPWP).
- A public involvement plan or process.

There are additional requirements, but these four represent the basic core products of the transportation planning process. Table 2 below lists these core products and current federal requirements for state DOTs, MPOs, and RPOs. RPOs in Texas are not required to prepare long-range plans, rural TIPs, public involvement plans, or work programs.

**Table 2. Federal Transportation Planning and Programming Products.**

Planning Requirement	Long-Range Plan	Program TIP/STIP	Public Involvement	Work Program (UPWP)	Other Planning Requirements
State DOT	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
MPO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RPO	No	No	No	No	No

Although several states have prescribed MPO-like requirements for RPOs and provided funding to achieve those requirements, that is not the current practice in Texas. In order to prepare scenarios for RPOs in Texas, the researchers have included RPO scenarios that include minimal planning requirements and MPO-like planning requirements. Specifically, *Scenario I* includes minimal planning requirements consistent with current practice and the newly adopted rules (Title 43 TAC, Chapter 16). *Scenario II* involves planning requirements for long-range plan preparation, rural transportation improvement program preparation, work program preparation, and public involvement.

These RPO scenarios are constructed based on information obtained during the projects work tasks, including:

- Literature review.
- Stakeholder outreach and comparisons with similar transportation planning efforts.
- A national scan of RPOs funding, duties and responsibilities, and the role of state DOTs.
- Review of bylaws from RPOs in Texas and other states.
- Review of TxDOT’s proposed Transportation Planning Rules.

There are two organization and funding scenarios presented for RPOs in Texas. Each scenario is based on assumptions about an RPO’s purpose and work product responsibilities. These are similar in scope to RPO practices in other states. In some states, RPO-like organizations are primarily decision making forums with minimal technical responsibility. In other states RPO function as a decision making forum and are also given technical planning and programming responsibility.

The table below (Table 3) presents the basic responsibility for planning and programming work products for state DOTs and MPOs. Following the first table, two RPO scenarios are presented that represent an increasing level of planning work requirements from a minimum level of planning product in *Scenario I* to increased responsibility in *Scenario II*.

**Table 3. Federal Planning Products.**

Current Transportation Planning Products Federal Planning and Programming Requirements					
Planning Product	Who Develops	Who Approves	Time Horizon	Content	Updates Required
Work Program (UPWP)	MPO	MPO	1 or 2 years	Planning studies	Annually
MTP	MPO	MPO	20 years	Future goals, strategies, and projects	Every 5 years, 4 years in Non-attainment
TIP	MPO	MPO/Governor	4 years	Transportation investments	Every 4 years
State LRTP	TxDOT	TxDOT/TTC	20 years	Future goals and Strategies	Not Specified
STIP	State DOT	U.S. DOT	4 years	Transportation investments	Every 4 years

*RPO Scenario I*

The first scenario is for an RPO consisting of a policy board with no technical committee, no required work program, and no responsibility to prepare planning or programming documents. The primary function of an RPO in *Scenario I* is a decision-making forum and public involvement vehicle for rural transportation planning. TxDOT Districts and TPP Division provide technical planning and programming support. Under the new planning rules, an RPO can work with TxDOT to provide recommendations to the State Long Range Plan, the Rural TIP, and the Unified Transportation Program (UTP). Table 4 presents the work products for *Scenario I*.

**Table 4. RPO Scenario I Planning Products.**

RPO Scenario I Potential Work Products for RPO in Texas (not Federal or State requirements)					
Planning Product	Who Develops	Who Approves	Time Horizon	Content	Updates Required
Rural Work Program	Optional	TxDOT	Optional	Planning studies	Optional
Rural LRP	Optional	TxDOT	20 years	Future goals and strategies	Optional
Rural TIP	TxDOT w/RPO Coordination	TxDOT	4 years	Transportation investments	Every 2 Years
Public Involvement Plan	TxDOT with RPO coordination	RPO/TxDOT	1 year (continuous)	Stakeholders' goals and objectives	Annually
Project Selection	TxDOT with RPO	TxDOT	Annually	Prioritized and constrained list	Annually (minimum)

*RPO Scenario II*

The second scenario is for an RPO consisting of a policy board, a technical support capability (committee, staff, or consultant), a work program, and responsibility for plan and programming preparation. Approval for the work products would be by TxDOT in cooperation with the RPO board. This scenario exceeds the role of RPOs described in the TxDOT rules but is not prevented since the rules provide only a minimum standard. *Scenario II* is for an RPO to function and have

responsibility very similar to the function and responsibility of MPO. Table 5 presents the work products for *Scenario II*.

**Table 5. RPO *Scenario II* Planning Products.**

<i>Scenario II</i> Potential Work Products for RPO in Texas (not Federal requirements)					
Planning Product	Who Develops	Who Approves	Time Horizon	Content	Updates Required
Rural Work Program	RPO	TXDOT RPO Board	1 or 2 years	Planning studies	Annually
Rural LRP	RPO w/ TxDOT Coordination	TxDOT RPO Board	20 years	Future goals and strategies	Every 5 years
Rural TIP	TxDOT w/ RPO coordination	TxDOT	4 years	Transportation investments	Every 2 years
Public Involvement	RPO	RPO Board TxDOT	1 year	Stakeholders' goals and strategies	Annually
Project Selection	RPO w/ TxDOT Coordination	TxDOT RPO Board	Annually	Prioritized and constrained list	Annually (minimum)

*RPO Funding Scenarios*

Funding for the two RPO scenarios is defined as the estimated funding needed to conduct transportation planning functions. The funding scenarios do not include funding for actual transportation improvements. (A discussion of rural transportation funding needs based on the *2030 Committee Report* for infrastructure improvements is provided later in Chapter 5).

The funding levels are presented as an estimated range of funding understanding that RPO planning needs may vary widely across the state. The funding level for meeting planning requirements at RPOs considered the following:

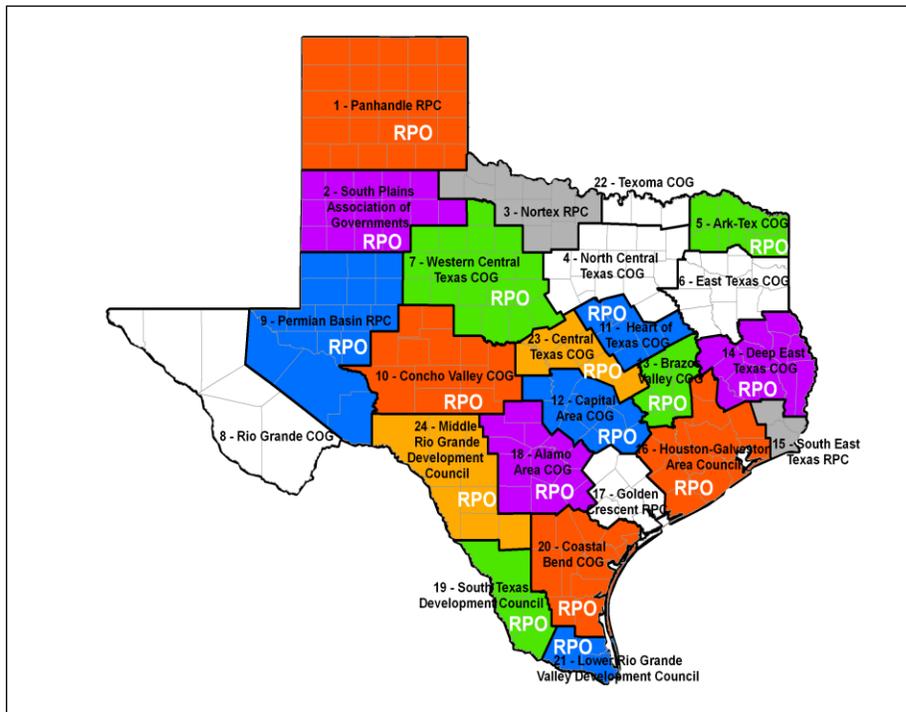
- Many planning duties and requirements for non-metro areas are currently conducted by TxDOT Districts and Divisions. These planning duties include, but are not limited to statewide plan preparation, programming (STIP), data collection, alternatives analysis, and project prioritization.
- Many COGs currently have the capacity to support transportation planning functions of an RPO. Many of the COGs already house the regions MPO. RPOs that are housed in COGs could use (purchase) existing technical planning resources.
- An RPO's estimated need would be \$10,000 to \$25,000 per year to accomplish *Scenario I*. This would include policy board meetings, policy board level input, and coordinating activities to be combined with required technical planning and programming functions by TxDOT. The RPO would function primarily as a decision making forum and public involvement venue and vehicle.
- An RPO's estimated need would be \$25,000 to \$75,000 per year for *Scenario II*. This includes having the RPO conduct technical planning, programming, and public involvement functions in addition to functioning as a decision making forum. Planning work products would need to be approved by TxDOT.

- The level of funding should take into account population, lane miles, the value and importance of existing infrastructure assets, and the geographic size of the area.
- RPO membership should be voluntary but include dues, in-kind contributions, and provide support to the organizations for both *Scenario I* and *Scenario II*.

### RPO Boundaries

There are currently 16 COGs that have passed resolutions recognizing their COG as the rural planning entity for their region or supporting the creation of an RPO for their region. Figure 9 shows these COGs shaded in color. As previously stated, the status of RPOs in Texas is dynamic. New RPOs were beginning to organize, and some became organized as this project was being conducted and the report was being prepared. This report has attempted to identify RPOs in existence from the beginning of the project in March 2009 and its conclusion in August 2010.

TxDOT’s planning rules do not prescribe RPO boundaries. Currently there are seven RPOs identified in Texas. Five of the seven have boundaries consistent with a COG boundary, and two have boundaries consistent with TxDOT district boundaries.



**Figure 9. COGs with RPO Resolutions.**

The COGs that do not have resolutions are not shaded with a color in Figure 9. These COGs either may have existing RPO like processes in-place, do not contain the non-metro areas within the region to justify an RPO, or have chosen not to pass a resolution for creation of an RPO. The NORTEX COG region, which includes the Cross Plains Rural Transportation Council and portions of the Rolling Plains Organization for Rural Transportation, both function as RPOs but have boundaries aligned with TxDOT’s Wichita Falls and Childress District boundaries,

respectively (instead of the area’s COG boundaries). The Rolling Plains Organization for Rural Transportation Planning area includes counties from four different COGs in the Panhandle region (see Table 6).

**Table 6. COGs/Regional Councils.**

	<b>Council of Governments/Regional Council</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>RPO Resolution</b>
1	Alamo Area Council of Governments	AACOG	Yes
2	Ark-Tex Council of Governments	ARK-TEX	Yes
3	Brazos Valley Council of Governments	BVCOG	Yes
4	Capital Area Council of Governments	CAPCOG	Yes
5	Central Texas Council of Governments	CTCOG	Yes
6	Coastal Bend Council of Governments	CBCOG	Yes
7	Concho Valley Council of Governments	CVCOG	Yes
8	Deep East Texas Council of Governments	DETCOG	Yes
9	East Texas Council of Governments	ETCOG	No
10	Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission	GCRPC	No
11	Heart of Texas Council of Governments	HOTCOG	Yes
12	Houston-Galveston Area Council	H-GAC	Yes
13	Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council	LRGVDC	Yes
14	Middle Rio Grande Development Council	MRGDC	Yes
15	Nortex Regional Planning Commission	NORTEX	Not applicable
16	North Central Texas Council of Governments	NCTCOG	No
17	Panhandle Regional Planning Commission	PRPC	Yes
18	Permian Basin Regional Planning Commission	PBRPC	Yes
19	Rio Grande Council of Governments	RGCOG	No
20	South East Texas Regional Planning Commission	SETRPC	Not applicable
21	South Plains Association of Governments	SPAG	Yes
22	South Texas Development Council	STDC	Yes
23	Texoma Council of Governments	TEXOMA	No
24	West Central Texas Council of Governments	WCTCOG	Yes

RPO boundaries should be flexible and honor existing and historical rural transportation planning relationships and jurisdictions. The geographic and demographic diversity in Texas would not support a one-size-fits-all approach for RPO boundaries, jurisdiction, and administration.

### **RPO Board Composition**

The new transportation planning and programming rules do not prescribe the composition of an RPO policy board. The rules indicate that an RPO be governed by local elected officials with responsibility for transportation decisions at the local level, including an organization established by a COG or regional planning commission designated by the governor pursuant to Local Government Code, Chapter 391.

In keeping with the rules and current practice, it is recommended that the RPO policy board be comprised of elected officials from the region similar to those presented herein. The existing RPOs’ board compositions generally include a Board of Directors, Ex-Officio, and At-large members. Examples from three RPOs are provided in Tables 7, 8, and 9, followed by the

recommended RPO board concept in Table 10. Appendix C provides examples of RPO bylaws and board composition.

**Table 7. CARTPO Membership.**

	<b>CARTPO</b>
Membership	<p>Open to representatives from cities, counties, transportation agencies, private and non-profit organizations, and citizens interested in regional transportation issues. CARTPO is composed of voting, non-voting ex-officio, non-voting associate, and staff members.</p> <p><u>Voting:</u> Each of the 10 counties in the CAPCOG region may choose three elected officials to serve as voting members. Individual counties are encouraged to include at least one municipal representative in their voting membership.</p> <p><u>Ex-Officio:</u> Each of the regional transportation stakeholder organizations may choose one official to serve as a non-voting ex-officio member.</p> <p><u>Associate:</u> Any government, organization, or individual interested in regional transportation issues may serve as a non-voting associate member.</p>
Officers	<p>Elects from its voting members a Chair and Vice Chair at the first meeting of the calendar year. All officers must represent a city or county in the 10-county CAPCOG region.</p> <p>Officers serve two-year terms, beginning on the date they are elected.</p>

**Table 8. Cross Plains Rural Transportation Council Membership.**

	<b>Rolling Plains</b>
Membership	<p>Voting members include each of the nine county judges and one representative from each incorporated city including Wichita Falls. A minimum of nine voting members must be present to form a quorum.</p> <p>Ex-officio members include TxDOT staff, Economic Development Corporations, Chambers of Commerce, State Senators, and State Representatives representing the region.</p>
Officers	<p>Chairman and Vice-Chairman Officers are elected every 2 years in January. Chairman’s duties are to conduct the meeting and represent CPRTC as required. The Vice-Chairman will perform these duties in absence of the Chairman.</p> <p>MPO liaison committee is a 3 person committee that is appointed by the Chairman every 2 years to meet with the MPO personnel as needed.</p>

**Table 9. Alamo Region RPO Membership.**

	<b>Alamo Region</b>
Membership	<p>There shall be three categories of membership: Board of Directors, ex-officio, and at-large.</p> <p><u>Board of Directors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each member county (12) shall have one director, who will be the County Judge or an elected member as appointed.</li> <li>• Member municipalities shall be represented by three municipal, elected officials (one each from the three county groupings).</li> <li>• The TxDOT District Engineer shall have one director seat.</li> <li>• The SA-BC MPO shall select one director from its body of officials in a manner of its choosing.</li> <li>• The county, municipal, and TxDOT directors shall be the only directors having voting rights.</li> </ul> <p><u>Ex-officio</u> The AACOG Executive Director shall serve as an ex-officio member.</p> <p><u>At-large membership</u> Any ARRPO-region governmental or non-governmental agency, business, organization, or individual with a stake in ARRPO issues may serve as an at-large member. At-large members shall have no motion, second, or voting rights at meetings.</p>
Officers	The directors shall elect from among them a Chairperson and Vice-chairperson each year. Election shall be by simple majority of a quorum of the directors at that meeting.

**Table 10. Texas RPO Membership Concept.**

	<b>Recommended RPO Membership and Board Composition</b>
Membership	<p>Three categories of membership: Board of Directors, ex-officio, and at-large.</p> <p><u>Board of Directors with Voting Rights</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each member county shall have one director (County Judge or appointee).</li> <li>• Member municipalities elected officials (or appointee, up to 5, with rotating responsibility).</li> <li>• The TxDOT District Engineer shall have one director seat.</li> <li>• The MPO (if applicable) shall select one director from its body.</li> <li>• A public transportation representative either from Human Service Transportation Coordination Committee or Lead Agency.</li> </ul> <p><u>Ex-officio</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The COG Executive Director shall serve as an ex-officio member.</li> <li>• Transit or Human Service Transportation Steering Committee Member.</li> </ul> <p><u>At-large membership</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any region governmental or non-governmental agency, business, organization, or individual with a stake in rural transportation issues may serve as an at-large member. At-large members shall have no motion, second, or voting rights at meetings.</li> </ul>
Officers	The directors shall elect from among them a Chairperson and Vice-chairperson each year. Election shall be by simple majority of a quorum of the directors at that meeting.

## RPO Planning Activities

RPOs may undertake a variety of activities related to the rural transportation planning process. Tables 11 and 12 present the basic activities and the proposed responsibilities of the RPOs for *Scenario I* and *Scenario II*.

**Table 11. RPO Activities *Scenario I*.**

<b>Rural Planning Activities</b>	<b>Who Develops</b>	<b>Who Approves</b>	<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Required?</b>
RPO Boundary	TXDOT & RPO Board	TxDOT & RPO board	As needed	No (Optional)
RPO Resolutions	RPO Board	RPO Board	As needed	No (Optional)
RPO Policy Board	Local Elected Officials	RPO Board	Annual	Yes
RPO Technical Committee	Optional	RPO Board	Optional	No (Optional)
RPO Bylaws	RPO Board	RPO Board	Review annually	Yes
Goals and Objectives	RPO Board	RPO Board	Annual	No
Rural TIP	TxDOT with RPO cooperation	TTC/TxDOT	Every 4 years (min)	Yes
Rural Plan Document	District and RPO Board	RPO Board	Every 4 Years	No (Optional)
Statewide LRTP Plan recommendation	RPO Board recommends to TxDOT	RPO Board	Every 4	Yes
Project Selection	TxDOT with RPO Cooperation	TxDOT & RPO Board	Every Year	No (Optional)
Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan	Lead Agency	Lead Agency	Not prescribed	Yes

**Table 12. RPO Activities *Scenario II*.**

<b>Rural planning Products</b>	<b>Who Develops</b>	<b>Who Approves</b>	<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Required?</b>
RPO Boundaries	TXDOT & RPO Board	TxDOT & RPO board	As Needed	No (Optional)
RPO Resolutions	RPO Board	RPO Board	As needed	Yes. (For planning products)
RPO Policy Board	Elected Officials	RPO Board	Annual	Yes
RPO Technical Committee	RPO Board	RPO Board	Optional	Yes
RPO Bylaws	RPO Board	RPO Board	Annual Review	Yes
Goals and Objectives	RPO Board	RPO Board	Annual	Yes
Rural TIP	TxDOT & RPO Tech Committee	TTC/TxDOT	Every 4 years (min)	Yes
Rural Plan document	RPO Committee	RPO Board	Every 4 Years	Yes
Statewide LRTP Plan recommendation	RPO Board recommends to TxDOT	RPO Board	Every 4 Years	Yes
Project Selection	RPO with TxDOT coordination	RPO Board	Every Year	Yes
Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan	Lead Agency	Lead Agency/ TxDOT	Not prescribed	Yes

### *Lead Agency Coordination*

Statewide and metropolitan planning rules require that the preparation of public transit-human services transportation plan should be coordinated and consistent with both the statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes. Projects from the coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans also must be incorporated into TIP and STIP.<sup>2</sup>

In most instances, the Lead Agencies are housed in COGs. Each Lead Agency has a Steering Committee that serves in an advisory capacity to the rural and urban transit providers and human service transportation providers for coordinated human service transportation. Since established in 2005, Steering Committees have served many RPO-like functions by representing rural transportation needs. Each Lead Agency prepared Regional Transit Coordination Plans in 2006 for their regions. RPOs can build upon this history and knowledge of rural transportation needs with the inclusion of Lead Agencies and Steering Committees in the RPO policy committee.

Human services transportation coordination should be integrated into a region's rural transportation planning efforts and not be a parallel process. There are 24 Lead Agencies in Texas that perform Human Service Transportation Coordination, as described earlier in this chapter.

### *Integrated Transportation Planning*

The TxDOT Planning and Programming rules require consistency among planning and programming efforts, which mirrors federal planning requirements. The inclusion of RPOs in transportation planning and programming has been an evolving process in Texas and many other states. Legislation has been proposed in both the Texas Legislature and Congress to increase the participation and role of RPOs in the transportation planning process. In light of these efforts, it is more a matter of when, not if, RPOs will be formally integrated into transportation planning. RPOs in Texas provide an opportunity to build upon existing transportation planning processes and organizations. Table 13 provides a broad overview of transportation planning involvement by planning organizations.

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Transportation, FHWA 23 CFR Parts 450 and 500, and FTA 49 CFR Part 463. Statewide Transportation Planning and Metropolitan Transportation Final Rule.

**Table 13. Transportation Planning Involvement by Organization and Types of Plans-Programs.**

	Vision Planning	Long-Range Plans	TIPs	RTIP	STIP	Human Service Transit Coord.
<b>TxDOT</b>						
<b>MPOs</b>						
<b>Metro Transit Agency</b>						
<b>Rural Transit District</b>						
<b>City/County</b>						
<b>RPO</b>						
<b>Lead Agency</b>						



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 presents a *Summary of Key Findings* followed by *Summaries of Selected Citations*. The *Bibliography* prepared for this literature review is located at the end of this report.

The literature search was initiated using the Transportation Information Services database to identify key research efforts and information relative to RPOs. The information search results revealed numerous studies examining rural planning organizations and the rural consultation processes since consultation requirements were set forth in ISTEA and SAFETEA-LU. The literature review narrowed the information and publications from state and national resources that address the organizational, institutional, and operation framework of RPOs. The research team focused the review on published literature and online resources, including, but not limited to:

- National Association of Development Organizations (NADO).
- Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.
- American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHTO).
- Transportation Research Board.
- National Conference of State Legislatures.
- Texas Legislature online.

### KEY FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE REVIEW

Listed below are some of the key findings from the literature review. The key findings reflect issues that are most frequently identified in the literature as most relevant to RPOs.

- Rural transportation planning is integrally linked to economic development.
  - From a policy perspective rural stakeholders and local officials generally view transportation as a means to support economic development.
  - From organizational perspective, RPOs are housed in existing COGs/Regional Development Organization (RDOs) and the same planning practitioners (staff) and stakeholders share interest in both economic development and transportation.
- Many RPOs face similar organization challenges.
  - Funding: There is no established funding allocation to support RPOs. Those state DOTs that provide funding support generally use State Planning and Research (SPR) funds and most require some form of local match. Funding for RPO varies among the states.
  - Organization: The RPO organization and process is typically incorporated within established regional planning commissions or economic development districts. The majority of the RPOs have policy and technical committees similar to those found in MPOs.
  - Interagency Coordination: The coordination between multiple agencies and multiple funding programs was cited in many instances as a challenge. For example, transportation planning coordination should occur with MPOs, state DOTs, multiple County Commissions/Boards of Supervisors, COGS, RDOs, and local municipalities. Each organization has multiple responsibilities, locations, boundaries, and organizational missions.
  - Geographic Boundaries: The majorities of RPO boundaries align with regional

- planning commissions or economic development districts, but exclude areas inside MPO boundaries.
- NADO (2009): “In 1998, the NADO Research Foundation identified 17 state highway agencies with formal contracts or funding agreements with regional development organizations for RPO-type assistance. By December 2005, the number had grown to a minimum of 25 states, with several others in various stages of discussions about forming new partnerships or pilots.”

## SUMMARIES FOR SELECTED CITATIONS

### National Association of Development Organizations

NADO’s website<sup>3</sup> on rural transportation is a clearinghouse of information on rural transportation and RPOs. The website contains a comprehensive collection of reports, guidance documents, and documented RPO issues and practices. Most of the reports and guides target planning practitioners, and local officials. The most relevant and recent publications are summarized below. The website contains many more documents than those summarized below.

*2009 National Scan: Rural Transportation Planning Organizations. National Association of Development Organizations, Washington, D.C., September 2009, <http://www.ruraltransportation.org/uploads/rposcan2009.pdf> (2)*

This NADO report presents the results of a 2009 national scan of multi-county regional planning and development organizations to determine their level of involvement in rural transportation planning, including through RPOs. Since ISTEA, an increasing number of states have turned to regional planning and development organizations to involve local and rural official in statewide planning processes. Although MPOs have federal rules and funding sources, there are no federal definitions or specific funding streams for RPOs. The 2009 NADO scan revealed:

- Most rural transportation planning programs are established through state DOT contracts with existing regional planning and development entities, such as economic development districts, councils of governments, and regional planning commissions.
- Funding sources, funding levels, and responsibilities vary considerably among RPOs in various states and even RPOs within the same state.
- Twenty-seven states report that they have a contract with their state DOTs to perform some type of transportation planning services in non-metropolitan areas as an RPO or similar entity.
- Twenty-three percent of respondents (40 organizations) administer or staff a federally designated MPO in-house and of those with MPOs, 80 percent (32 respondents) house both an MPO and an RPO.
- Most RPOs receive funding through state DOT contracts at amounts between \$25,000 and \$100,000, with 28 percent of responding regions receiving \$50,001–\$75,000, 22 percent receiving \$75,001–\$100,000, and another 21 percent receiving \$25,001–\$50,000 (see Table 2).

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<sup>3</sup> The NADO website is located at [http://www.ruraltransportation.org/pages/page.asp?page\\_id=59033](http://www.ruraltransportation.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=59033).

- SPR funds were reported as the major source of funding for 31 percent of respondents. Thirty percent indicated their funding was a mix of state and federal funds that may include SPR funds and other transit programs funding.
- RPO boundaries typically align with regional planning commission or economic development district boundaries (excluding portions of region covered by MPO), although some exceptions do exist.
- Most RPOs have policy (70 percent) and technical committees (60 percent) similar to MPOs. Policy committees are most frequently made up of state DOT representatives, municipal elected officials, and county commissioners.

**Table 14. Annual Funding by State from State and Federal Sources.**

	State	Annual funding from state and federal sources	Match rate	Time period established
1	Alabama	\$25,000–\$75,000	20%	2005–2006
2	Arizona	\$125,000–\$150,000	10–20%	1970s
3	California <sup>1</sup>	\$77,000–\$220,000	mid-1980s	
4	Colorado	Less than \$25,000–\$75,000	No match required	
5	Connecticut	\$75,000–\$100,000	15%	1990s
6	Florida <sup>2</sup>	\$25,000		2005
7	Georgia	\$25,000–\$100,000	20%	early 2000s
8	Iowa	\$25,000–\$100,000	20%	1995
9	Indiana	\$25,000–\$50,000	10–20%	2001
10	Kentucky	\$75,000–\$100,000	10%	mid-1990s
11	Maine	\$25,000–\$50,000	No match required	mid-1990s
12	Maryland <sup>3</sup>	More than \$150,000	25%	
13	Massachusetts	More than \$150,000	No match required	1970s and 1980s
14	Michigan	\$25,000–\$125,000	No match required	1970s
15	Minnesota	\$25,000–\$50,000	15%	1980s
16	Missouri	\$25,000–\$75,000	20–25%	mid-1990s
17	New Hampshire	\$125,000–more than \$150,000	10–20%	early 1990s
18	New Mexico	\$25,000–\$75,000	15–20%	mid-1990s
19	North Carolina	\$75,000–\$125,000	20%	2001–2002
20	Oregon <sup>4</sup>	\$25,000–\$50,000	No match required	late 1990s
21	Pennsylvania	\$100,000–more than \$150,000	10%	1990s
22	South Carolina	\$50,000–\$125,000	20%	late 1990s
23	Tennessee	\$50,000–\$125,000	10%	2005
24	Texas <sup>5</sup>	\$50,000–\$75,000		
25	Utah	Less than \$25,000–\$50,000	\$25,000–\$50,000	2005–2008
26	Vermont	\$125,000–more than \$150,000	10%	early 1990s
27	Virginia	\$58,000	20%	early 1990s
28	Washington	\$50,000–\$125,000	No match required	early 1990s
29	Wisconsin	\$50,000–\$75,000	5–10%	1970s

Table excerpted from *2009 National Scan: Rural Transportation Planning Organizations*. National Association of Development Organizations, Washington, D.C., September 2009, <http://www.ruraltransportation.org/uploads/rposcan2009.pdf>. Table based on self-reported scan responses, which were given in \$25,000 increments in most cases.

1 No scan responses received from organizations in California; information based on prior research.

2 No scan responses received; prior research found a pilot program with two RPCs assisting Florida DOT.

3 One region in Maryland is known to conduct an annual transportation needs assessment.

4 Oregon’s Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs) exist statewide, but RDOs only staff some ACTs.

5 Texas RPOs are primarily voluntary and self-funded, but some Councils of Governments (COGs) receive support for work in related areas such as transit.

*Role of Transportation Planning in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Process: A Nationwide Scan. National Association of Development Organizations, Washington, D.C., September 2009, <http://66.132.139.69/uploads/cedsreport.pdf> (3)*

This 2008 nationwide scan conducted by NADO documents the role of transportation planning in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Process (CEDS). CEDS are required by the Economic Development Act (EDA) and are generally conducted by RDOs and COGS.

- Both CEDS and RPO/MPO transportation planning processes develop broad goals and policies for achieving their main objectives.
- Direct contact and co-located meetings between CEDS and RPO/MPO process is the most effective approach to involving transportation agencies.
- Direct involvement by state DOT and other transportation industry representatives is reported by less than 15 percent of respondents.
- The most significant goals and objectives for transportation projects in the CEDS are retaining or recruiting businesses and improving economic development opportunities
- Among the report's recommendations:
  - Economic Development District (EDD) staff could more fully incorporate the role of transportation as a requirement for success in development.
  - Attach the state or regional transportation plan to the CEDS document to show linkages with development even when the two planning processes are separate and distinct.
  - EDDs can share the CEDS document more widely with their DOTs and other transportation agencies and stakeholders to incorporate it more widely into regional decision making.
  - Where possible, house the metropolitan and rural planning organizations and the EDD in the same regional planning agency.
  - Conduct joint planning meetings and develop cross representation of membership for CEDS committees and MPO and rural transportation planning committees, where they exist.

*Transportation Planning Bibliography: Rural Local Official Consultation. National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation. 2008 (4)*

This bibliography contains 19 citations spanning 2000–08 that focus on the consultation processes between state DOT and rural local officials. Some of the citations in the bibliography are publications already included in this literature review.

*Transportation Planning in Rural America: Emerging Models for Local Consultation, Regional Coordination and Rural Planning Organizations, National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation, Washington, D.C., December 2005, <http://66.132.139.69/uploads/scan2005.pdf> (5)*

This report builds on NADO Research Foundation's previous work and was a pre-cursor to the 2009 scan cited above. The report includes summaries of practices from 29 states including Texas.

*Local Government Officials: Key Stakeholders in Rural Transportation Planning, National Association of Development Organizations and National Association of Counties, December 2004, [www.nado.org/pubs/primer.pdf](http://www.nado.org/pubs/primer.pdf) (6)*

The publication outlines federal requirements for state consultation with rural local officials on statewide transportation planning issues. The guide also features examples from various states, a glossary of transportation terms, and a list of online transportation resources.

### **American Association of State Highway Officials**

AASHTO ([www.transportation.org](http://www.transportation.org)) also has published studies on rural consultation and RPOs.

*Wilbur Smith Associates, Non-Metropolitan Local Consultation Process: A Self-Assessment Tool for States, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, Washington, D.C., August 2006, [https://bookstore.transportation.org/item\\_details.aspx?ID=368](https://bookstore.transportation.org/item_details.aspx?ID=368) (7)*

This is a self-assessment guide to assist state transportation agencies evaluate local consultation processes required by federal law for statewide transportation planning. Rural consultation is much less established than consultation processes used in metropolitan areas. Involving local officials is a major element in statewide transportation planning and programming. The assessment tool provides suggestions for questionnaires, rating systems, and performance evaluations. The tool could also be used by other participants in the process to provide the perspective of local officials and/or RPOs.

Common features identified as important to the Non-Metropolitan Local Official Consultation process were:

- Adaptability over time and over different audiences.
- Buy-in from local officials and DOT staff by using tools/strategies targeted to a specific audience or a specific process.
- Credibility created by opportunities for meaningful input.
- Descriptive consultation process that is well-documented.
- Education of local officials and DOT staff to create motivation and capacity for participation by local officials.
- Feedback to enhance the consultation process.

*Southeast Local Consultation Workshop, June 16 and 17, 2005, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, National Association of Counties, National Association of Development Organizations, 2006, [http://bookstore.transportation.org/item\\_details.aspx?ID=369](http://bookstore.transportation.org/item_details.aspx?ID=369) (8)*

This report presents the results of a workshop held in Nashville, Tennessee, on June 16–17, 2005, for the 12 states in the southeastern United States. Participants included representatives of state transportation agencies and state representatives from both the National Association of Counties (NACo) and NADO.

## **Texas Transportation Institute**

*A Report on Rural Planning Organizations, Texas Transportation Institute and Texas Department of Transportation, May 2008 (9)*

This report was prepared by TTI for TxDOT in 2008. It provides an overview of legislation affecting RPOs in Texas and a description of existing RPOs in Texas. In addition, the report examines the need for regional transportation planning statewide and the views of existing MPOs. The report concludes with a recommendation that RPOs be established and staffed by existing regional COGs.

- Texas RPOs should prepare a rural transportation strategy or plan that identifies rural transportation deficiencies and propose strategies to address those needs over a 20- to 25-year planning period.
- Texas RPOs should prepare a long-range financial plan.
- Texas RPOs are not currently operating under any legislative-set guidelines and do not receive any planning funds from the state. They are self-financed and governed by local officials.
- Rulemaking is needed for RPOs in Texas to provide a formalized decision-making structure and coordination with MPOs in development of a regional mobility strategy for their area.
- RPOs should be a formal organization with oversight by a Transportation Policy Board.
- The RPOs and TxDOT should cooperatively determine their mutual responsibilities in carrying out the rural transportation planning process using Memorandum of Agreement.
- RPOs should individually develop a planning work program, which becomes the scope of work and authority to be reimbursed for approved transportation planning tasks and work products (similar to MPOs).
- The RPOs should be charged with at least three core duties:
  - Assist TxDOT in development of a long-range Rural Transportation Plan (RTP) and a prioritized short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) in cooperation with the MPOs.
  - Provide a forum for public participation in the rural transportation planning process.
  - Provide transportation-related information to local governments and other interested organizations and individuals.
- RPOs should prepare an Annual Performance and Expenditure Report to document accomplishments of their work program.
- TxDOT should establish a certification review process to assure that the rural transportation planning process is being carried out in accordance with state and federal requirements.

## **Previous Work on Rural Planning Organizations**

In 2008, prior to initiation of this research project, interviews with selected organizations were conducted by TxDOT with assistance from TTI. Questionnaires were distributed to MPOs, TxDOT district planning staff, and the Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC) for input. TARC distributed the questionnaire to each of its 24 Councils of Government and summarized the responses from 18 of those Regional Councils. TTI staff summarized the

responses from a total of 14 MPOs. Key findings from these interviews are provided below followed by a more detailed summary of responses.

Interviews with existing Texas RPOs indicated that they have not experienced significant difficulty due to the fact that TxDOT district boundaries are not co-terminus with COG boundaries. Planning would be simpler if coordination was required with only one district. Participants recognized that TxDOT districts were aligned to facilitate planning, design, construction, and maintenance of the transportation system and not just the planning elements. TxDOT district boundary realignments were expressed to be “preferable but not essential.” There was no consensus among MPOs in favor of using existing COG boundaries. TARC favored using COG boundaries. A summary of additional interview results are provided below.

### *MPO and RPOs – Key Findings from MPO Outreach*

Based on a review of the interviews with TARC and selected MPOs:

- MPOs generally have a mixed opinion on the role of RPOs. A slight majority expressed support for RPOs.
- The greatest concerns from MPOs toward RPOs are duplication of planning efforts, diluting the funding pool, and increasing coordination requirements.
- TARC is supportive of establishing RPOs, housing RPOs within COGs, and using COG boundaries for RPOs.
- A slight majority of MPOs support RPOs being housed within COGs.
- A majority of MPOs support using COG boundaries for RPO, but several support using TxDOT district boundaries.
- Most MPOs and TARC support a structure for RPOs similar to MPOs – having both a policy board and technical committee.

#### **1. What are your thoughts on Rural Planning Organizations (RPO)?**

TARC: RPOs will be ideally situated to facilitate consultation and cooperation among the rural regions of Texas and the Texas Department of Transportation, resulting in more efficient transportation planning.

MPOs: The majority of MPO comments were generally supportive of the RPO concept and the need for planning in the rural areas that are outside MPO boundaries. Several MPOs expressed concerns that current limited funding availability should not be further diluted through RPO funding. One MPO noted that formation of an RPO should be voluntary. Four MPOs were of the opinion that there is no need for RPOs and they would be duplication of existing planning organizations. One MPO suggested that if RPOs are formed, they should only be tasked with information dissemination and not planning activities.

#### **2. How do you see the RPOs working with the Councils of Governments (COG) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO)?**

TARC: Each of the COG regions will have a different approach to facilitate working relationships with the MPOs in their region in order to best meet the needs of the cities and

counties that comprise their member governments. This collaborative effort will allow for cost-sharing and the maximization of planning budgets.

MPOs: Comments in general indicate that there is a strong urban and rural interconnectivity with need for a regional focus. Consultation and coordination will be necessary to assure continuity across the region. Three MPOs continued to suggest that there is no need for RPOs and that existing MPOs, COGs, or TxDOT districts can perform the required rural transportation planning. One MPO recommended that the County Commissioner's Courts be designated as RPOs.

### **3. How do you envision the RPO membership?**

TARC: RPO membership will vary from region to region but is likely to mirror that of the COG. As a starting point, the membership of each RPO should be comprised of elected officials from the cities and counties within each planning region.

MPOs: Most recommendations included county, city, TxDOT, transit, and other rural stakeholders. Some thought that membership should mirror the COG or mirror the MPO. Although elected officials were mentioned as essential, it was suggested that flexibility be allowed to permit determination of membership at the local level.

### **4. What do you think about MPO-RPO membership crossover?**

TARC: Each region should determine the most workable level of collaboration between the MPO and RPO in an effort to complement each other. Permissive flexibility will allow each region to approach MPO-RPO membership crossover in an appropriate manner.

MPOs: The MPOs recognized the possibility of duplication of memberships, but generally did not consider this to be an issue. Response indicated that membership crossover of both rural and urban entities would serve to improve the lines of communication and assure that planning efforts for both the RPO and MPO would be achieved in a coordinated manner.

### **5. What do you think of RPO-MPO membership crossover?**

TARC: The importance of working collaboratively with the MPO is recognized, but the level of involvement will vary from region to region.

MPOs: Again, the MPOs recognized the possibility of duplication of memberships, but did not consider this to be an issue. Membership crossover would serve to improve the lines of communication and assure a consultative and coordinated planning effort.

### **6. Do you think the RPO should be housed within the COG?**

TARC: COGs already perform an important role in supporting the state's planning efforts for rural areas. This history ideally positions COGs to house the RPO program. RPOs would benefit from all of the services and economies of scale offered by COGs. Each region's local government representatives should maintain the flexibility to determine the host entity that best meet their needs.

MPOs: Half of those responding suggested that the RPO could be housed within the COG, but recommended that flexibility should permit that this be a local decision. Two MPOs indicated that the RPO should not be housed within the COG and one suggested that the RPO be housed at TxDOT with separate planning staff.

### **7. Do you think that the RPO should be housed separate from the COG?**

TARC: Housing the RPO separate from the COG would likely be inefficient and more costly. Each region should be allowed the flexibility to tailor the RPO to best meet its needs.

MPOs: Responses indicated that MPOs were evenly divided about whether the RPO should be housed separate from the COG. Some MPOs continued to suggest flexibility to permit this to be a local decision.

### **8. How do you feel the RPO should be structured?**

TARC: The structure of an RPO should vary depending upon the region. While the structure may vary, in order for the RPOs to provide a forum for rural transportation planning input, flexibility remains critical to overall success in the regions.

MPOs: Most often mentioned in the responses was that the structure should mirror that of the MPOs. They suggested a Policy Committee, a Technical Committee, and a Citizens Advisory Committee with day-to-day operations being conducted by an independent staff. It was again mentioned that this should be flexible to permit local decision based on local need. Other respondents again suggested either lack of need for the RPO or that the RPO be for information dissemination purposes only.

### **9. What geographical area should the RPO cover?**

TARC: RPOs should cover those geographic areas that lie outside the existing MPOs, but should have boundaries identical with the COG regions.

MPOs: Sixty percent of respondents suggested that the geographical area of the RPO should be the same as the COG areas. Twenty percent thought that the boundaries should agree with the TxDOT district boundaries and 20 percent recommended only that the RPOs include only rural areas.

### **10. How do you feel about RPOs doing transportation planning for their areas that will be shared with the Texas Transportation Commission?**

TARC: While the Transportation Commission is ultimately responsible for transportation planning and prioritization in Texas, RPOs would provide an excellent opportunity for formalized local and regional input into the state's planning and prioritization processes.

MPOs: Several MPOs indicated that transportation planning provided by RPOs would eliminate the void that currently exists in the provision of comprehensive transportation planning in the rural areas. They mentioned that RPO planning will result in a complete

picture to the Texas Transportation Commission to identify, quantify, and prioritize resources to address locally identified transportation priorities. Other MPOs continue to explain the lack of need for the RPO process or lack of understanding of what authority would be delegated to the RPOs.

**11. Does the fact that the COG boundaries and the TxDOT district boundaries are not identical present a RPO transportation planning concern? How could these concerns be addressed?**

TARC: Alignment of the boundaries is preferred, but this challenge can be overcome. COGs and TxDOT representatives have worked closely in the past and will continue to do so in the future despite non-alignment of boundaries.

MPOs: This question was not directed to the MPOs.

**12. TxDOT is looking to securing appropriate funding for RPOs. How much yearly funding do you feel it would take to administer and maintain an RPO?**

TARC: The amount of funding required for each RPO will vary depending on factors such as the scope of work expected, region size, population, and rural road miles. A formula-driven funding approach is advisable.

MPOs: This question was not directed to the MPOs.

*Overman, John and Linda K. Cherrington, Rapidly Urbanizing Areas, Federal Highway Administration, Washington, D.C., [www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/metro/rapurbov.htm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/metro/rapurbov.htm), 2006 (10)*

This report identifies examples of innovative transportation planning practices by states and MPOs that include rural counties and towns in their process. The focus is on rural communities near rapidly growing urbanized areas or small towns that are expected to grow to metropolitan levels by the 2010 census. Currently a gap exists between planning processes for rural communities and their urban neighbors in many places.

**National Academy of Public Administration**

*Rural Transportation Consultation Processes, National Academy of Public Administration, Washington D.C., May 2000. <http://www.napawash.org/publications.html> (11)*

*Rural Transportation Consultation Processes Supplement: State-by-State Summaries of the Processes Used and Local Views on Them, National Academy of Public Administration, Washington, D.C., April 2001, [www.napawash.org/pc\\_management\\_studies/Rural\\_Trans\\_State\\_April\\_2001.pdf](http://www.napawash.org/pc_management_studies/Rural_Trans_State_April_2001.pdf) (12)*

These two companion publications report on the ISTEA requirement for DOTs to establish a statewide transportation planning process and to consult with local officials and consider non-metropolitan needs. These companion studies provided a state-by-state summary of DOT consultation processes, the context for non-metropolitan consultation in each state, and views of

local officials. Fifty-two local officials from 38 states provided comments on the state summaries. The state-by-state summaries provide a companion document to *Rural Transportation Consultation Processes*.

### **The Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program FHWA/FTA<sup>4</sup>**

The Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program sponsored by FHWA and FTA provides a clearinghouse of resources and best practices. The website features peer exchanges on a variety of topics, including rural transportation planning. The peer exchanges related to rural transportation planning include:

- Charleston, West Virginia (June 1, 2007). Rural Transportation Planning in West Virginia. The FHWA West Virginia Division office, the West Virginia Department of Highways, and the Rahall Transportation Institute co-hosted a one-day workshop focused on rural transportation planning. The event served as the kick-off meeting for the update to West Virginia's Statewide Transportation Plan. More than 70 conference participants attended the session, including expert speakers and panelists from neighboring states.
- Dubuque, Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, Ames, Centerville, and Burlington, Iowa (August 21–25, 2006). This peer exchange provided metropolitan and rural planning agencies from Indiana and New Hampshire, as well as the Indiana Department of Transportation, a comprehensive look at the rural/regional transportation planning process in Iowa, specifically examining the role of Regional Planning Agencies in the planning process of Iowa.
- Fort Smith, Arkansas (April 21–23, 2004). Best Practices for Small and Medium Sized Metropolitan Planning Organizations. The purpose of the Peer Exchange was to highlight issues facing small and medium-sized MPOs and to facilitate information sharing among the agencies.
- Hagerstown, Maryland (September 24–25, 2003). Solution to Rural Issues Through Partnerships: A Community-Centered Approach Transportation Solutions for Rural Communities. This peer roundtable session was part of a two-day conference in which the participants developed a strategic plan to coordinate rural development resources within the region.
- Indianapolis, Indiana (August 1, 2003). Institutions, Processes, and Practices for Transportation Planning in Rural Areas. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) hosted representatives from South Dakota, Iowa, and Kentucky to discuss institutions, processes, and practices for transportation planning in rural areas.
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (May 19, 2003). Rural Public Transportation's Role in the Planning Process. The workshop provided a forum to explore the complex challenges posed in the planning and operation of a community transit system, and the methods used by some state departments of transportation and other agencies with transportation needs.

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<sup>4</sup> The Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program FHWA/FTA website <http://www.planning.dot.gov/>

## Transportation Research Board

*Burkhardt, Jon E., James L. Hedrick and Adam T. McGavock, TCRP Report 34: Assessment of the Economic Impacts of Rural Public Transportation, Transportation Research Board, National Research Council, for the Federal Transit Administration, Washington D.C., 1998 (13)*

The report identifies economic impacts of rural public transportation in the United States on both a local and a national level and develops and presents a practical economic impact methodology to enable rural transportation providers, planners, and community decision makers to plan, design, and evaluate rural public transportation to maximize economic benefit.

*Cambridge Systematics, Inc., NCHRP 8-36(A) – Task 32: Tools, Techniques, and Methods for Rural Transportation Planning, Final Report, prepared for the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), Oakland, California, January 2004, [www.transportation.org/sites/planning/docs/nchrp32.pdf](http://www.transportation.org/sites/planning/docs/nchrp32.pdf) (14)*

The research report presents planning tools and techniques currently used and available to support the local secondary and collector transportation system in rural areas. Within the context of tools supporting the secondary transportation system, objectives addressed in this research include:

- Identify the tools and methods used to support rural transportation planning undertaken by state DOTs and non-metropolitan regional agencies (regions).
- Inventory rural transportation planning issues and the tools and methods used by state and regional agencies to resolve their issues.
- Assess the decision-making process used by these agencies to design, approve, implement, and deploy a particular analysis tool or method.
- Prepare case studies that present the best practices associated with the successful implementation of rural tools and methods.
- Recommend areas for future research in the development and deployment of rural oriented analysis tools.

*ICF Consulting, Evaluating State DOT Rural Planning Practices, prepared as part of NCHRP Project 08-36, National Cooperative Highway Research Program, Transportation Research Board, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, Washington, D.C., December 2003, [www.transportation.org/sites/planning/docs/nchrp35.doc](http://www.transportation.org/sites/planning/docs/nchrp35.doc) (15)*

This report provides a description of how transportation planning and programming is performed in rural areas, focusing in particular on the role of state DOTs and RPOs. The discussion is organized around five topic areas:

- State and RPO roles in rural transportation planning.
- Public participation in rural areas.
- Serving the transit dependent in rural areas.
- Linking transportation and land use in rural areas.
- Linking transportation and economic development in rural areas.

The report also highlights some best practices in state DOT rural planning and programming, and identifies topic areas that are particularly challenging and warrant improvement.

## **CHAPTER 3: STATE OF THE PRACTICE INSTITUTIONAL AND REGULATORY REVIEW**

Chapter 3 reports on the state of the practice and regulatory review of RPO from across the United States. This review involved online desktop research of state-of-the-practice at RPOs, a search and review of legislation proposed in the 80<sup>th</sup> and 81<sup>st</sup> Texas Legislature, and the 111<sup>th</sup> United States Congress.

During this research project, TxDOT proposed and subsequently adopted new transportation planning rules. These rules were drafted in 2009, following the 81<sup>st</sup> legislative session. The new rules defined the RPO's role in the transportation planning and programming process (Title 43 TAC, Chapter 16) and were adopted on August 26, 2010, with an effective date of January 1, 2011.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

Listed below are selected key findings from the state-of-the-practice and regulatory review:

- Despite several efforts in the 80<sup>th</sup> and 81<sup>st</sup> Texas Legislatures, no legislation was passed that enabled RPOs in Texas.
- TxDOT used the rulemaking process following the 81<sup>st</sup> Texas Legislature to enact new rules (Title 43 TAC, Chapter 16) that define RPOs and their role in the transportation planning and programming process.
- Proposed federal legislation recognizes RPO's existence and directs states to coordinate with existing RPOs and local officials in statewide transportation planning. The proposed legislation also increases the population threshold for MPOs from 50,000 to 100,000.
- Many states and state DOTs fund RPOs to conduct rural transportation planning.
- States use a variety of processes to consult with rural and local officials, and RPOs are commonly used to fill this role.
- Most RPOs are organized and operate like MPOs.
- Texas Association of Regional Councils favors RPO formation and housing RPOs in COGs.
- The seven RPOs in Texas are voluntary organizations and use both TxDOT district and COG boundaries.

### **LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS**

The research team reviewed current and proposed legislation at the state and national level.

#### **National Legislation**

Under the current federal legislation, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, states are required to consult with non-metropolitan local officials in transportation planning and programming. SAFETEA-LU planning rules require that transportation projects, outside of metropolitan planning areas, undertaken on the National Highway System with Title 23 funds, and under the Bridge and Interstate Highway Maintenance

Programs, should be selected by the state in consultation with the affected local officials. These consultation practices vary widely among state DOTs.

The transportation planning definition of rural is any area located outside of designated metropolitan areas and includes incorporated areas that are outside of metropolitan area planning boundaries.

RPOs are voluntary associations of local governments that function as decision making forums for rural transportation planning. RPOs advise each state's DOT on rural transportation policies. According to NADO, approximately 29 states have enabling legislation and organizations similar to RPOs that conduct transportation planning in the non-MPO areas. Other states may have established RPOs but not enabling legislation. In total, there are approximately 273 RPOs in 29 states. The NADO directory does not list Texas' seven RPOs.

In general, most RPOs assist state DOTs in the development and prioritization of short- and long-range transportation plans, provide a forum for rural transportation interests, and establish a link to other regional transportation planning organizations and providers. However, there is considerable variance among the states with regard to jurisdictional structures and RPO functions. The most important RPO functions relate to:

- Establishing a rural transportation planning advisory committee to function as the policy-making body of the RPO.
- Developing and prioritizing short- and long-range regional transportation plans in cooperation with state DOTs.
- Providing a forum for public participation in the transportation planning process.
- Assisting DOTs in developing and prioritizing projects for inclusion in a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).
- Preparing planning work programs to identify specific tasks for RPOs to perform and provide budgets that determine the activities of the RPO.

The Obama Administration is advocating a continuing resolution for the Transportation bill. Congress, in contrast, led by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and chaired by Chairman Oberstar, is proposing a new transportation bill: The Surface Transportation Authorization Act of 2009 (see <http://transportation.house.gov/>).

This proposed bill is NOT a reauthorization. The bill proposes changes for new MPOs, specifically to increase the population threshold from 50,000 to 100,000. Existing MPOs would remain.

The bill also recognizes that RPOs currently exists and directs states to coordinate with existing RPOs and local officials in the statewide transportation planning process. The bill would enable the creation of new RPOs and removes the provision added in TEA 21(P.L. 105-178) prohibiting DOT from reviewing the rural consultation process. The bill strengthens the role of rural agencies in the statewide planning process.

The proposed House Bill also:

- Requires U.S. DOT to set transportation planning performance targets for states.

- Sets minimum requirements for states' performance targets.
- Requires states to develop performance targets.
- Requires annual reporting documenting the degree to which states are meeting performance targets.
- Links performance management to statewide planning funds.

## **Texas Legislation**

The past two biennial legislative sessions have attempted to establish RPOs, but neither regular session produced RPO legislation. A special session of the 81<sup>st</sup> Legislature passed a bill that referenced rural planning organizations but it did not provide any definitions or organizational guidance. A brief summary of the two previous legislative sessions are provided below.

### *The 80<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature*

During the 80<sup>th</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, 2007, H.B. 3783/S.B. 1929 was introduced, which among other things, considered language creating RPOs in state statute. Under proposed Section 201.6013, Transportation Code, RPOs were permitted to be created to cover the area within the boundaries of a COG and outside the boundaries of an MPO if agreed to by local governments that represent at least 75 percent of the affected population. RPOs would be tasked with preparing and periodically updating a long-range transportation plan for its service area and making recommendations to the Texas Transportation Commission concerning the selection of transportation projects or programs. The commission would have been authorized to delegate the selection of projects to an RPO, but was required to concur with the selections of the RPO before it was effective. Funding for the operation of RPOs was to be made through funds available in the State Highway Fund. The committee substitute for S.B. 1929 as voted out of the Senate Committee did not include any of the above language for the creation of RPOs.<sup>5</sup>

### *The 81<sup>st</sup> Texas Legislature (Regular Session)*

There were several bills introduced in both the house and senate that would have affected the establishment of RPOs in Texas. None of the proposed legislation was passed. These proposed bills included the following:

#### **H.B. 2589 (Pickett)/S.B. 1417 (Shapiro)**

This proposed bill provided for the establishment of rural planning organizations based on existing COG boundaries. The bill directed TxDOT to create RPOs through the use of existing resources, in cooperation with councils of governments, municipal and county governments, and other local transportation entities. Under this proposed bill, RPOs would establish transportation priorities, approve transportation projects, select projects for inclusion in the statewide transportation improvement program, and provide input to TxDOT on projects involving the connectivity of the state highway system. TxDOT would have been required to provide funds and personnel to assist RPOs.

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<sup>5</sup> Based on testimony by TxDOT Executive Director, Amadeo Saenz on February 6, 2008.

### **H.B. 300 (Heger)/S.B. 1019 (Islett)**

This proposed legislation was similar to the Pickett/Shapiro bill and would have authorized RPOs to make recommendations to Texas Transportation Commission concerning the selection of transportation projects, systems, or programs to be undertaken in the boundaries of the rural planning organization.

#### *The 81<sup>st</sup> Texas Legislature (Special Session)*

When the legislature failed to enact legislation to continue several state agencies, including TxDOT, a special session was convened. In the 81<sup>st</sup> Special Session, House and Senate companion bills proposed enabling legislation for RPOs, but both bills failed. The special session adjourned with no action on rural transportation planning.

### **H.B. 14 (Pickett) & S.B. 14 (Shapiro)**

Section 210.623 of the Pickett/Shapiro bill was similar to the previous regular session bill and mentions the role of RPOs to make recommendations to Texas Transportation Commission on selection of projects.

## **TXDOT TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING RULES**

Prior to the 81<sup>st</sup> Legislature Regular Session in 2009, the Sunset Advisory Commission made several recommendations for legislation to address transportation planning and programming. Although none of the transportation planning and programming legislation was passed during the regular or special session, key concepts from the Conference Committee Report for H.B. 300 did provide a basis for revising the existing transportation planning and programming rules to recognize RPOs.

Later in 2009, following the 81<sup>st</sup> legislative session, the Texas Transportation Commission created a Rulemaking Advisory Committee to prepare draft rules for transportation planning and programming. This rulemaking process would include provisions for RPOs that had been unsuccessful in the previous legislative sessions. The Rulemaking Advisory Committee consisted of representatives from MPOs, local governments, COGs, transit organizations, tolling authorities, and the FHWA. The new rules defined the RPO's role in the transportation planning and programming process (Title 43 TAC, Chapter 16). These new rules were adopted on August 26, 2010, with an effective date of January 1, 2011.

Title 43 of Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Chapter 16, *Planning and Development of Transportation Projects*, is a new chapter that establishes a comprehensive approach to transportation planning, programming, funding, and performance reporting. The new subchapters include:

- New Subchapter A, General Provisions, §§16.1 - 16.4;
- New Subchapter B, Transportation Planning, §§16.51 - 16.56;
- New Subchapter C, Transportation Programs, §§16.101 - 16.105;
- New Subchapter D, Transportation Funding, §§16.151 - 16.160; and
- New Subchapter E, Project and Performance Reporting, §§16.201 - 16.205

Chapter 16, Section 16.2(a) (23) defines rural planning organization (RPO) as:

“A voluntary organization created and governed by local elected officials with responsibility for transportation decisions at the local level, including an organization established by a council of governments or regional planning commission designated by the governor pursuant to Local Government Code, Chapter 391, to address rural transportation priorities and planning and provide recommendations to the department for areas of the state not included in the boundaries of a metropolitan planning organization.”

Chapter 16, Section 16.2(a) (24) defines a rural transportation improvement program (RTIP) as:

“A staged, multiyear, intermodal program of transportation projects which is developed by the department, in consultation with local officials, for areas of the state outside of the metropolitan planning area boundaries. The rural TIP includes a financially constrained plan that demonstrates how the program can be implemented.”

These new rules apply to MPOs, federally funded transit agencies, and RPOs. In general, the rules provide minimum standards for metropolitan and rural transportation planning and programming. The new rules do not prescribe conditions for the boundaries or organization of an RPO.

The following bullets provide a summary of how RPOs fit into the transportation planning and programming process based on the new rules.

- An RPO may make recommendations to the department regarding projects and priorities for areas within its boundaries to accommodate preparation of the statewide long-range transportation plan (SLRTP), STIP, and Unified Transportation Program (UTP).
- TxDOT will develop TIPs for all areas of the state outside of metropolitan planning areas, containing a prioritized list of projects which have been approved for development in the near term. These RTIPs will be developed in cooperation with RPOs and projects will be selected in accordance with federal regulations and the requirements of this subchapter.
- RTIP projects are rolled into the STIP and UTP. All projects are approved by the department and projects in the in the TIP and RTIP must be consistent with the state LRTP.
- A rural public involvement process provides that each district will coordinate with the applicable RPO, if any, to develop and implement a public involvement process covering the development of a rural TIP that, at a minimum, consists of the following: publication,

in a newspaper with general TxDOT circulation in each county within the district, of a notice informing the public of the availability of the proposed rural TIP and of a 10-day public comment period.

- (ii) a request, in the published notice, for public comments concerning the proposed rural TIP, to be submitted in writing to the district.
- (iii) notification, in the published notice, that a public hearing will be held in order to receive comments on the initial adoption, along with a public comment period of at least 10 days subsequent to the hearing. The notice of public hearing will be published a minimum of 10 days prior to the hearing.

The new rules do not provide funding for RPOs but allow for RPO flexibility by providing for minimum standards for rural transportation planning and programming. The rules should provide for greater opportunities for rural stakeholders to participate in rural transportation planning decisions through the establishment of these minimum standards.

## **STATE PRACTICES**

The literature review identified numerous sources that reported on state RPO practices. The most recent and comprehensive summary of state practices were reported by NADO in a nationwide scan conducted in 2005 and again in 2009 (2). The NADO scans identified the increasing number of RPOs across the country:

“In 1998, the NADO Research Foundation identified 17 state highway agencies with formal contracts or funding agreements with regional development organizations for RPO-type assistance. By December 2005, the number had grown to a minimum of 25 states, with several others in various stages of discussions about forming new partnerships or pilots (NADO 2009).”

Provided below are a selection of practices from these scans.

### **Arizona**

Rural planning in Arizona began with Transportation Planning Division of the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) working with state’s COGs, which includes Arizona’s four rural COGs. ADOT worked with the COGs to prepare a resolution and mutually agreed upon guidelines to establish its rural consultation process. Each of the rural regions (COGs) receives between \$80,000 and \$125,000 each year, along with a 20 percent local match, to carry out the work program.

Each COG in Arizona employs one transportation planning director who serves as a liaison between ADOT and local jurisdictions in the COG region. The consultation process also included the Rural Transportation Advocacy Council (RTAC), a consortium of local governments, COGs, and MPOs representing the transportation concerns of rural Arizona that include the 13 counties outside of the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas. RTAC members contribute annual dues to support their legislative priorities through a full-time Rural Transportation Liaison.

ADOT and RTAC worked together to draft a resolution for non-metropolitan consultation, as well as a set of *Consultation Elements* that would guide the process in the areas of planning and programming transportation improvement projects. In order to build on existing strengths and relationships between ADOT and COGs the management of the rural consultation process was assigned to the COGs. These *Consultation Elements* are listed below:

- Long-range plan consultation meetings will be held within each rural county at key decision points during plan development and updates. Meetings for two or more counties may be combined if mutually agreeable.
- COG and ADOT staff will cooperatively agree on the timing of meetings to coincide with key decision points during the planning process.
- Meetings will be conducted jointly by COG and ADOT staff in a round-table format, and should include the involvement of State Transportation Board member representing the district and the district engineer(s), as well as a member of the ADOT Transportation Planning Division.
- Each COG will facilitate county meetings within its region by establishing the meeting location and invitation list, coordinating with the State Transportation Board member representing the district and ADOT staff members, documenting input from local elected officials, and transmitting this input to ADOT.
- ADOT will provide feedback to the region relative to all documented input received from the meetings.
- ADOT will share with local elected officials information from planning studies that are relevant to the long-range plan.

A second set of elements was applied to consultation sessions conducted during the programming process.

- Consultation meetings for the Five-Year Transportation Facilities Construction Program will be held annually within each rural county. Meetings for two or more counties may be combined if mutually agreeable.
- Meetings will be held in the fall of each year to allow for input at a meaningful point during the development of the Five-Year Transportation Facilities Construction Program.
- Meetings will be conducted jointly by COG and ADOT staff in a round-table format and should include the involvement of State Transportation Board member representing the district and the district engineer(s), as well as a member of the ADOT Transportation Planning Division.
- Each COG will facilitate county meetings within its region by establishing the meeting location and invitation list, coordinating with the State Transportation Board member representing the district and ADOT staff members, documenting input from local elected officials, and transmitting this input to ADOT.
- ADOT will provide feedback to the region relative to all documented input received.

Each region collects and analyzes transportation data for state and local agencies, reviews Section 5311 rural transit applications for consistency with the regional plan, and coordinates the application and prioritization process for transportation enhancement projects and the Section 5310 rural transit program for the elderly and disabled.

## *Northern Arizona COG (NACOG)*

NACOG<sup>6</sup> is an example of a rural COG involved in transportation planning and programming. NACOG coordinates highway planning as a liaison between the ADOT and local governments. Their major planning activities include:

- Providing information to ADOT on roadway mileage under local jurisdiction in the region.
- Ensuring that local governments submit building permit data for developing population estimates.
- Representing the region in establishing population estimates and projections.
- Working with local jurisdictions to identify state and federal funding sources for highway construction projects and to add routes added to the appropriate Federal Aid System.
- Prioritizing project requests in the region for state and federally funded programs.
- Monitoring progress of project development.
- Participating on advisory committees for small area transportation studies.
- Attending meetings of area transportation planning organizations.
- Representing the Region at meetings of ADOT's Priority Planning Committee and the State Transportation Board.
- Maintaining two advisory committees for transportation issues: the Transportation Policy Advisory Committee (elected officials) and the Technical Subcommittee (city, town, and county engineers).

## **California**

California has a well-defined practice for regional transportation planning. Caltrans (California DOT) uses a network of Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs) that are similar in structure and responsibility to MPOs. There are 44 RTPAs and 18 are also MPOs. The RTPAs are typically staffed and housed within a COG.<sup>7</sup> Each RTPA prepares a regional transportation plan and transportation improvement program.

For planning and project development, the RTPAs involve local elected and appointed officials. Caltrans provides RTPAs between \$77,000 and \$220,000 in funding each year using federal and state planning funds based on a funding formula and the overall work program of each RTPA. Each RTPA is required to:

- Prepare an annual work program.
- Develop a regional transportation plan.
- Select projects for implementation.

The RTPA plans conform to federal transportation planning guidance and are focused on a coordinated and balanced regional multimodal transportation system with an emphasis on incorporating public transportation services. Specifics on the regional planning process are available through the Caltrans website (<http://www.dot.ca.gov/perf/>), which includes:

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<sup>6</sup> NACOG Planning website <http://www.nacog.org/planning/default.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> A map of RTPA is available at [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/orip/blueprint/index\\_files/RTPAs\\_map.pdf](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/orip/blueprint/index_files/RTPAs_map.pdf)

- Performance Measures for Rural Transportation Systems Guidebook.
- Performance Measures for Rural Transportation Systems Technical Supplement.
- Regional Transportation Planning Agency Overall Work Program.

## **Iowa**

Rural transportation planning in Iowa has a long history. A complete record of Iowa's rural transportation planning effort is available at:

[http://www.ruraltransportation.org/pages/page.asp?page\\_id=61034](http://www.ruraltransportation.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=61034).

As a result of ISTEA, the Iowa Transportation Commission designated the 16 regional transit-planning regions as the initial basis for organization. The Commission provided local officials representing the cities and counties the opportunity to choose from three options: 1) remain in their current transit planning region; 2) join with another region; or 3) join with other counties to form a new regional planning affiliation (RPA). The MPOs and Traffic Management Areas (TMAs) were not included in the regions, but all planning agencies were encouraged to cooperate in planning efforts and to coordinate programming. Ultimately, 18 RPAs were formed from this decision.

The Iowa RPAs are organized similar to MPOs with each having both technical and policy committees with various ad hoc committees.<sup>8</sup> Each RPA has a planning staff that assists the committees, guides public input, and oversees the planning process for the region. Iowa DOT provides funding to each RPA, utilizing FHWA Surface Transportation Program (STP) Funds and FTA Sections 5313 and 5311 funds, with the local match provided by the RPA. Funding amounts, including the local match, range from \$18,900 to \$101,200, depending upon the discretion of the various RPA Committee members and the goals of each RPA.

Each RPA maintains a current and approved Transportation Planning Work Program (TPWP) that includes tasks such as:

- Developing the long-range transportation plan.
- TIP.
- Public involvement procedures.

### *Northland Regional Transportation Authority (INRTA)*

The Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority provides a good example of RPOs in Iowa. INRTA encompasses the counties of Bremer, Butler, Grundy, Chickasaw, Buchanan and the non-MPO portion of Black Hawk County.

- The INRTA 2000 population was 213,199.
- INRTA's counties have a relatively high population of persons over age 65.
- The median household income in the six-county region ranges from \$35,883 in Butler County to \$40,826 in Bremer County.

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<sup>8</sup> The Iowa RPO Guide is available at <http://66.132.139.69/uploads/iowarpo.pdf>.

- Public transit in the INRTA's six county region is provided by the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission (RTC), which is a division of the Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments. The RTC operates ADA accessible buses for Head Start students, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, and the general public.

INRTA by-laws provide for the chief-elected official of each jurisdiction (or their designee) to be voting members and appointed representatives on the Technical Committee. The voting membership of the INRTA includes a member of the Board of Supervisors or other elected official designee, for Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy Counties, a mayor or council member or other elected official designee from two cities in each county as determined by a convention of cities in that county and in lieu of a convention, two cities are selected by the County Board of Supervisors.

To ensure representation for the region's small urban areas, one representative from Bremer County represents the City of Waverly and one representative from Buchanan County represents the City of Independence. Non-voting, ex officio members include a representative from INRCOG, the Iowa DOT, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration.

The INRTA has a standing Technical Committee and a standing Enhancement Committee. Both Committees consist of engineering, public works and, in the case of the Enhancement Committee, county conservation staff as well as other cultural representatives. The Director of the Regional Transit Commission is also a member of the Technical Committee.

### *Roles and Responsibilities*

Each year the INRTA and the Iowa DOT enter into a planning agreement, which identifies available funding as well as the roles and responsibilities of each organization. The INRTA meets once a month with some exceptions. Planning activities for the INRTA are provided via a combination of regional STP and FTA funds. The local match is provided from membership dues paid to INRCOG. All funding is identified in the Transportation Planning Work Program and are reimbursed by the Iowa DOT on a quarterly basis.

The Unified Planning Work Program is prepared and approved by the INRTA each year. The initial document is approved in March for submittal and review by the Iowa DOT. Once comments are received, a final UPWP is prepared and approved in June of each year. The UPWP identifies funding sources and breaks the program down by specific tasks to be completed in that fiscal year. Development of the UPWP is performed by staff with assistance from the Technical Committee and Policy Board. All members are asked to identify potential work activities that they would like included in a specific program. Work activities cover a broad range of issues, from the day to day administration of the INRTA to involvement in larger scale traffic studies.

The TIP is developed by the INRTA Transportation Policy Board and INRCOG staff through consultation with the public after participating jurisdictions submitted individual projects. Upon receipt of candidate projects from participating jurisdictions, the projects are reviewed with the Technical Committee who makes programming recommendations to the Policy Board.

Priorities are developed according to federal aid eligibility, existing infrastructure needs, system continuity, and its compatibility with the goals set forth in the long-range plan and as established in the TIP. Issues such as safety, condition of pavement, and volume of traffic are considered, though no formal scoring process is used. Overall, projects are prioritized on a regional basis. The INRTA makes a concerted effort to not sub allocate funds on a county by county basis.

INRCOG staff and the Iowa DOT communicate regularly. For example, Iowa DOT issues quarterly STP and Enhancement reports. Each INRTA meeting agenda includes a project status report. This gives those in attendance the opportunity to provide updates on projects that are in the program, which enables staff to identify projects that may need to be moved in the program. Having the RTC housed in the same office is a benefit in terms of programming transit projects. The MPO and DOT assist in technical support in our transportation planning activities.

## **North Carolina**

North Carolina Department of Transportation changed its consultation processes in response to state laws passed in 2000<sup>9</sup> and established RPOs to work cooperatively with the NCDOT to plan and to advise the department on rural transportation policy. There are 20 RPOs that work within existing regional development organizations (COGs). The law requires RPOs to serve contiguous areas of 3–15 counties and must have a combined minimum population of 50,000. MPOs cannot be a member of RPOs, and not all of the municipalities in an RPO region are required to join, but each of the counties must be a member.<sup>10</sup> Funding for RPOs ranges between \$80,000 and \$100,000 each. The state RPO website is <http://www.nctransportationanswers.org/>.

### *Kerr-Tarr Regional Council of Government*

The Kerr-Tar RPO provides one example of RPOs in North Carolina. The Kerr-Tar COG coordinates regional transportation planning for the Region K area of North Carolina. The Kerr-Tar RPO is one of 20 RPOs in the state that collaborate with NCDOT.

The RPO includes the counties of Person, Vance, and Warren, parts of Franklin and Granville Counties, the municipalities of Butner, Henderson, Kittrell, Louisburg, Macon, Middlesburg, Norlina, Oxford, Stem, Stovall, and Warrenton, regional transportation authorities and the North Carolina (N.C.) Department of Transportation (NCDOT). Kerr-Tar RPO's four primary functions are to:

- Develop a transportation plan in cooperation with the area MPO and the N.C. Department of Transportation (see <http://www.kerrtarcog.org/rpo/regionalplan.php>).
- Provide a forum for public participation in the rural transportation planning process.
- Develop and prioritize suggestions for transportation projects to be included in the state STIP.
- Provide transportation-related information to local governments and other interested organizations and persons.

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<sup>9</sup> Senate Bill 1195. Covered under Article 17 General Statute 136-210 through 213.

<sup>10</sup> The North Carolina RPO by-laws are available at:

[http://www.kerrtarcog.org/rpo/documents/NCARPO\\_Bylaws\\_Jan05.pdf](http://www.kerrtarcog.org/rpo/documents/NCARPO_Bylaws_Jan05.pdf).

The Kerr-Tar Council of Governments is the lead planning agency for the RPO and the primary local recipient of planning funds received from NCDOT for the RPO. The RPO roles and responsibilities include:

- The Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC), which provides policy direction for the RPO's regional transportation planning process. This committee comprises local elected officials and NCDOT Board of Transportation members.
- The Rural Transportation Coordinating Committee (RTCC), which provides technical expertise for the RPO's regional transportation planning process. This committee is comprised of technical staff such as city and county managers, economic development professionals, planners, and transit operators who deal with transportation issues and citizens' concerns on a daily basis.
- N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) makes policy decisions and holds implementation authority for construction, improvement, and maintenance of streets and highways.

## **CHAPTER 4: OUTREACH TO TXDOT DISTRICTS AND DIVISIONS**

Chapter 4 documents the collection of input from TxDOT districts and COGs in 2010 in order to:

- Develop a better understanding of rural planning processes and needs.
- Assess attitudes, institutional relationships, cooperation, and coordination between agencies.
- Consider and evaluate the jurisdictional boundaries relative to current COGs, TxDOT districts, and TxDOT regions.
- Gather input as to how rural planning organizations might work.

### **USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH**

Any human subject research conducted by Texas A&M University (TAMU) faculty, staff, or students must be reviewed and approved prior to being initiated. This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University and was determined to be exempt. All of the researchers involved in this project have completed human subjects training. This study is confidential, and comments made during interviews will not be directly attributable to a respondent. The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely and only John Overman of the Texas Transportation Institute will have access to the records.

Figure 11 and Appendix A provides the questionnaire used to collect input from RPO stakeholders. Appendix B provides the summary of responses from the questionnaires and interviews.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

Listed below are selected key findings from the 2010 outreach:

- A majority of districts and COGs questioned were supportive of establishing RPOs in their region. Only a couple of respondents in sparsely populated areas of Texas felt that RPOs would not provide significant added value over the current rural planning process. There was agreement that coordination and cooperation between TxDOT and RPOs is needed in order for RPOs to work effectively.
- Responses from TxDOT and COGs indicate that membership in an RPO should be similar to the structure of MPO policy boards and include local elected officials (county judges/commissioners and city council members) or their designated appointees, area public transportation directors, and may include representatives from COGs, MPOs, and RMAs. RPOs should also include other transportation stakeholders as identified for each area.
- Most respondents believe that COGs provide a logical place for RPOs since they already have the regional structure and relationships in place. However, there were some different ideas on whether TxDOT districts or COG areas should serve as the geographic boundary for an RPO. Because districts do not mirror COG areas alignment with COG

boundaries, it would require some districts to work with multiple RPOs or some RPOs to work with multiple districts. There is an overall consensus that TxDOT and COGs should remain flexible and maintain the ability to tailor RPO areas in the manner that works best for each area of the state.

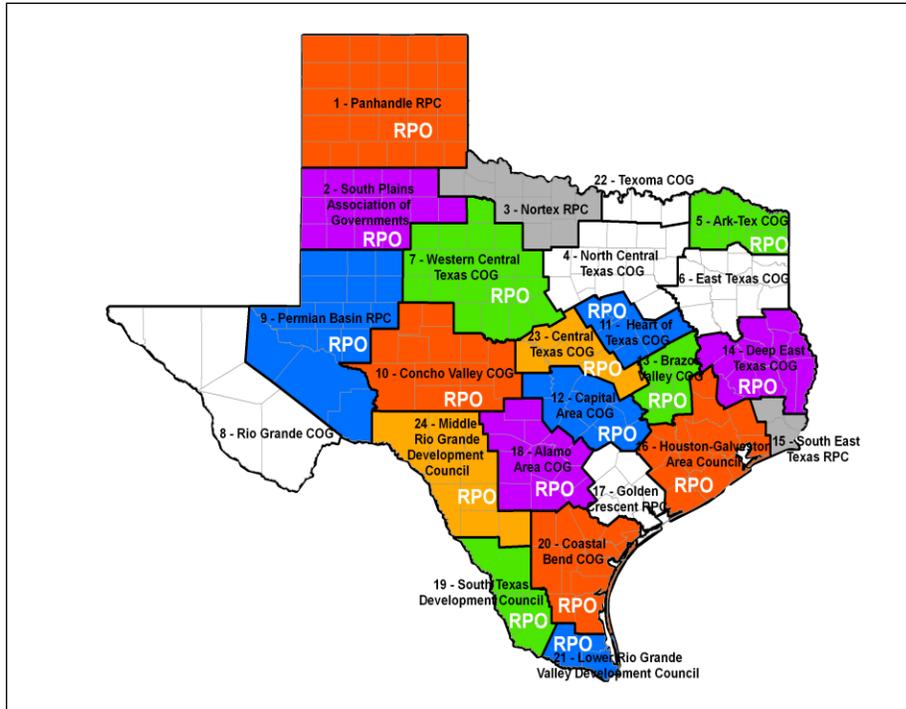
- Districts and COGs both agree that a permanent source of funding is required to support RPO efforts. Funding may come from state, federal, and/or local sources, but should be separate from funding provided for MPOs. The amount of funding needed ranged from \$10,000 to \$75,000 per year but would depend on the size, growth rate, and transportation planning needs of each area. Most RPOs would not need full time staff so the potential for some cost sharing among RPOs exists. There is potential for sharing planners and staff between RPOs and COGS or MPO as a practical alternative to full-time RPO staff.
- Long-range rural transportation plans would be beneficial and serve to provide direction and encourage an organized process. Funding would be needed to develop and update long-range rural plans. The content of long-range plans should be oriented to the goals and objectives of each RPO. Although RPOs may want to identify and prioritize specific projects in the long-range plans, RPOs would benefit from setting goals, objectives, strategies, and alternatives to address rural transportation needs. Flexibility is needed regard to content and timing of long-range plans and whether the plans are project- or policy-based.
- Overall, flexibility is the key concept to be considered when developing legislation, regulatory guidance, and a framework for the structure, responsibilities, and authority of RPOs. Significant differences exist between rural areas across the state and no “one-size” will “fit all.”

## **OVERVIEW OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TXDOT DISTRICTS, COGS, AND RPOS**

There are 25 TxDOT districts, two of which have established RPOs. These include the Cross Plains Rural Transportation Council and the Rolling Plains Organization for Rural Transportation, both function as RPOs but have boundaries aligned with TxDOT’s Wichita Falls and Childress District boundaries, respectively.

There are currently 16 COGs that have passed resolutions recognizing their COG as the rural planning entity for their region, or supporting the creation of an RPO for their region. Figure 10 shows these COGs shaded in color.

No RPO (established or loosely organized) operates as the decision-making body for rural transportation planning. Although existing RPOs coordinate and cooperate with TxDOT district, the responsibility and authority for planning and programming still lies solely with TxDOT districts.



**Figure 9. COGs with RPO Resolutions.**

**Methodology**

A single series of questions was prepared to gather information and encourage discussion on RPOs from TxDOT Districts and Councils of Governments. Questions were worded such that the desired information could be gathered for areas with an existing RPO or areas without an RPO. Figure 11 provides the questions used in this process.

TxDOT District Directors of Transportation Planning and Development (TPDs) and executive directors of COGs were contacted either by phone, email, or in person and asked to provide information on rural planning and RPOs relative to their organization and specific area of the state. In some areas with an existing RPO, responses were received from RPO members such as county judges. Responses were received from 17 TxDOT districts and 12 COGs.

1. How is rural transportation planning conducted in your area? What agencies/entities do you coordinate with?
2. Do you have a formalized organization structure? If so, have you adopted by-laws, how is it funded, who performs administrative functions?
3. What year was your organization established? What prompted you to organize?
4. What are the goals/objectives/strategies of the organization?
5. What is the membership make-up of the organization?
6. How do you perceive RPOs coordinating with COGs, MPOs, or RMAs?
7. How are projects developed/prioritized?
8. What are your thoughts on Rural Planning Organizations (RPO)?
9. How should RPO membership be structured?
10. What geographical area should RPOs cover? Should it coincide with TxDOT districts or COG areas?
11. How should RPOs be funded? What would you estimate the level of funding needed for an effective rural planning organization? (just a range/year)
12. Does your group cooperate/communicate with TxDOT? Is this cooperation/communication at the District level or does it include Divisions or Administration?
13. Does your group cooperate/communicate with the area's MPO?
14. How would your group fit into rural planning if an RPO was established that covered your area?

**Figure 10. Questionnaire.**

Results of the outreach are summarized below. Responses are organized by question and highlight responses from TxDOT districts and COGs separately. For some questions, responses are further broken down by districts and COGs according to whether they currently have a functioning RPO. Participants generally answered only those questions that applied to their area. Appendix C provides more detailed response information for districts and COGs.

## **Outreach Summary**

*How is rural planning conducted in your area?*

### **TxDOT Districts without RPOs**

Each TxDOT district has a rural State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) consultation and public involvement process. In most districts this process consists of issuing a district-wide call for projects to county and local elected officials, chambers of commerce, other interested groups or agencies, and the public on an annual or biennial basis. In many districts, district engineers (DEs), TPDs, or area engineers meet with the county judges or local officials to identify new projects and to obtain input on previously programmed projects. Input is also solicited from district maintenance supervisors.

Identified projects are then reviewed and prioritized by the DEs, TPDs, and/or other district staff. Priorities are generally made on the basis of pavement condition, bridge condition, volume, safety, connectivity, and available funding. The majority of rural areas within the districts indicated they rarely experience a need for new/added capacity projects. Projects are then presented at a series of public hearings to obtain input relative to the project selection and prioritization. Final project selection is made by TxDOT DEs.

### **TxDOT Districts with Formal RPOs**

Responses were received from three districts that have formal RPOs. Of these three, only two RPOs had adopted bylaws at the time of the response. The remaining two RPOs operate with a formal membership structure and record meeting minutes. TxDOT districts with an existing RPO follow the same general rural transportation planning process described above, but also coordinate and work with the RPO on project identification and selection. Final authority on project selection rests with the TxDOT district.

### **COGs without RPOs**

Rural transportation planning in COG areas without an established RPO is conducted by TxDOT districts in the manner described above. These COGs do currently act as the lead agency for organizing regional human service transportation coordination.

### **COGs with RPOs**

COGs that have established RPOs coordinate and cooperate with TxDOT districts to provide input on identifying and prioritizing projects. TxDOT district staff participates in the RPO meetings and provides information and technical expertise, but TxDOT remains the sole authority for rural transportation project planning and programming. These

COGs also act as the lead agency for organizing regional human service transportation coordination.

*What agencies/entities do you coordinate with?*

### **TxDOT Districts**

Each district interviewed indicated that they coordinate with local elected officials from all counties and cities. Other entities cited included chambers of commerce, COGs, and MPOs.

### **COGs without RPOs**

COGs without functioning RPOs indicated that coordination on rural transportation should be viewed as a continuum of the overall transportation planning process. Responsibility should be shared between TxDOT, MPOs, RPOs, and regional human service transportation committees. RMAs should be included in the process where applicable. One respondent noted that it was an “absolute necessity” that any RPO coordinate and cooperate with other agencies involved in the transportation planning process.

### **COGs with RPOs**

COG areas with a functioning RPO indicated that coordination and cooperation should be “seamless” with involvement of TxDOT districts, RMAs, and MPOs. Responses indicated that the overall view was that an RPO simply brought the individual counties and cities together to provide a coordinated effort toward assisting TxDOT in the identification and prioritizing of transportation needs.

*Do you have a formalized organizational structure? If yes, do you have adopted bylaws, how is it funded, and who performs the administrative functions?*

### **TxDOT Districts with Formal RPOs**

For the three TxDOT districts with a structured RPO that responded, one RPO had formal bylaws and two had a structured membership with a designated chairman and vice-chairman. Meeting minutes are kept for all three RPOs.

No official funding is provided for support of the RPO, but some administrative duties are provided by TxDOT or by the COG.

### **COGs with RPOs**

Five COGs with RPOs responded to the outreach. For all five COGs with an organized RPO, each has adopted bylaws. Administrative functions are provided by the COG for four of the RPOs and provided by TxDOT for one of the RPOs. There is no dedicated funding for any of the RPOs. What funds are available are provided via in-kind support from TxDOT or the COG. One COG indicated they use of the uniform volunteer rate established by the IRS, currently set at \$20.25/hr, to calculate the value of time for each

member traveling to and attending the meetings as part of the local match to recoup a portion of the funds use to support the RPO meetings.

*What year was your organization established? What prompted you to organize?*

### **COGs with RPOs**

The first RPO in Texas organized in 1999. Another began informally as a set of various committees formed to address specific transportation modes/issues (i.e., aviation, high speed rail, priority corridors) in 1998 and then transitioned in 2008 to streamline the functions under one group. The remainder of the RPOs were organized, and in some cases re-organized, during the period between 2001 and 2008.

Only one RPO specified that organization was in response to federal legislation. All others indicated that organization was in response to the need to better address transportation needs and issues and to improve communication among stakeholders.

*What are the goals/objectives/strategies of the organization?*

### **COGs with RPOs**

The overall common goal/objective/strategy among COGs with RPOs was to provide a forum for elected officials and community leaders to discuss relevant transportation issues and improve cooperation for transportation improvements. More detailed goals/objectives/strategies included monitoring existing transportation conditions, identifying future needs, developing short- and long-term plans, providing education on funding and financing mechanisms, improving coordination between agencies, and recommending changes in statutes/rules/policies affecting transportation.

*What is the membership of the organization?*

### **COGs with RPOs**

Membership in existing RPOs generally consists of county and local elected officials or their designated representatives. Some RPOs that geographically include a MPO, allow a MPO representative as an ex-officio, non-voting member. Other ex-officio members include TxDOT staff, public transit representatives, and representatives from the COG Board of Directors.

Overall, comments indicated that membership, either official or ex-officio, should include elected officials (or their designated representatives), MPO representatives, transit representatives, and members representing other transportation stakeholders within the area. The general consensus is that membership should be open and tailored to the needs and composition of each RPO area.

*How do you perceive RPOs coordinating with COGS, MPOs, or RMAs?*

### **TxDOT Districts**

The general consensus among TxDOT districts is that RPOs will need to coordinate with all transportation agencies and stakeholders in order to be effective.

### **COGs without RPOs**

COGs that do not currently have an organized RPO believe that coordination, cooperation, and communication between all agencies/organizations would be required and can be achieved.

### **COGs with RPOs**

Overall, COGs with existing RPOs felt that the organization can provide an effective link between the planning efforts of the various agencies that provide planning for rural and urban areas, and more specifically provide an effective forum for rural needs/issues.

*How are projects developed and prioritized?*

For most rural areas, both those with and without an organized RPO, projects are developed and prioritized as described under question 1, “***How is rural planning conducted in your area?***” Two RPOs indicated that their organization is performing some formal rural transportation planning. However, both of these RPOs indicated that their effort serves as input to TxDOT district planning/programming and that the district has final authority for project selection.

*What are your thoughts on Rural Planning Organizations?*

### **TxDOT Districts**

Responses concerning the usefulness of RPOs from TxDOT districts were varied. A majority felt that RPOs would provide a needed venue for counties, cities, and other stakeholders to come together to discuss regional transportation needs and issues. Most believed that an organized RPO would allow elected officials to better understand competing interests within the district and to more easily reach agreement on programming projects. Several districts felt that the current rural planning process worked well and that RPOs might not provide significant added value to the process.

### **COGs without RPOs**

There is strong support for the RPO concept among COGs that do not currently have an organized RPO. Many of these COGS have passed resolutions supporting the formation of an RPO, but have postponed organizing until the state formally recognizes the need and provides support for RPOs. Most feel that in order for RPOs to work effectively there needs to be official guidance to establish the role of RPOs in the overall transportation planning process as well as acceptance and buy-in from TxDOT. It is

believed that RPOs can make the statewide and district planning and programming more transparent and increase local ownership of the process.

### **COGs with RPOs**

The most common remark supported the idea that RPOs can improve communication and cooperation among local elected officials and between local officials and TxDOT, and lead to consensus building. One COG suggested that RPOs will empower local officials from rural communities and encourage them to be proactive in planning, and this may lead to producing more local funding for projects. Another COG suggested that the RPOs can provide needed planning assistance to help guide development and prepare for future growth.

*What geographical area should RPOs cover? Should it coincide with TxDOT districts or COG areas?*

### **TxDOT Districts**

A majority felt that COGs were the logical agency to house RPOs since they have the regional organization and structure already in place. However, since most TxDOT districts do not match COG areas, organizing RPOs along COG areas would require some districts to work with multiple RPOs and some RPOs to work with multiple districts. Most district respondents felt that working with multiple RPOs could be challenging when trying to reach a consensus on project plans and programming but would be manageable. Several districts noted that the size of some COGs might hinder participation in an RPO so geographic coverage should remain flexible.

### **COGs**

COGs overwhelmingly agreed that RPOs should be aligned with COG areas because they have regional organization to support the effort and already act as the lead agency for human service transportation coordination. Most acknowledged that this would require some RPOs to work with multiple districts, but believed this could be managed effectively. One respondent indicated that it might work best to have TxDOT boundaries align with those of the RPO if the RPOs are established to prioritize regional projects in cooperation with TxDOT. But, if the primary function of the RPO is to provide planning support to individual counties then alignment with TxDOT districts would not be necessary.

*How should RPOs be funded? What would you estimate the level of funding needed for an effective rural planning organization? (general range/year).*

### **TxDOT Districts**

The general consensus is that a permanent source of funding is needed to support the activities of the RPO. Although funding needs will be significantly less than that required for MPOs, sufficient funds to support the process and to develop and update a long-range rural transportation plan will be required. Several districts emphasized that

funding should be above and beyond what is currently available to MPOs so that existing planning funds are not spread thinner. A couple of districts suggested that it might be a good idea for some of the funding to come from member organizations; perhaps enough to cover meeting and administrative functions.

### **COGs**

COGs were in agreement that state and/or federal funds need to be provided to support the RPOs. One COG noted that if RPOs assumed the rural planning responsibility from TxDOT there could be some cost savings. Another noted that some of the monies allocated to TxDOT regional offices to prepare short- and long-term regional plans could be shifted to the RPOs to develop plans that could become part of the TxDOT regional plans.

Most COGs believed that RPOs would require less funding than MPOs with amounts ranging from \$25,000 to \$75,000 per year. Funding needs would vary depending on the size and needs of each area. One COG suggested that establishing a funding formula under which each RPO received a base amount and then additional funds could be allocated relative to population, number of counties, and/or square miles. Additional funding beyond the yearly allocation would be required to support the development of a rural long-range plan, but this funding could be provided as needed. It was also suggested that a monetary or in-kind match should be required from all member counties and local governments to supplement the planning effort since these funds could be used for a wider variety of purposes and would promote ownership in the process.

*Does your group cooperate/communicate with TxDOT? Is this cooperation/communication at the district level or does it include divisions or administration?*

### **COGs without RPOs**

Yes, but not through an organized RPO.

### **COGs with RPOs**

Each COG with an existing RPO indicated that they have open communication with TxDOT. TxDOT district staff is involved with meetings and, in several instances, provides administrative support. Several COGs noted that the RPO also communicates with TxDOT divisions when additional information or support for a specific item is needed.

*Does your group cooperate/communicate with the area's MPO?*

### **TxDOT Districts**

For all districts containing an MPO, the response was yes.

### **COGs without RPOs**

COGs without RPOs indicated that they do cooperate and coordinate with the MPO. In some areas, the COG is the MPO and in other areas COGs have a representative that routinely attends MPO meetings.

### **COGs with RPOs**

COGs with RPOs noted that they have open and active communication with the MPO. At least one RPO includes representation from the area MPO. The consensus is that RPOs should work seamlessly with MPO to provide for effective regional planning and improve understanding of all transportation needs.

*How would your group fit into rural planning if an RPO was established in your area?*

### **TxDOT Districts**

The general consensus among districts is that TxDOT would work with RPOs similar to how they work with MPOs. It would be a coordinated and cooperative effort with TxDOT providing information and support relative to statewide and district needs. TxDOT district and division staff would also be available to provide technical support as needed.

### **COGs**

Overall, COGs indicated that their organizational structure and regional contacts would enable them to effectively support the needs of RPOs. COGs were in unanimous agreement that they are the logical organization for housing RPOs. Several COGs noted that they currently serve as the regional planning group for housing, water, and human service transportation coordination so adding regional rural transportation planning would be an easy segue.



## **CHAPTER 5: REVIEW OF TRANSPORTATION FUNDING**

Chapter 5 presents a review and background on transportation planning funding and a scan of funding at selected RPOs.

### **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING FUNDING**

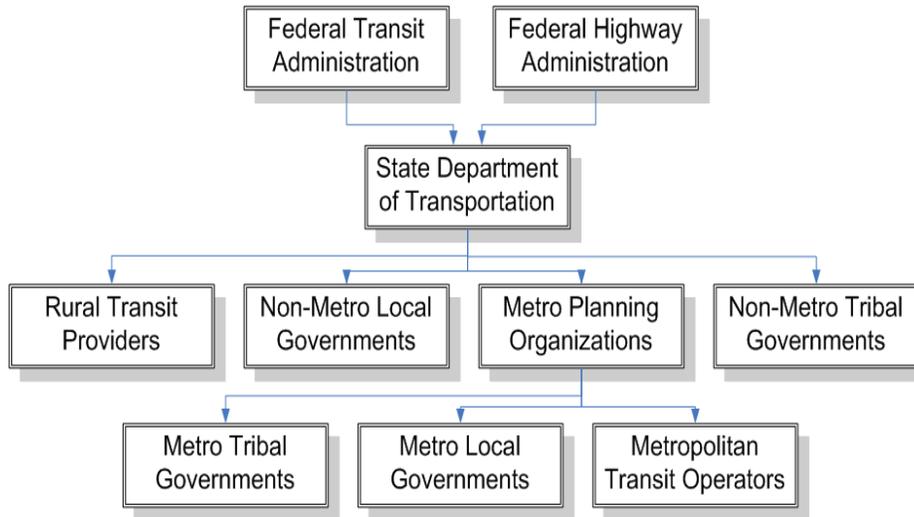
#### **Overview**

The combinations of funding sources available to RPOs include:

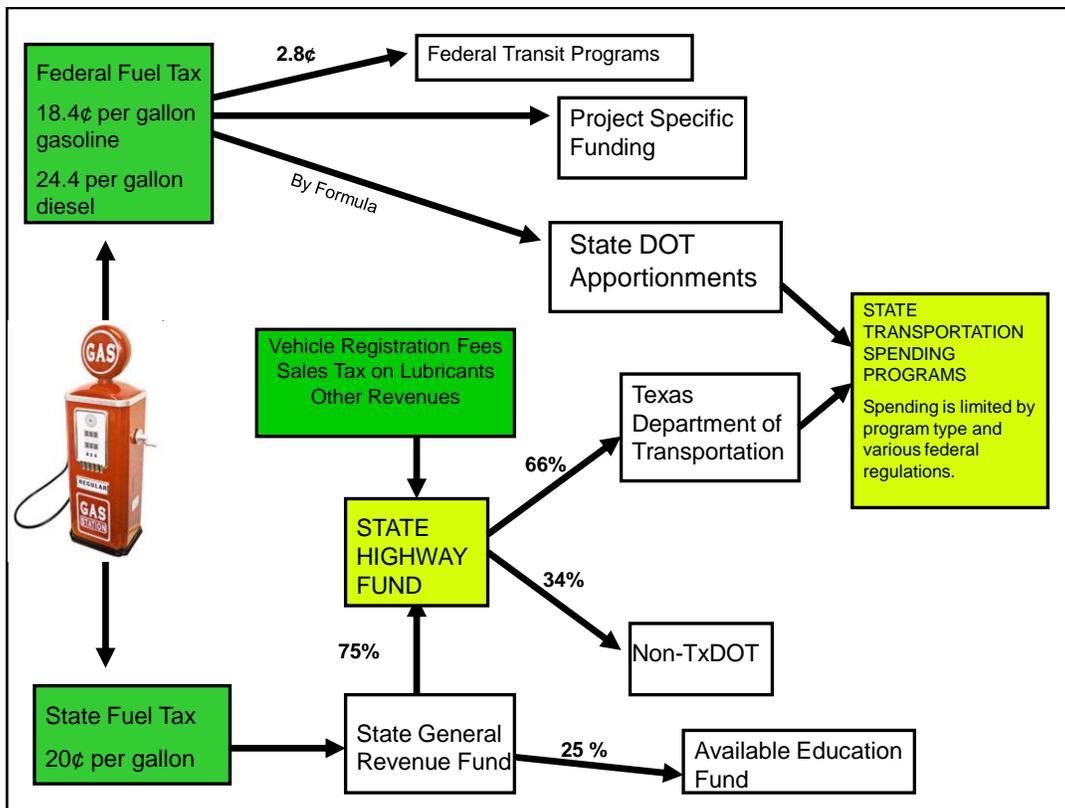
- SPR funds.
- State funds.
- Local funds.
- A combination of state, federal, and local funds.

As indicated in the NADO report, many states provide funding to RPOs for rural transportation planning. The most common federal source of funds is from SPR funds, which were reported as the major source of funding for 31 percent of states in NADO's national scan. Thirty percent indicated their funding was a mix of state and federal funds that may include SPR funds and other transit programs funding. In Texas, as in many other states, there is no dedicated funding source for RPOs. Transportation planning in rural (non-metro) areas is conducted by TxDOT districts.

In general, federal funding for transportation planning is transferred to the state, later distributed to metropolitan areas, and is typically the primary funding source for major plans and projects. Federal transportation funding is made available through the Federal Highway Trust Fund and is supplemented by general funds. Most FHWA sources of funding are administered by the state DOTs such as TxDOT. The state DOT then allocates the money to urban and rural areas based on state and local priorities and needs. Most transit funds for urban areas are sent directly from the FTA to the transit operator. Transit funds for rural areas are administered by the state DOT. Figure 12 provides an overview of the federal aid system. Figure 13 provides an overview of the fuel tax funding for transportation funds.



**Figure 11. The Federal Aid Transportation Planning and Programming System.**



**Figure 12. Fuel Tax Transportation Funding Flow.**

## **TxDOT Transportation Planning Fund Sources**

### *General Transportation Planning Funds*

The General Transportation Planning Fund (GTPF) is a sub-category of Federal Highway Administration Planning (PL) funds. When an individual MPO's excess unobligated balance and new allocation exceed the maximum of two years' allocation, the excess balance is transferred to the GTPF. TxDOT Commission Minute Order 106921 delegates authority for allocating these funds to the Executive Director. TPP is responsible for recommending allocations. These funds would not likely be available for funding RPOs. PL funds, as a general rule, cannot be used for rural planning. PL funds are intended for metro-planning activities and can only be used in urbanized areas. However, exceptions may occur. For example, a bus service that has both urban and rural connections may be eligible.

### **Matching of Federal Funds Used for Planning Purposes**

The federal transportation planning funds require a 20 percent match. Since 2007, TxDOT uses toll development credits as the match for PL and FTA planning funds for MPOs. If Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds or Surface Transportation Program Metropolitan Mobility/Rehabilitation funds are used by an MPO for planning purposes, the 20 percent matching funds are *not* included in the state match. The match for CMAQ and STP funds is a local requirement. These planning funds would not likely be available to RPOs for planning funding but provide the basis for matching planning funds.

### **Federal Funding of the State Planning and Research Program**

As previously stated, SPR program provides the most likely program for RPO planning funds. Information on SPR program administration is provided below.

*Source of SPR Funds:* Title 23, "Highways," Chapter 5, "Research, Technology, and Education," of the U.S. Code provides for SPR funding. Of the total funds apportioned to states, it authorizes 2 percent of most apportionment categories to be used only for planning and research activities. These funds are administered and accounted for as a single fund, regardless of the category of Federal-aid highway funds from which they were derived.

*The 25 Percent Rule:* Chapter 5 of the U.S. Code further states that not less than 25 percent of the SPR funds apportioned to a state for a fiscal year shall be used for research, unless the state meets the requirements for a waiver of this rule.

*Sharing of SPR Program Funds:* Federal SPR funds are shared between the Research Technology and Implementation (RTI) Office and TPP.

*Obligation of SPR Funds:* The RTI Office requests obligation of federal SPR funds before each annual program is initiated, based on 80 percent of the total Legislative appropriation for that program. Obligation of SPR funds for projects, which are not part of an annual program, are handled individually for each project.

## Federal SPR Work Program

*Requirements for an SPR Work Program:* Title 23, Section 420.111 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) requires that the proposed use of FHWA Planning and Research funds be documented by TxDOT in a work program “acceptable to the FHWA.” This work program must be approved by FHWA before SPR funds can be obligated.

*Separate Work Programs for Planning and Research:* RTI prepares an SPR Part II (research) annual work program, including quarterly updates, separate from the SPR Part I (planning) work program prepared by TPP. The Part II work program includes information on TxDOT’s research and implementation programs. RTI and TPP work together to provide any summary information requested by FHWA.

## Texas Funding Categories

The Unified Transportation Program (UTP) is an 11-year statewide program for transportation project development. The UTP is updated by the Finance Division and approved by the commission. TxDOT has 12 funding categories in the UTP. Table 15 shows the UTP categories that were identified as possible funding categories in rural areas. These include: Category 4: Rural Connectivity; Category 8: Safety; Category 11: District Discretionary; and Category 12: Strategic Priority.

**Table 15. Possible UTP Funding Categories for Use at RPOs/RTIP.**

<b>Funding Category</b>	<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>Project Selection</b>	<b>Usual Funding</b>
<b>4 – Statewide Connectivity Corridor Projects</b>	TxDOT District	Projects selected by the commission based on corridor ranking. Project total costs cannot exceed commission-approved statewide allocation.	Federal 80% State 20% or State 100%
<b>8 – Safety:</b> FHWA Safety Improvement Program, Federal Railway-Highway Crossing Program, Safety Bond Program, Federal Safe Routes to School Program, and Federal High Risk Rural Roads.	TxDOT District	Project selected by Federally mandated safety indices and prioritized listing. Commission allocates funds through Statewide Allocation Program. Projects selected and approved by Commission on a per-project basis for Federal Safe Routes to School Program.	Federal 90% State 10% or Federal 90% Local 10% or Federal 100% or State 100%
<b>11 – District Discretionary</b>	TxDOT District	Projects selected by Districts. Commission allocates funds through Allocation Program	Federal 80% State 20% or State 100%
<b>12 – Strategic Priority</b>	Commission	Commission selects projects that generally promote economic opportunity, increase efficiency on military deployment routes or to retain military assets in response to the federal military base realignment and closure report, or maintain the ability to respond to both man-made and natural emergencies. Also, the commission approves pass-through financing projects in order to help local communities address their transportation needs.	Federal 80% State 20% or State 100%

## **Transit Funding (17)**

Funds for transit come from federal, state, and local sources. Local funds include fares from users, revenues generated directly by the transit agency (including locally dedicated taxes), and contributions from local governments. When compared to the national average, Texas transit agencies rely less on federal and state funds for transit operating revenues and more on local revenues. Local funds represent 69 percent of the operating funds applied nationally for urban transit systems and 85 percent of operating funds applied in Texas. State funds account for 23 percent and federal grants account for 8 percent when reported on a national basis; however, in Texas, state funds account for less than 1 percent, and federal funds represent 15 percent of all funds applied.

Federal funding for transit comes primarily through the U.S. DOT and is administered by the FTA. SAFETEA-LU authorizes \$286.4 billion in funding for federal surface transportation programs over six years (2004 through 2009), including \$52.6 billion (18.6 percent) for federal transit programs.

Federal funds for transit are appropriated from either the Highway Trust Fund or the general fund. Receipts for the Highway Trust Fund are derived from federal excise taxes on motor fuels and truck-related taxes. All tax revenues are deposited into the Highway Trust Fund and are then distributed to one of two accounts: the Highway Account and the Mass Transit Account. Approximately 15 percent of revenues from the taxes on motor fuels go into the Mass Transit Account. For the fiscal years 2005 through 2009 under SAFETEA-LU, 82 percent of all funds authorized for FTA are from the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund. The remaining 18 percent of authorized funds are from the general fund of the U.S. Treasury.

Texas taxpayers contributed \$416.8 million to the Mass Transit Account and received \$313.5 million in apportionments for FTA programs that are paid from the Mass Transit Account (excludes \$23.5 in New Starts projects paid from the general fund), representing 81 percent return on contributions for transit).<sup>11</sup>

### **State Funding for Transit in Texas**

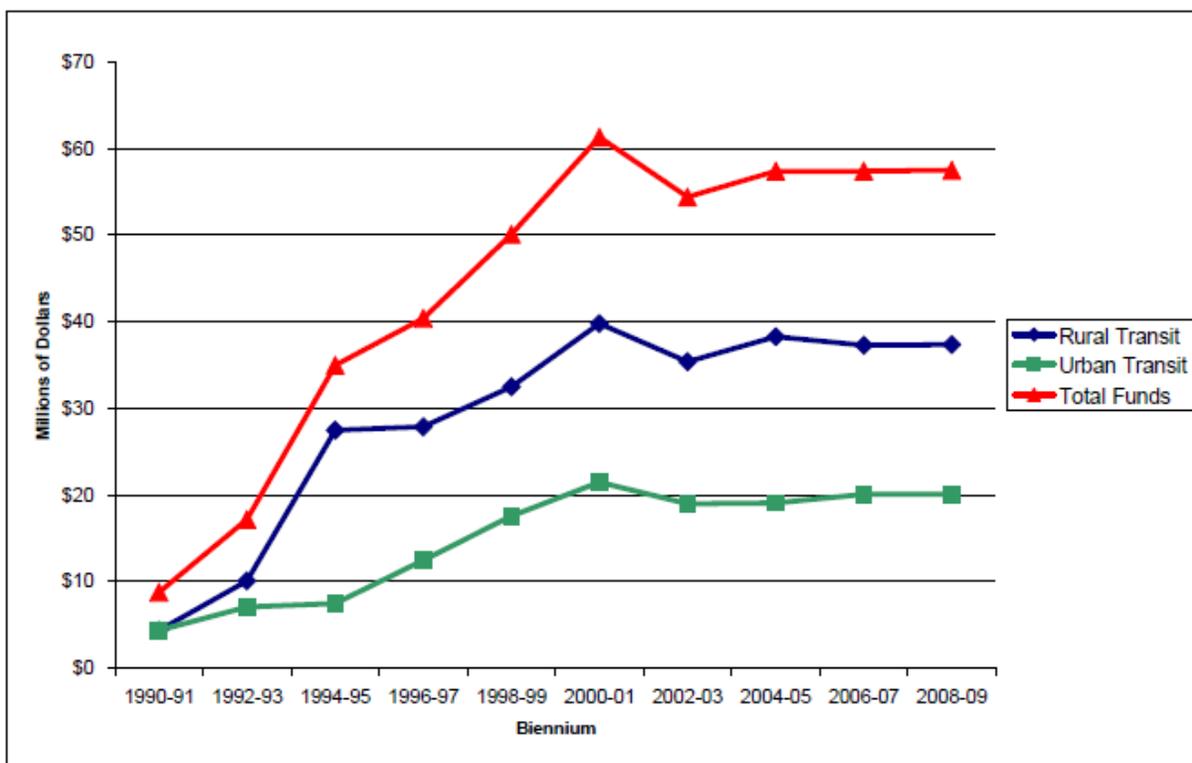
In Texas, state transit funds are distributed to small urban and rural transit providers; the state does not fund transit programs in large metropolitan areas where most of the state's population resides. Texas provides financial support to 31 transit providers in eligible urban areas and 39 transit providers in rural areas. Generally, the state does not provide funding assistance to urban areas that have a population of 200,000 or more and the legislative authority to ask voter approval to create a transit authority with a dedicated sales tax.

State funding levels are established each biennium by the Texas Legislature. Figure 14 shows that the level of state funding has been consistent each of the last three biennia. The Legislature

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<sup>11</sup> In 2006, Texas highway users contributed \$2.96 billion to the Highway Account and received \$2.82 billion in apportionments from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), a 96% return on contribution for highways.

appropriated \$57.4 million in state funds for public transportation each biennium, equal to about \$28.7 million in state funds annually.

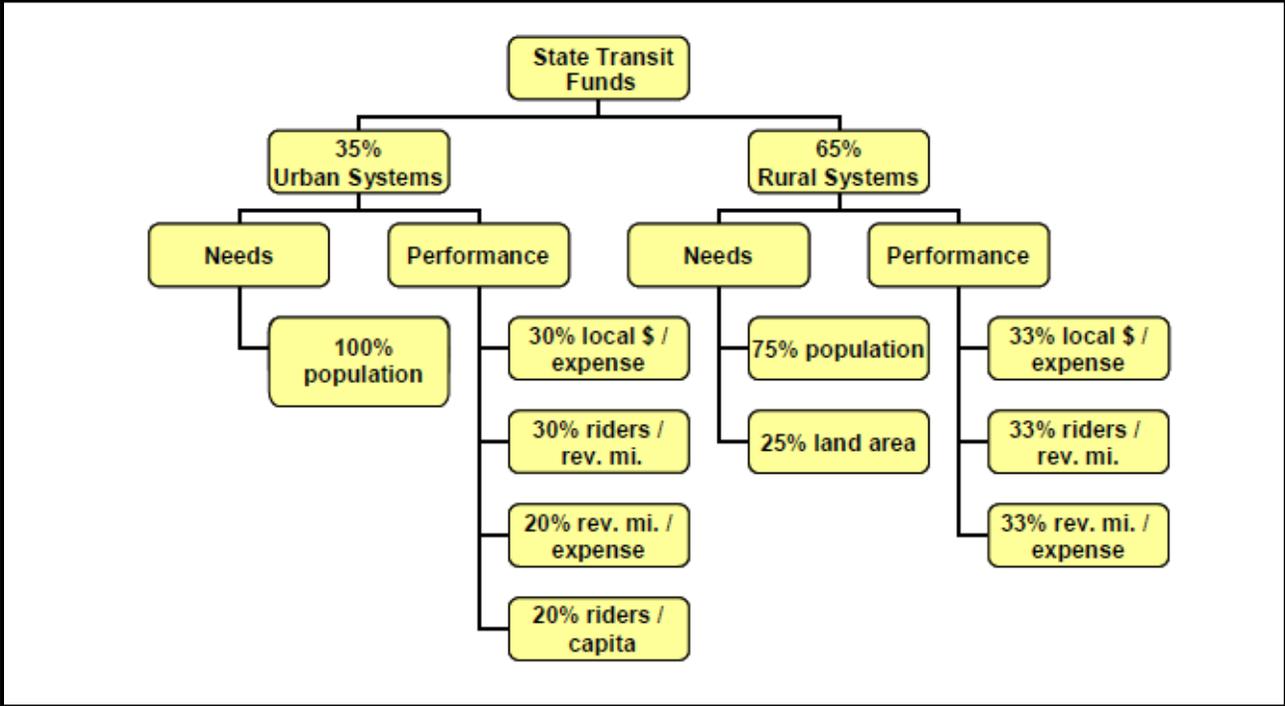


**Figure 13. Texas State Appropriations for Public Transportation per Biennium.**

### Transit Funding Formula

In 2004, the Texas Transportation Commission established a formula to allocate funds for public transportation based on need and performance. The formula addresses state funds for small urban and rural transit providers and federal funds for rural areas. According to the formula, state funds for public transportation are split 35 percent to small urban areas and 65 percent to rural areas. The funding formula then allocates funds to each transit provider according to needs and performance. The portion of the formula attributed to needs is allocated to small urban transit systems based on population in each urban area. Rural systems receive the needs allocation based upon population (weighted 75 percent) and land area (weighted 25 percent).

The funding formula is administered by the TxDOT's Public Transportation Division (TxDOT-PTN). Several measures are used to allocate funding based upon performance. These measures include revenue miles per operating expense, riders per revenue mile, local investment per operating expense, and riders per capita (urban systems only). The initial weighting of needs and performance in the allocation was 80 percent needs and 20 percent performance. Rural systems transitioned to 65 percent needs and 35 percent performance as of 2009. There will be no additional transition for rural systems. Figure 15 illustrates the funding formula including weighting of performance indicators.



**Figure 14. Transit Funding.**

**RURAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING NEEDS**

The *2030 Committee Texas Transportation Needs Report (18)* provides a comprehensive analysis of estimated transportation needs, associated costs in 2008 dollars, and resulting benefits from basic categories of transportation infrastructure investments highway maintenance (pavements and bridges), urban mobility, and rural mobility and safety. The 2030 report “...was designed to help policymakers answer two critical questions: which transportation needs should we fund and how much do we need to spend?” Highlights from the 2030 Committee Report are presented below to provide context for rural transportation planning funding needs.

**Rural Setting**

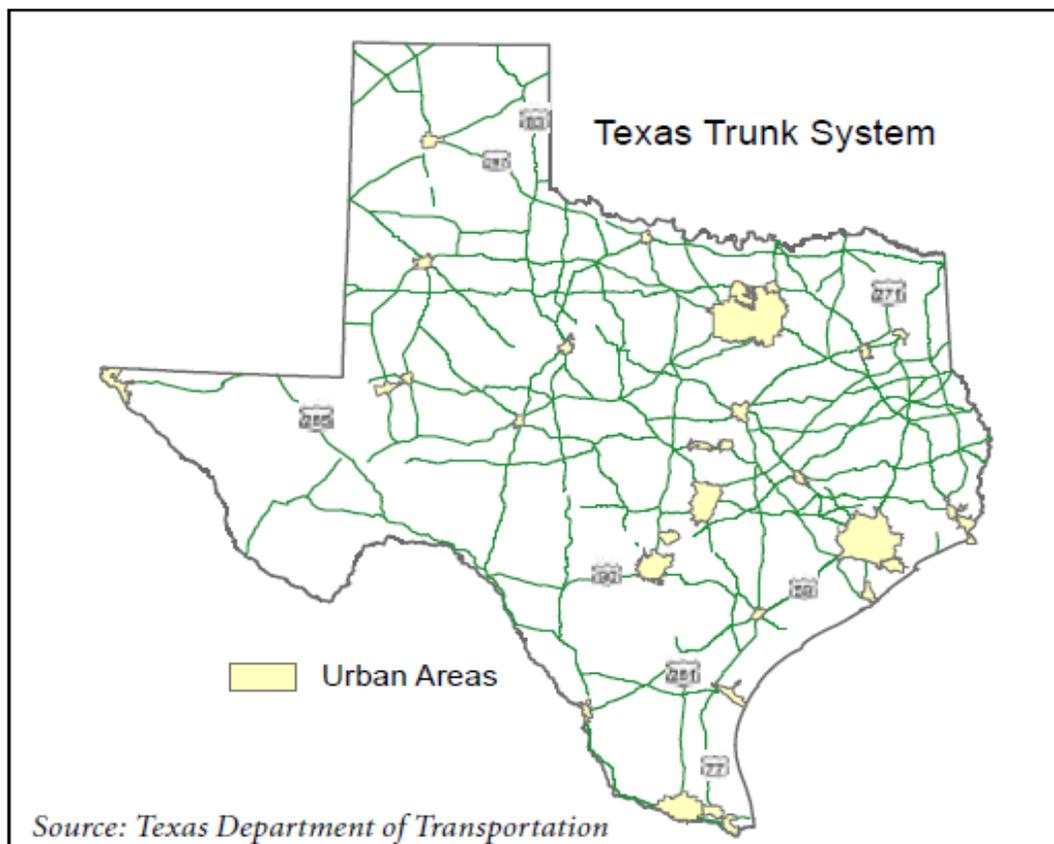
There are more than 60,000 lane-miles of rural highway in Texas. The core of the rural highway network consists of a 10,175-mile network known as the Texas Trunk System, shown in Figure 16. The purpose of the Texas Trunk System is to provide connectivity between communities of 20,000 population or more, as well as linking rural communities to markets in urban areas.

Rural areas face unique transportation. The 2030 report identifies improved safety and enhanced connectivity of routes as more urgent than managing congestion. Whereas, crash rates in urban

areas are high (largely as a result of higher vehicle miles traveled [VMT]), crash severity is much higher in rural areas.

The 2030 Committee considered a range of rural transportation scenarios as described in Table 16. The funding needs ranged from \$8.4 billion to \$18.8 billion and recommended to:

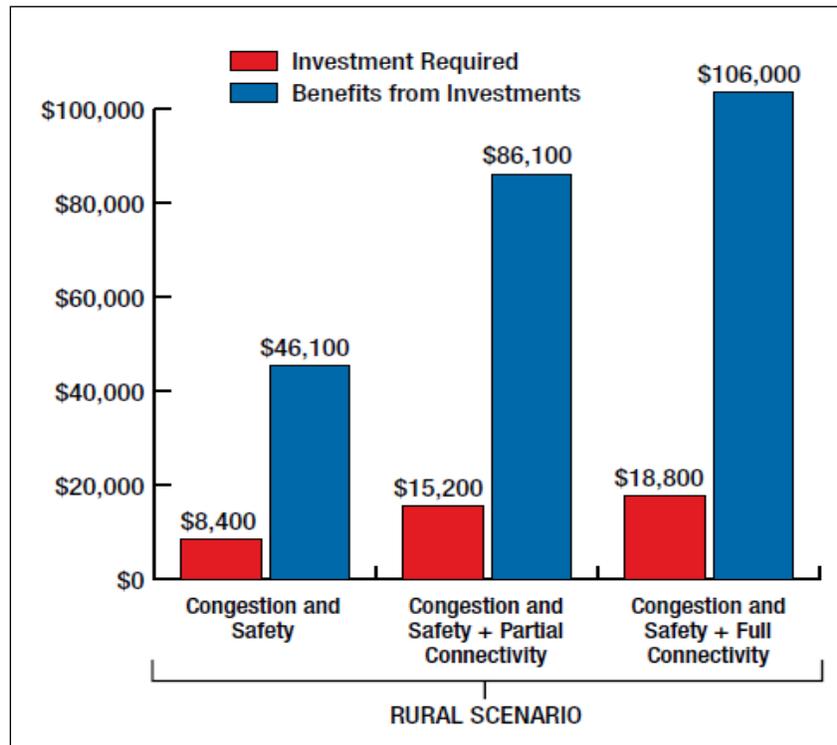
- Complete the Texas Trunk System to facilitate rural competitiveness and safety.
- Prioritize additional road capacity for highest immediate economic impact.
- Invest in “Congestion and Safety + Full Connectivity” for \$19 billion total; \$0.9 billion per year.



**Figure 15. Texas Trunk System.**

**Table 16. Rural Transportation Investments.**

Rural Scenario	Investment Required	Scenario Description
<i>Improve Congestion/Safety</i>	\$8.4 Billion	This scenario estimates the amount of congestion that can be expected on rural highways, typically in the vicinity of growing urban areas, and identifies the investment needed to address that congestion.
<i>Improve Congestion/Safety + Partial Connectivity</i>	\$15.2 Billion	This scenario builds on the previous one and addresses connectivity that fosters economic development and opportunity in rural areas.
<i>Improve Congestion/Safety + Full Connectivity</i>	\$18.8 Billion	This scenario accomplishes all of the goals of the first two scenarios, plus completes the Texas Trunk System to four-lane divided roadways. This scenario maximizes the accessibility of all of Texas' larger but non-urban communities, further enhancing the connectivity and economic opportunity.



**Figure 16. Rural Funding Needs Scenarios.**

### RPO Funding Scan

As reported in Chapter 2, NADO examined rural transportation funding at RPOs across the country in the report: *2009 National Scan: Rural Transportation Planning Organizations*. The NADO report provided an overview of funding for rural transportation planning and is summarized below:

- Funding sources, funding levels, and responsibilities vary considerably among RPOs in various states and even RPOs within the same state.
- Twenty-seven states report that they have a contract with their state DOT to perform some type of transportation planning services in non-metropolitan areas as an RPO or similar entity.
- Most RPOs receive funding through state DOT contracts at amounts between \$25,000 and \$100,000, with 28 percent of responding regions receiving \$50,001–\$75,000, 22 percent receiving \$75,001–\$100,000, and another 21 percent receiving \$25,001–\$50,000 (see Table 14).
- SPR funds were reported as the major source of funding for 31 percent of respondents. Thirty percent indicated their funding was a mix of state and federal funds that may include SPR funds and other transit programs funding.

There are currently no federal definitions or specific funding streams for RPOs in Texas. Texas does not have designated funding for RPOs. Other states have dedicated funding specifically for RPOs or RPO-like organizations. Four examples of states with dedicated funding sources to non-metropolitan transportation planning are summarized below.

### *Arizona*

Rural planning in Arizona began with Transportation Planning Division of the Arizona Department of Transportation working with state COGs, which includes Arizona's four rural COGs. ADOT worked with the COGs to prepare a resolution and mutually agreed upon guidelines to establish its rural consultation process. Each of the rural regions (COGs) receives between \$80,000 and \$125,000 each year, along with a 20 percent local match, to carry out the work program.

Each COG in Arizona employs one transportation planning director who serves as a liaison between ADOT and local jurisdictions in the COG region. The consultation process also included the Rural Transportation Advocacy Council, a consortium of local governments, COGs, and MPOs representing the transportation concerns of rural Arizona that include the 13 counties outside of the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas. RTAC members contribute annual dues to support their legislative priorities through a full-time Rural Transportation Liaison. Each region collects and analyzes transportation data for state and local agencies, reviews Section 5311 rural transit applications for consistency with the regional plan, and coordinates the application and prioritization process for transportation enhancement projects and the Section 5310 rural transit program for the elderly and disabled.

### *California*

California has a well-defined practice for regional transportation planning. California DOT uses a network of Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs) that are similar in structure and responsibility to MPOs. There are 44 RTPAs and 18 are also MPOs. The RTPAs are typically staffed and housed within a COG. Each RTPA prepares a regional transportation plan and transportation improvement program.

For planning and project development, the RTPAs involve local elected and appointed officials. Caltrans provides RTPAs between \$77,000 and \$220,000 in funding each year using federal and state planning funds based on a funding formula and the overall work program of each RTPA.

Each RTPA is required to:

- Prepare an annual work program.
- Develop a regional transportation plan.
- Select projects for implementation.

Specifics on the regional planning process are available through the Caltrans website (<http://www.dot.ca.gov/perf/>).

### *Iowa*

The Iowa RPAs are organized similar to MPOs with each having both a technical and policy committees with various ad hoc committees. Each RPA has a planning staff that assists the Committees, guides public input, and oversees the planning process for the region. Iowa DOT provides funding to each RPA, utilizing FHWA Surface Transportation Program (STP) Funds and FTA Sections 5313 and 5311 funds, with the local match provided by the RPA. Funding amounts, including the local match, range from \$18,900 to \$101,200, depending upon the discretion of the various RPA Committee members and the goals of each RPA.

Each RPA maintains a current and approved Transportation Planning Work Program (TPWP) that includes tasks such as:

- Developing the long-range transportation plan.
- TIPS.
- Public involvement procedures.

### *North Carolina*

North Carolina Department of Transportation changed its consultation processes in response to state laws passed in 2000<sup>12</sup> and established RPOs to work cooperatively with the NCDOT to plan and to advise the department on rural transportation policy. There are 20 RPOs that work within existing COGs. The law requires RPOs to serve contiguous areas of 3–15 counties and must have a combined minimum population of 50,000. MPOs cannot be a member of RPOs, and not all of the municipalities in an RPO region are required to join, but each of the counties must be a member. The North Carolina RPO bylaws are available at:

[http://www.kerrtarcog.org/rpo/documents/NCARPO\\_Bylaws\\_Jan05.pdf](http://www.kerrtarcog.org/rpo/documents/NCARPO_Bylaws_Jan05.pdf). Funding for RPOs ranges between \$80,000 and \$100,000 each. The State RPO website is <http://www.nctransportationanswers.org/>.

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<sup>12</sup> Senate Bill 1195. Covered under Article 17 General Statute 136-210 through 213.



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## **APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**



In conjunction with the federally mandated Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Human Subjects' Protection Program (HSPP) works to assure the protection of human research participants and to ensure TAMU's compliance with the laws and regulations governing human subject research. Any human subject research conducted by TAMU faculty, staff, or students must be reviewed and approved prior to being initiated. Also, any other party wishing to conduct research using TAMU employees or students as subjects must secure authorization prior to recruiting participants.

An application for this research project was submitted to the IRB that included the questions in Appendix B. This project is classified as exempt. It was determined that the referenced protocol application meets the criteria for exemption and no further review is required.

## Interview Questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your role in this organization?
2. How is rural transportation planning conducted in your area? What agencies/entities do you coordinate with?
3. Do you have a formalized organization structure? If so, have you adopted bylaws, how is it funded, who performs administrative functions?
4. How are projects developed/prioritized?
5. What are your thoughts on Rural Planning Organizations (RPO)?
6. How should RPO membership be structured?
7. What geographical area should RPOs cover? Should it coincide with TxDOT districts?
8. How should RPOs be funded?
9. How do you perceive RPOs coordinating with COGs, MPOs, or RMAs?
10. What year was your Commission organized? What prompted you to organize?
11. What are the goals/objectives/strategies of the organization?
12. What is the membership make-up of the organization?
13. Does your group cooperate/communicate with TxDOT? Is this cooperation/communication at the District level or does it include Divisions or Administration?
14. Does your group cooperate/communicate with the area's Rural Planning Organization?
15. Does your group cooperate/communicate with the area's MPO?
16. How would your group fit into rural planning if an RPO was established that covered your area?

Answer any or all questions. Please include your contact information so we can follow-up.

Return to John Overman [joverman@tamu.edu](mailto:joverman@tamu.edu) or call 817-462-0516.

## **APPENDIX B: OUTREACH COMMENTS**



**TxDOT District Comments**

<b>How Rural Transportation Planning is Conducted – Project Identification</b>
District makes a district-wide call soliciting candidate projects. Area engineers meet with local officials and citizens to identify projects. District staff may also identify projects.
Projects are identified by area engineers as well as local officials, Chambers of Commerce, and citizens.
No rural counties within District.
District Engineer meets with each county judge and area engineers to identify projects and needs.
Area engineers meet with local officials and citizens. Also, obtain input from maintenance supervisors.
Every two years meetings are held in two cities within the District, but outside of the urban county, to obtain input on projects. Elected officials are notified and public notices run in newspapers.
Regular meetings are held with county and city officials and the District staff develops projects. Citizen input is solicited every 2 years at public meetings.
TxDOT District conducts rural meetings every 2 years to present and discuss the TIP. The DE, TPD, and the Director of Operations visit with each county judge to discuss issues in their counties.
Typically, communication through public meetings, local government agencies and public surveys, and visits with elected officials. Recently, due to fluctuations in funding, rural planning has been conducted through informal communications with county commissioner courts and small urban area city councils. The COG is the self-proclaimed RPO for the area, but it is not yet productive in planning for the region.
Discuss with county judges the relevant transportation issues. Judges can propose projects needed over a 20-year period.
Informal, constant communication with local elected officials. Formally, have a public meeting every other year to take comments on TIP and other needs.
PIO uses available resources to identify issues within the district. Previously, the district solicited project ideas from every community. In 2002, did extensive outreach and asked communities for their input in writing and held 4 public meetings. In 2005, area engineers went to commissioner courts and city councils and solicited project ideas, needs, wants.
Rely heavily on area engineers and maintenance foremen to identify projects/needs. As part of the TIP process we hold meetings in two areas—more if there is a major corridor project. We get feedback from local elected officials and public.
Communication with county and city officials. DE meets with each county judge at least once per year. Provide monthly updates to officials.
Public hearings held once every 2 years in areas outside of urban county. Invite local officials and public for input.

<b>How Rural Transportation Planning is Conducted – Project Selection</b>
First ranked by each area engineer and then submitted to District. TPD then ranked based on funding, safety, pavement conditions, bridge condition, ADT, and other factors. DE has final project selection approval. After ranking, public meetings held on projects. Based on input from these meetings the project selection is finalized.
Have only 2 capacity projects, which are on hold due to lack of funding. As a result, projects are ranked and selected based on pavement condition, bridge condition, and safety. Ranked by District staff.
No rural counties in District.
Input is received at public meetings held after initial ranking performed by District staff. This input is used by the DE to make the final selection.
DE and District staff drive the projects submitted by area engineers and maintenance supervisors. DE selects projects based on pavement, safety, funding, capacity, and cost effectiveness.
Projects are developed by area engineer offices who work with elected officials to prioritize projects.
Projects are selected by District staff under close coordination with local officials and the area MPOs. Decisions on project development schedules are made by the TxDOT District Managers.
Process under development for newly formed RPO. Projects currently are selected by District with input from counties and cities.
Input from local elected officials and public used in prioritizing projects, but selection done by district staff and DE.
District provides information on the specific needs in each county and funding available. Recommend judges provide guidance on the top priority projects.
Generally use pavement management information system, fiscal constraints, volume, and costs to evaluate and rank projects within the district. May use discretionary money to address smaller projects brought up by local governments.
TxDOT makes decision based on level of local contribution and whether the project would enhance the overall system.
TxDOT does project selection using pavement, funding, maintenance, etc. to prioritize projects.
Use PMIS, focus more on primary facilities. Decisions made by District staff. Then priorities are presented at 2 or 3 public meetings
Projects developed/prioritized by area engineer offices. They work with local officials to set priorities.

<b>What Agencies do you coordinate with under the current rural planning process</b>
Counties, cities, COG, and MPO
Counties, cities, COG, and MPO
No rural counties in district
Counties, cities, MPO
Counties, cities, COGs
Along the lines of MPO coordination process
Counties, cities, MPOs
Counties, cities
Counties, cities, MPO, COG
Not answered
Not answered
Not answered
Not answered
Counties, cities
Counties, cities

<b>Is there a formal rural planning organization structure in your area</b>
No
No
No rural counties within District, but COG has an informal RPO committee
No
No
No
No
Yes – under development. Organized in 2007, no bylaws, just membership structure with chair and vice chair. Administrative functions by District. Formed after it was suggested an RPO would be good for our area. No current goals/objectives. Believes RPO should assist the District in looking at projects.
Yes. COG has an established RPO with bylaws, but it has not yet been productive in regional planning.
Currently have an RPO under the COG. Includes 3 Districts. Membership is designated by county commissioner court. No bylaws, but do take and approve minutes.
No
None now.
No
No
No

<b>Geographic Boundaries for Rural Planning Organizations</b>
COGs are the logical place. Having to work with multiple COGs is not a problem.
COGs have the organizational structure in place to do this. However, our COG is quite large and it could be difficult to getting regular participation due to travel distance. Suggested either a rotating location for meetings. Also a concern relative to the size of any organization given that many counties – suggested it might be set up so members serve on a rotational basis.
No comment
Prefer that they coincide with District boundaries largely because District has 3 COGs. But, can work with 3 COGs if necessary.
COGs or District boundaries. Encompasses 3 COGs.
District boundaries or COG – they coincide in our area
Along District lines – excluding any area served by an MPO
TxDOT Districts
Matching TxDOT district boundaries would make it easier for TxDOT, but COGs already have the structure in place to handle RPOs. TxDOT can handle multiple COGs.
Since COG and district boundaries do not match, it's difficult to decide on boundaries.
Probably aligned with COGs as they already have the structure.
Match COG boundaries. Each district within the COG will need to be involved.
Match district boundaries – Having to coordinate with multiple districts might be difficult.
District boundaries easier
Best if District, but COGs will work as well

<b>Organizational/Membership Structure for Rural Planning Organization</b>
Elected officials (county or city) or their designated representatives. Citizens appointed by elected officials. Might be set up similar to MPOs.
Set up similar to MPOs with a director and perhaps a part time planner. Would have technical committee and policy board. Technical committee might include district staff, MPO representative, and staff from counties and cities. Policy board would be elected officials.
No comment
No opinion on possible structure.
Elected officials (county and city), designated representative, or appointed citizens.
Similar to MPOs with a technical staff and a policy board of elected officials.
Have a governing body composed of county judges and the District Engineer
County judges (voting) and municipalities (non-voting)
Locally appointed elected officials representing each incorporated community and county within the designated region outside of any MPO area
No comment
No comment
Voting membership should be one per city and one per county.
No answer
No comment
Similar to MPOs with representatives comprised of elected officials, include a technical staff.

<b>Funding for Rural Planning Organizations</b>
Funding to conduct the planning process and hold meetings. This should require less funding than required for MPOs. Also a need to develop and update a long range rural transportation plan. Updates would likely be needed less often than for MPOs.
Funding should be separate from MPOs. Sufficient to cover a director and a part time planner plus travel for members.
n/a
Not sure without more information on structure and requirements.
Sufficient funding to support the process and develop and update a long-range plan every few years.
Would require state or federal funding
Funded by the counties who are members of the RPO.
Perhaps similar to MPO funding mechanisms
Through federal and state planning fund grants like the MPOs. Do not agree with slicing the existing planning dollars thinner – need additional funding.
Not answered
Not answered
Was concern that giving money to RPOs would dilute what was available and no projects would be accomplished – questions on how aviation, public transportation funding/projects would be handled.
Not answered
No comment
State or federal sources

<b>Perceived Coordination between Rural Planning Organizations, MPOs, COGs, and RMAs</b>
Including members from these in RPO meetings or through District. No RMAs in District.
Include representatives as part of the RPO process
No comment
No RMAs. District would need to coordinate among the rural planning organizations within district area, but no thoughts on coordination between RPOs, COGs, MPOs.
Through District.
Similar to coordination process used in MPOs
RPOs, MPOs, and COGs would coordinate adjacent projects and provide support for the agencies' mutual interests
No comment
Might have some difficulties, but with the right communication could work together.
No comment
Along the lines of coordination with MPOs

<b>Thoughts on Rural Planning Organizations</b>
Believes there may be some real benefits to having an established rural planning process. Would bring all players to the table and perhaps make reaching a consensus easier. Feels most counties would be interested in participating.
Believed it would be well received. Need to maintain some flexibility on geographic area, structure, and requirements (i.e., such as information required in a long range plan) to allow for differences between areas.
No comment
At this time the relationship between the District and the counties/cities is very good and having an RPO might not be necessary.
Believes having an RPO might be a benefit for the district and for the planning/development process. Would assist in reaching a consensus when there are competing needs. Would need an official plan to be developed to guide project selections and prioritization. Include defined project selection process.
Would be happy to work with such an organization
An RPO could function as a local stakeholder in prioritizing rural program funds. Believe they should be authorized, but not mandated by the legislature and must include at least 2 counties. Application process through TxDOT.
Apprehensive as to how well it will work. The group could provide beneficial insight on project selection. Concern that they will get short-sighted and not work cooperatively.
Believe in them. A regional voice to coordinate priorities would assist TxDOT in achieving strategic goals in the rural portions of the state. They must have a funding category assigned to them like MPOs have cat 2, 3, 5, 7 or there is little motivation for diverse elected officials to give priority to any transportation project outside their jurisdiction. County judges need a funding motivation to give priority to projects outside their county.
So far the RPO effort has been helpful in achieving regional cooperation.
Would probably be beneficial. As a group it would show what the region believes are the highest needs – often different from TxDOT’s view. We feel that we hear what people in the area want, but sometimes it’s surprising.
RPOs should be a tool to help prioritize resources. RPOs should not have the responsibility of actually handing out the funding – just working to establish priorities.
Might be some benefit to having a more structured process particularly when working with expansion projects or something like the Ports to Plains corridor.
Not really needed. There are no big issues that require coordination.
Would be happy to work with an RPO. May not be needed since population is so small in the District rural counties.

## **COG Comments**

<b>How Rural Transportation Planning Is Conducted</b>
The COG relies on TxDOT traditional role as the planning agent primarily for formal transportation planning throughout the rural areas of the region. The COG coordinates with the Transit District and acts as the regional transportation coordination committee – call the Regional Planning Organization.
Currently rural transportation planning is conducted by the three District Offices. The counties in the COG are currently working together through the Regional Transportation Advisory Group on regional public transportation planning and with the area COG serving as administrator of the group.
Rural transportation planning is carried out partially by the COG Regional Planning Committee and partially by TxDOT and county/local governments. TxDOT participates in the Regional Planning Committee meetings and activities, but is still largely responsible for the selection of projects, which are funded through them.
There are 5 counties in the COG area that are rural. These counties are not located in TxDOT’s District, but split between 3 other districts. Rural planning is currently largely handled by the individual TxDOT Districts through a process of gathering input from local elected officials, area engineers, citizens, and other stakeholders (see process for TxDOT Districts). In 2008, COG Board of Directors established a subcommittee comprised of the voting members of the 5 counties to discuss transportation issues in those counties.
COG formed an RPO, which performs some rural transportation planning coordinated with the TxDOT District office and other transportation stakeholders as applicable.
Cooperative effort between TxDOT District and the RPO. TxDOT has final authority on which projects are funded, but meet with and consider input from the RPO.
Currently run traditionally by the TxDOT District with input from elected officials thorough our RPO

<b>Formal Structure with By-Laws and Who Performs Administrative Functions</b>
No. Funding for the regional transportation coordination committee comes from the transit district and the state.
In July 2009, the COG passed a resolution supporting the concept of RPOs and indicating interest in forming one should they become recognized by the State of Texas. If one were formed the COG could provide the administrative support and they would establish by-laws for the organization.
The Regional Planning Organization is a formal organization with by-laws. The COG performs administrative functions.
The COG subcommittee acts as the rural planning arm. They operate under the by-laws established for COG Board of Directors. The group does not meet on a regular basis. Administrative functions are provided by the COG.
The RPO is a committee of COG and has adopted by-laws. Administrative functions are performed by the COG staff. There is no dedicated funding.
The RPO has by-laws. Administrative functions are provided by TxDOT staff. Funded through TxDOT.
The RPO is formally adopted for seven years. Operates under the by-laws and organizational structure of the COG.

<b>Year RPO Established/Reason for Organizing</b>
In 2003, the COG executive committee created the Regional Planning organization (RPO) by resolution.
Not yet established. However, we would like to have RPOs recognized so that local elected officials could have more input into the decision making process on how and where in the region TxDOT does projects.
Originally in 1998. Then in April 2008 was streamlined to be more effective. It was patterned after the “MPO model” with a technical committee and a policy committee. The COG board of directors served as the policy committee. Over time the Regional Planning Committee evolved into a number of transportation subcommittees (such as a specific corridor committee, high speed rail committee, aviation committee, 2005 regional transportation coordination committee. Then in April 2008 all committee functions merged into one group. The same group functions as the Regional Transportation Coordination Committee. The stated purpose of the Regional Planning Organization is to review and conduct coordinated, comprehensive and continuing transportation planning in the COG region. The committee was organized to provide a mechanism for regional transportation issues and needs that exist beyond the MPO boundary to be discussed and studied.
Subcommittee of the Board established in 2008 to address transportation issues affecting the counties not included in the COG MPO.
RPO was established in 1999 to provide a venue for city and county officials to come together to address transportation issues that impacted mobility across the ten-county region and beyond the boundaries of the three-county MPO.
Initial effort began in 2001, but was formally established in 2003. Was established to provide a forum for communication on transportation with TxDOT.
2001 in response to the ISTEA legislation

<b>How Should RPO Membership be Structured</b>
Stakeholders such as local elected officials of the member governments, citizens, transportation operators, state officials
Local elected officials from counties and cities, appointed representatives, area engineer, MPO, public transportation, civil engineering, academic engineering
Should be based on membership of elected officials or designated representatives as well as other agencies important to the transportation planning process. Currently, county judges from each of the 7 counties in the COG area appoint 4 people from their respective county to serve as a member on the Regional Planning Organization. These members, along with the COG Board of Directors comprise the Regional Planning Organization (Board of Directors is comprised of county and city elected officials, business men and women, retired elected officials, and other citizens). Staff of the COG are non-voting members. Ex-officio members may include staff from TxDOT, TTI, MPO, public transit, area Workforce Board, Mental health and Mental Retardation, United Way, Community Action Agency, and area colleges/universities, and may vote.
No comment

The RPO members should be local government elected officials of the non-MPO areas, but also allow for elected officials from the MPO to serve as ex-officio members. Ex officio membership should allow any regional stakeholder organizations or other planning agencies to participate.
Should include county judges, mayors of cities, or their proxy.
That should be left open to each region

<b>Purpose and Responsibilities of the Rural Planning Organization</b>
Coordinate transportation planning throughout the region through outreach and education, soliciting input from county and city governments, the MPO, health and human services agencies, the private sector, and the non-profit networks.
Not applicable
To review and conduct coordinated, comprehensive, and continuing transportation planning as outlined in the ISTEA. Activities generally consist of: monitoring existing conditions; using projections of population and employment and development to identify major growth corridors; identifying current and anticipated future transportation problems and needs and identifying strategies to address those needs; developing long-range plans and short-range programs of capital improvement and operational strategies for moving people and goods; estimating impact of future transportation improvements on the environment; developing financial plan for securing sufficient revenues to cover the costs of improvements; review projects submitted by jurisdictions in the COG area for compatibility with regional plans/programs; identify additional funding opportunities for local government transportation initiatives; and identify opportunities for sharing training and bringing resources together for a common goal.
No comment
To provide a venue for city and county officials to come together to address transportation issues that impacted mobility across the ten-county region and beyond the boundaries of the three-county MPO.
To improve transportation in the region

<b>What Are Goals/Objectives/Strategies</b>
Encourage planning transparency and facilitate improved project prioritization by strengthening the role of elected officials in the statewide planning process; encourage state and federal recognition and funding for RPOs; support planning for the service delivery to the transit dependent in rural areas; increase public outreach and public involvement; integrate land use planning and transportation planning in rural areas; support rural economic development coordination in rural transportation.
Hypothetically they would be: to grant decision – making power to local elected officials in matters pertaining to the expenditure of TxDOT funds in the region; develop short and long term plans and gain buy-in for those plans from local elected officials; to ensure that existing infrastructure is adequately maintained and improved; to help reduce TxDOT project cost overruns through effective planning.
Goal is to provide a continuing and coordinated long and short range transportation planning for the COG area. Objectives include: monitoring existing conditions; using projections of population and employment and development to identify major growth

<p>corridors; identifying current and anticipated future transportation problems and needs and identifying strategies to address those needs; developing long-range plans and short-range programs of capital improvement and operational strategies for moving people and goods; estimating impact of future transportation improvements on the environment; developing financial plan for securing sufficient revenues to cover the costs of improvements; review projects submitted by jurisdictions in the COG area for compatibility with regional plans/programs; identify additional funding opportunities for local government transportation initiatives; and identify opportunities for sharing training and bringing resources together for a common goal. The overall strategy has been to bring information, tools, and expertise to the local officials to solve short-term problems and to provide a forum to discuss area-wide transportation issues.</p>
<p>To provide a venue for the elected officials of the 5 rural counties in the COG area to address issues and projects not included in the MPO planning effort.</p>
<p>Per the by-laws the RPO provides a forum for elected officials and community leaders to discuss relevant transportation issues, evaluate and recommend regional impact projects to TxDOT, oversee research and education on financing mechanisms, recommend changes in statutes/rules/policies, coordinate with the MPO on transportation issues, develop a regional mobility strategy, and serve as a clearinghouse for transportation related data.</p>
<p>To improve transportation throughout the area</p>
<p>To improve the coordination and planning for transportation improvements in the region.</p>

<p><b>How Are Projects Developed/Prioritized</b></p>
<p>Projects are developed through various needs assessment tools, surveys, feedback from internal and external customers, concerns expressed in public meetings. They are prioritized based on need and the funding available.</p>
<p>The RPO has not developed a long-range plan to develop and program projects for implementation. Currently work together to provide input on capital projects for implementation by other agencies.</p>
<p>Per TxDOT district processes</p>
<p>Planning projects such as county transportation plans currently underway by the RPO and TxDOT are developed by the staff of these two organizations; the RPO had input on prioritizing the order in which counties would receive assistance. Construction projects are generated by the counties with support of TxDOT area engineers and prioritized by the RPO for the non-MPO portion of the region. A final list of projects prioritized based on regional impact is provided to the DE.</p>
<p>The group votes on projects submitted for consideration. TxDOT has the final say on priorities.</p>
<p>The TxDOT District works through their rural STIP program in consultation with elected officials.</p>

<p><b>Geographic Boundaries for Rural Planning Organizations</b></p>
<p>COG boundaries</p>
<p>COG boundaries</p>
<p>COG boundaries are logical place since they currently have the regional organization to support the effort.</p>

No comment
The RPOS should be based on the 24 COG boundaries and the COGs should provide the support staff for them. If the RPO scope of work includes prioritizing regional projects for use by TxDOT, this can best be achieved by having the TxDOT boundaries aligned with the RPO boundaries. If the RPOs primary function is planning assistance to counties, aligning with TxDOT boundaries isn't necessary. If RPOs are funded to do transportation planning it makes the most sense to have them at the COGs, which already work on other regional issues that impact transportation such as housing, economic and community development, water planning, etc.
Needs to correspond to TxDOT Districts
Should mirror COG boundaries. The elected officials in those regions have relationships with one another and have a history of working together on other programs.

<b>What Are Your Thoughts on RPOs</b>
RPOs can improve the transparency of statewide planning by providing more public transparency in the planning process and holding local elected officials accountable to the public. They will increase "ownership" in the process. COGs are in a good position to support these efforts through the existing organization.
The COG feels that RPOs will provide representatives of the general population within a region an opportunity to contribute to the decision making process regarding the expenditure of TxDOT funds within a region. Utilizing local expertise in maintaining and improving regional transportation infrastructure will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of regional fund allocations.
Believe that RPOs will empower local officials from rural counties to be proactive in planning and will assist in developing projects in a cooperative manner. Believe that there should be more local funding of transportation projects rather than leaning on TxDOT to build everything. Hopeful TxDOT will buy into the RPO process and accept RPOs as the lead agency for regional planning.
No comment
To sustain the road networks in many rural areas, counties need planning assistance to help guide development and prepare for growth. This is especially the case for counties on the outer ring of high growth urban areas; however, if they are not in the MPO, they do not have access to this type of assistance. RPOs can play an important role in achieving consensus among city and county officials across a region with regard to how limited funding should be spent by TxDOT Districts.
Our existing organization provides us with the opportunity for communication.
They could streamline and make much more efficient the process of gaining consensus among local officials.

<b>Funding for Rural Planning Organization</b>
Federal highway, transit, or safety planning resources could be targeted by TxDOT to provide support. Depending on the size and complexity of the region, might need between \$20K and \$50K annually.
Should receive financial assistance from TxDOT. The allocation of monies currently being distributed to Regional Offices to develop the long-term and short-term regional plans could be shifted to RPOs for the same purpose. The amount needed will vary by

size and needs.
The COG funds the RPO effort using about \$75,000/year and believes this figure to represent the “average” for supporting the effort (some areas may require more or less depending on circumstances). It might work for each RPO to get a base amount and then additional funds based on some formula that could consider population, square miles, etc. Also believes that a monetary or in-kind match should be required from all member county and local governments to supplement the planning effort. These funds could be used for a wider variety of purposes and would promote a vested interest in the process. (COG currently uses the uniform volunteer rate established by the IRS, currently set at \$20.25/hr, to calculate the value of time for each member traveling to and attending the meetings as part of the local match).
No comment
RPOs can provide information to counties on funding projects such as helping them use tools such as TIFs, leveraging economic development projects to include ROW dedication or road construction, and use of other creative means for developing infrastructure. This would seem to be an investment that the State needs to make to build capacity and ultimately get planning done that could provide savings in the long run.
Funding is provided by TxDOT. The State should provide funding to support the RPO effort.
Cost savings in shifting the effort from the District staff should provide enough for modest funding for the program.

<b>Coordination between Rural Planning Organizations, MPOs, COGs, and RMAs</b>
In rural transportation planning, coordination can be viewed as a continuum of the overall transportation planning process. RPOs can work with and share responsibility with these agencies and work together to achieve regional transportation goals.
Absolute necessity that RPOs coordinate with other regional planning organizations. The COG currently has a voting seat on the MPO and MPOs should be participants on the RPO process, but not direct the process. Coordination with RMAs should be dealt with by those areas where they exist.
Any RPO should cooperate with MPOs or RMAs on regional plans and programs. This could be achieved by allowing representatives of each agency to attend meetings, make presentations, and through open communication.
Since the rural subcommittee is set up under the COG Board of Directors and the COG also houses the MPO, coordination should be easy.
RPOs should work seamlessly with the MPOs through coordination/communication and may incorporate key elements of regional plans that impact the same geographical area. RPOS should work with RMAs on projects viable for financing.
There have been no problems in coordination.
Coordination should be seamless. Nothing to prohibit an RPO from working closely with all of these, whereas there are regulations regarding MPO funding restrictions geographically. RMAs are so specialized that in some areas they are not going to be a factor. Where RMAs exist there should be seamless interaction.

<b>Cooperation/Communication with TxDOT</b>
Yes. Largely at the District level, but do have interaction with the Transit Division, aviation division, and multimodal division.
Yes. As of now this is largely with the TxDOT District and area engineer offices.
Yes we work with the local TxDOT District office and several Divisions out of Austin as needed.
No comment
The COG and the RPO regularly communicate with TxDOT District Office.
Good communication. Mostly at District level.
Group works informally with the TxDOT District

<b>Cooperation/Communication with MPO</b>
Yes, the COG executive director is a member of the MPO Policy Board and the Transit District provides a report at each MPO meeting. The Transit District is also involved in TIP development for small urban projects.
A COG member sits on the MPOs policy board as a voting member. An RPO would likely have the MPO as a voting member as well.
Yes. MPO is invited to meetings and asked to present results of studies and plans.
Both the subcommittee and the MPO are part of the COG
The COG, as the staff of the RPO, works regularly with the MPO on multiple types of projects. Currently coordinating with them on a regional Growth Assessment.
The MPO is invited to our meetings and we have some members in common.
The COG houses the MPO so there is good cooperation/communication

<b>Would This Group Fit into Rural Planning if Established</b>
The COG could provide the fiscal or administrative support and the area Transit District could provide technical assistance for planning activities.
Yes, this is the logical place for the RPO in this area. Would like to see TxDOT embrace and support the RPO as the rural “decision” making body with regard to area plans and project prioritization.
No comment
The COG is the current RPO for the area and it has been a good fit. Would like to see funding established to complete capacity building, planning, and project prioritization.
We are the rural planning group.
We are the rural planning group.



**APPENDIX C: EXAMPLE BYLAWS AND MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**



## *Cross Plains Rural Transportation Council (CPRTC) By-Laws*

### **Article 1 – Mission Statement**

To advise the planning and development of rural transportation needs and projects relative to the rural region served by the Cross Plains Rural Transportation Council (CPRTC) and communicate those needs and recommendations to all levels of government.

### **Article 2 – Region**

Counties consisting of Archer, Baylor, Clay, Cooke, Montague, Throckmorton, Wichita, Wilbarger and Young, and all incorporated cities including Wichita Falls within the Wichita Falls TxDOT District.

### **Article 3 – Members**

Voting members include each of the nine county judges and one representative from each incorporated city including Wichita Falls. The chief elected official, judge or mayor, may designate a proxy in writing.

A minimum of nine (9) voting members must be present to form a quorum.

Ex-officio members include TxDOT staff, Economic Development Corporations, Chambers of Commerce, State Senators and State Representatives representing the region.

### **Article 4 – Meetings**

Meetings are held quarterly with minutes taken and approved by the members at each meeting. On an annual basis in October, CPRTC will review, nominate, and prioritize projects.

### **Article 5 – Elected Officials and Committees**

Chairman and Vice-Chairman Officers are elected every 2 years in January. Chairman's duties are to conduct the meeting and represent CPRTC as required. The Vice-Chairman will perform these duties in absence of the Chairman.

MPO liaison committee is a 3 person committee that is appointed by the Chairman every 2 years to meet with the MPO personnel as needed.

### **Article 6 – Amendments**

CPRTC may amend these by-laws at a regular meeting and will take effect when approved by the CPRTC membership.

Adopted by CPRTC Membership on: October 16, 2008

**Bylaws**  
**Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization**  
**of the**  
**Capital Area Council of Governments**  
**Article I – Name, Purpose, Responsibilities**

The Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization, herein referred to as CARTPO, enhances regional mobility through education, coordination, and advocacy. CARTPO serves as a forum for elected officials to come together on transportation issues to recommend changes in policy and practice, advocate for legislation, recommend regional priorities, direct certain planning and data initiatives, oversee the federally-prescribed local consultation process, and collaborate with the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO).

“Transportation”, for the purposes of CARTPO’s mission, shall be defined as any road, rail, transit, aviation, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure, as well as the associated physical, economic, political, and social impacts of that infrastructure.

CARTPO was originally created as a response to TEA-21 legislation, which called for state departments of transportation to work with officials in non-metropolitan areas when making transportation planning and programming decisions. CARTPO’s responsibilities include:

- Providing a forum for elected officials and community leaders to learn about and discuss relevant transportation topics;
- Evaluating and recommending projects with a regional impact to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT);
- Overseeing research and education on financing mechanisms for transportation and related projects;
- Studying and recommending changes in statutes, rules, or policies related to state or federal transportation programs;
- Coordinating with CAMPO on transportation issues; and
- Developing a regional mobility strategy for the ten-county area;
- Serving as an information clearinghouse for transportation related data.

CAPCOG shall provide staffing and administrative support for all CARTPO activities.

**Article II - Membership**

CARTPO membership shall be open to representatives from cities, counties, transportation agencies, private and non-profit organizations, and citizens who are interested in regional transportation issues. CARTPO is composed of voting, non-voting ex-officio, non-voting associate, and staff members.

Adopted 03/14/07 Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization

### Voting Members

Each county in the 10-county CAPCOG region may choose three (3) elected officials to serve as voting members. Individual counties are encouraged to include at least one municipal representative in their voting membership.

### Ex-Officio Member

Each of the following regional transportation stakeholder organizations may choose (1) official to serve as a non-voting ex-officio member:

- Austin Area Research Organization (AARO)
- Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council
- Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)
- Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS)
- Capital Area Transportation Coalition (CATC)
- Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (CMTA)
- Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA)
- Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce (GACC)
- Texas Department of Transportation – Austin District (TxDOT)

### Associate Member

Any government, organization, or individual interested in regional transportation issues may serve as a non-voting associate member.

## **Article III - Officers**

1. CARTPO shall elect from among its voting members a Chair, Vice Chair at the first meeting of the calendar year.
2. All CARTPO officers must represent a city or county in the 10-county CAPCOG region.
3. Officers serve two-year terms, beginning on the date they are elected.
4. In the event an Officer is unable to fulfill his/her term, CARTPO shall elect a replacement, at a regular or specially called meeting, who serves for the remainder of the unexpired term.
5. In the case of a tie vote at which a quorum is present, the Chair will be deemed to have the authority to break the tie.
6. In case the Chair and Vice-Chair are absent or unable to preside over meetings and perform their duties, CARTPO may appoint a Chair pro tem.

## **Article IV - Meetings**

### Regular

1. CARTPO shall meet at least four times annually on a day, time and place specified by the CARTPO Chair or the CAPCOG Executive Director.
2. Written notice of each regular meeting shall be prepared by the CARTPO liaison and mailed, or electronically transmitted, or hand-delivered to each CARTPO representative at least five (5) business days before the meeting date.

Adopted 03/14/07 Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization

3. CARTPO Ad Hoc Committees may meet regularly or specially if called by the Ad Hoc Committee Chair, CAPCOG Executive Director, or Executive Director's designee.

#### Special

1. CARTPO shall meet specially if called by the CAPCOG Executive Director, the Executive Director's designee, or the CARTPO Chair-
2. Notice of any special meeting shall be given at least 72 hours prior to the special meeting.

#### Quorum and Action

1. A quorum exists when at least one voting member from six of the 10 counties in the CAPCOG region is present.
2. If a quorum is present when a vote is taken, the affirmative vote of a majority of the representatives entitled to vote and present is the act of CARTPO, except when scoring the Call for Projects.
3. If a quorum is present when scoring the Call for Projects, the average score of the Voting Members from each county is summed and divided by the total number of counties that voted. Voting Members must abstain from scoring projects which exist within the county they represent. The list of projects submitted for evaluation is prioritized according to the average score of the counties present and represents the act of CARTPO.

#### Open Meetings and Records

1. All meetings of CARTPO shall be open to the public. The meetings are not subject to the Texas Open Meetings Act.
2. Minutes of the CARTPO meetings, documents distributed and other records are the property of CAPCOG.
3. Except where these bylaws require otherwise, *Robert's Rules of Order* shall govern the conduct of CARTPO meetings.

### **Article V – Ad Hoc Committees**

#### Appointment

Ad hoc committees may be appointed by the CARTPO Chair and shall serve for special purposes to comply with special needs.

#### Terms

Terms of membership on ad hoc committees shall be established to achieve the purpose for which the committee was created. At least three (3) counties and/or cities must be represented in each ad hoc committee. Ex-Officio members may also be appointed to ad hoc committees for technical expertise and will serve in a non-voting capacity. The CARTPO Chair has the authority to dissolve the ad hoc committee once the committee's purpose is achieved or the committee becomes inactive.

#### Meetings

Adopted 03/14/07 Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization

The method for calling ad hoc committee meetings shall be at the discretion of the ad hoc committee membership to discharge their responsibility.

Officers

The Chairs of the ad hoc committees shall be appointed by the Chair of CARTPO.

**Article VI - Amendments**

By Capital Area Council of Governments Executive Committee

The CAPCOG Executive Committee may amend these bylaws at a regular or special called meeting. The written text of a proposed amendment must be included with the notice of the meeting at which the amendment will be discussed and voted on.

By the Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization

Representatives to CARTPO may recommend amendments to these bylaws at a regular or special called meeting. The written text of a recommended amendment must be included with the notice of the meeting at which the amendment will be discussed and voted on. If the CARTPO representatives approve the recommended amendment, it is then forwarded to the CAPCOG Executive Director to be brought to the CAPCOG Executive Committee.

Effective Date

An amendment to these bylaws takes effect when approved by the CAPCOG Executive Committee.

Bylaws History

Adopted 03/14/07

Amended 04/11/07

Adopted 03/14/07 Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization

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**BYLAWS OF THE  
ALAMO REGIONAL RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

**ARTICLE I – PURPOSE**

- 1.1 Within the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), at 23 USC 101(b)(3), the U. S. Congress declared:
  - (D) among the foremost needs that the surface transportation system must meet to provide for a strong and vigorous national economy are safe, efficient, and reliable –
    - (i) national and interregional personal mobility (including personal mobility in rural and urban areas) and reduced congestion;
    - (ii) flow of interstate and international commerce and freight transportation; and
    - (iii) travel movements essential for national security.
- 1.2 The SAFETEA-LU legislation specifically mandates creation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to address these transportation objectives within the larger urban areas. Seeing the need for a parallel, rural counterpart to the MPOs, the State of Texas and many other states have begun movement toward establishing infrastructure to support Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs).
- 1.3 Therefore, the member jurisdictions hereby establish this organization for the purpose of fostering a coordinated, continuing, cooperative, comprehensive, and proactive transportation planning, decision-making, and prioritization process for improvement of rural transportation within the region defined in Article II.

**ARTICLE II – NAME AND JURISDICTION**

- 2.1 The body formed to address regional rural transportation objectives shall be known as the Alamo Regional Rural Planning Organization, or ARRPO.
- 2.2 The ARRPO is a voluntary-membership organization serving the 11-county rural area of the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) Region. While supported by AACOG, the ARRPO shall stand separate from AACOG governance.
- 2.3 The area represented by the ARRPO shall be known as the ARRPO Region. This area shall include the following counties exclusive of those areas within the boundaries of an existing or future MPO: Atascosa, Bandera, Comal, Frio, Gillespie, Guadalupe, Karnes, Kendall, Kerr, Medina, and Wilson.

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### ARTICLE III – FUNCTIONS, AND ACTIVITIES

- 3.1 The ARRPO shall provide for rural mobility through the functions of organization, planning, coordination, advocacy, inclusion, and education. These functions shall be designed to strengthen transportation capabilities and efficiencies within the ARRPO Region.
- 3.2 Activities in furtherance of these functions include but shall not be limited to the following:
  - a. Organization
    1. Develop and maintain an organized forum for transportation planning and oversight of implementation within the ARRPO Region and with TxDOT.
    2. Establish and oversee sufficient committees to evaluate transportation needs, develop recommendations for action, and seek implementation of those recommendations for the betterment of ARRPO regional transportation objectives.
    3. Create and amend, as necessary, a set of bylaws and other governing documents for efficient, effective operation of the ARRPO.
  - b. Planning.
    1. Direct rural-transportation planning and data initiatives having an ARRPO regional impact.
    2. Ensure analyses and plans include infrastructure considerations for multi-modal mobility of both people and goods.
    3. Develop and regularly update a summary of transportation issues, strengths, and limitations for the ARRPO Region.
    4. Create and regularly update a prioritized list of ARRPO short- and long-range transportation projects for consideration in the Rural Transportation Plan (RTP) and the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).
    5. Consider environmental impacts related to development of ARRPO regional policies, projects, and facilities.
    6. Develop and implement a regional transportation strategy with supporting goals, objectives, and plans in furtherance of ARRPO regional priorities and projects. The ARRPO shall update the strategy no less than every three years.
    7. Develop an annual Planning Work Program to define tasks, responsibilities, and budgets for the ARRPO and its committees.
    8. As necessary, assist TxDOT in developing plans for identified projects.
    9. Research, identify, and pursue alternative funding sources for transportation-related projects.

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c. Coordination.

1. Ensure ARRPO efforts are, to the greatest extent practicable, complementary to the efforts of the SA-BC MPO, other MPOs that may be created within the AACOG region, and TxDOT plans.
2. Ensure transportation plans and programs affecting multiple jurisdictions have complementary focus and action.
3. Actively coordinate with ARRPO jurisdictions and transportation planning organizations to keep each aware of individual and collective transportation needs, plans, and potential impacts.
4. Serve as a cohesive entity to communicate needs and recommendations among all levels of government within the ARRPO Region.
5. Collaborate with all other governmental transportation planning bodies within the ARRPO Region to create regional consensus and unity of purpose.
6. Serve as the formal link to TxDOT for planning, coordination, and execution of ARRPO regional transportation projects.
7. Assist TxDOT in developing and prioritizing projects for inclusion in a statewide and ARRPO regional TIP and RTP.
8. Act as a consultant body to the TxDOT District Office for planning, design, construction, and maintenance of projects affecting the ARRPO Region.
9. Participate in the planning of transportation corridors transiting the ARRPO Region.

d. Advocacy.

1. Provide a unified forum for the ARRPO Region when addressing transportation matters with the Federal and State governments
2. Study and recommend development of and changes to statutes, rules, or policies related to Federal and State transportation programs, especially as they pertain to ARRPO regional needs.
3. Provide advice and input toward shaping State transportation planning priorities, goals, and objectives.
4. Provide a forum for deciding when to use public or private partnerships to develop projects.
5. In coordination with the SA-BC MPO, advise and assist TxDOT in development of interdependent components of long-range RTP and TIP projects.

e. Inclusion

1. Serve as a formal forum for local elected officials and other public and private interested parties to meet and discuss transportation issues affecting the ARRPO Region.

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2. Ensure early and continuous public involvement from conceptual planning, to decision-making, and on through implementation.
  3. Provide an effective forum for public and private interests to express their concerns regarding transportation multi-modal infrastructure for both people and freight within the ARRPO Region.
- f. Education.
1. Serve as a clearinghouse for transportation-related information and resources to, from, and between local governments, public and private organizations/entities, and the general public.
  2. Make short- and long-range transportation plans available for public review.
  3. Make the public aware of challenges and successes in achieving the goals, objectives, and plans embodied in the regional transportation strategy.

#### ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP

- 4.1 There shall be three categories of ARRPO membership: Board of Directors, ex-officio, and at-large.
- a. Board of Directors.
1. Counties and municipalities within the ARRPO Region choosing to become members shall be represented on the ARRPO Board of Directors in the following manner.
    - a) Each member county shall have one director, who will be the County Judge or an elected member of the Commissioners Court as appointed by the Commissioners Court.
    - b) Member municipalities shall be represented by three municipal, elected officials – one each from the three county groupings listed below, provided those municipalities are not currently within the boundary of an existing MPO. These directors shall be selected by the City Councils of the applicable county groupings in a manner of their choosing.
      - 1) Group A: Atascosa, Frio, and Medina Counties.
      - 2) Group B: Comal, Guadalupe, Karnes, and Wilson Counties.
      - 3) Group C: Bandera, Gillespie, Kendall, and Kerr Counties
  2. The TxDOT District Engineer shall have one director seat.
  3. The San Antonio-Bexar Metropolitan Planning Organization (SA-BC MPO) shall select one director from its body of officials in a manner of its choosing.
  4. The county, municipal, and TxDOT directors shall be the only directors having voting rights, subject to any limitations imposed under the open-

- 
- government laws for potential conflicts of interest. All directors shall have the right to serve on any ARRPO committee.
5. Directors shall serve during their continuance in the office to which elected/appointed or for a term of one year, whichever is less. Directors may be selected for multiple terms.
  6. Notwithstanding 4.1(a)(5), directors shall continue to serve until a successor is selected or until such time as the director may become ineligible for any reason other than end of the ARRPO term. At least 60 days prior to the end of each director's ARRPO term, the Chairperson shall notify the director in writing of the pending expiration of his/her term.
  7. Each director from the counties and municipalities may name an elected-official alternate; county alternates shall be an elected member of the applicable Commissioners Court, and municipal alternates shall be an elected official from the applicable city council. The TxDOT and SA-BC MPO directors may also name an alternate who is an official of the respective entity. Alternate designations shall be submitted in writing to the ARRPO Chairperson for acceptance. Alternates may exercise full member powers at meetings during the primary's absence or as delegated in writing by the primary for a period of time. The alternate's authority to substitute for the primary shall cease upon expiration of the primary's term or upon written notification of rescission of alternate status by the primary to the Chairperson.
  8. Should a director fail to attend or have an alternate attend one-third of all meetings in a given 12-month period, the Chairperson shall contact said director to discuss consideration of a replacement.
  9. A simple majority of a quorum in meeting may remove a director for excessive absence or failure to fulfill obligations to the ARRPO.
- b. Ex-officio membership. The AACOG Executive Director shall serve as an ex-officio member. This individual shall have no motion, second, or voting rights at meetings of the main body but may serve on any ARRPO committee and participate in committee business as the committee decides.
  - c. At-large membership.
    1. Any ARRPO-region governmental or non-governmental agency, business, organization, or individual with a stake in ARRPO regional transportation issues may serve as an at-large member. The ARRPO and AACOG shall actively solicit at-large membership from both passenger and freight concerns operating within the ARRPO Region.
    2. At-large members shall have no motion, second, or voting rights at meetings of the main body but may serve on any ARRPO committee and participate in committee business as the committee decides. These members shall make known their interest in transportation and their connection to any governmental or for-profit entity with an interest in transportation.

## ARTICLE V- OFFICERS AND DUTIES

- 5.1 The directors shall elect from among them a Chairperson and Vice-chairperson at the January meeting of each calendar year. Election shall be by simple majority of a quorum of the directors at that meeting.
- 5.2 The Chairperson's duties shall be to:
- a. Ensure the purposes of the ARRPO are achieved.
  - b. Ensure update of the regional transportation strategy within the time limits prescribed herein.
  - c. Establish the agenda for all meetings of the ARRPO main body, taking into consideration requests for agenda items submitted by members or the ACOG Executive Director.
  - d. Chair all meetings of the ARRPO main body, whether regular or special.
  - e. As deemed necessary, establish committees, define their purposes, and appoint their chairpersons.
  - f. Dissolve committees when their purposes have been achieved or they become inactive.
  - g. Monitor efforts of all committees
  - h. Receive letters of appointment or rescission for director alternates.
  - i. Execute, sign, and enter into any and all agreements on behalf of the ARRPO, with Board approval.
- 5.3 The Vice-chairperson's duties shall be to:
- a. Fulfill the duties of the Chairperson when the Chairperson is unavailable or unable to perform her/his duties.
  - b. Ensure development of an annual Planning Work Program for the succeeding calendar year.
  - c. Assist the Chairperson in monitoring efforts of the committees
  - d. Ensure compilation and certification of meeting minutes.
- 5.4 Initial officers shall serve until the second January meeting following inception of the ARRPO. Subsequent officers shall serve a one-year term to commence at the meeting subsequent to election. An individual may serve as Chairperson or Vice-chairperson for a maximum of four consecutive years or the end of his/her elected/appointed term of office, whichever is less.
- 5.5 Should an officer be unable to fulfill her/his term, the remaining directors shall, at a regular or specially-called meeting, elect a replacement to serve the remainder of the unexpired term.
- 5.6 In the event both the Chairperson and Vice-chairperson are absent or otherwise unable to preside over any meeting or perform their respective duties, the directors present may, in a manner of their choosing, appoint a director to chair the meeting.

#### ARTICLE VI – COMMITTEES

- 6.1 All committees shall serve for a purpose specified by the ARRPO Chairperson. Committees shall be dissolved when their intended purposes have been achieved or eliminated.
- 6.2 Committees shall organize themselves, decide procedures for governance and continuity, and establish decision-making procedures as each sees fit to conduct effective and efficient business, provided:
  - a. Those methods are consistent with open-meeting requirements and these bylaws.
  - b. The composition of the committee must include representation from at least one-third of the member counties.
- 6.3 As committees are established, their purposes and primary activities shall be incorporated in or appended to these bylaws.

#### ARTICLE VII – MEETINGS

- 7.1 Open meetings and records.
  - a. The ARRPO and its committees shall:
    1. Post notice of and conduct meetings in compliance with the Texas Government Code, Chapter 551 – Open Meetings.
    2. Use generally accepted parliamentary procedures for meetings provided they are consistent with open-meeting requirements and these bylaws.
  - b. The designated AACOG support staff shall ensure proper publication and posting of meeting notices, distribution of meeting materials, and maintenance of records in accordance with open-meeting and record-retention requirements.
- 7.2 Regular meetings.
  - a. The ARRPO shall meet as regularly as deemed necessary by the directors. One of these meetings shall be in January each year with one of its agenda items being election of officers.
  - b. Regular meetings may be cancelled if the Chairperson determines there is insufficient business to warrant the meeting.
  - c. Mail-outs for each regular meeting shall be prepared and distributed at least five business days prior to the scheduled meeting date.
  - d. Regular-meeting agendas shall provide an opportunity for citizens to be heard. Time limitations shall be determined by policy of the Board of Directors.
- 7.3 Special meetings
  - a. Special meetings may be called by:
    1. The ARRPO Chairperson, or

- 
2. Petition of a simple majority of directors.
  - b. Mail-outs for each special meeting shall be prepared and distributed at least three business days prior to the scheduled meeting date.
  - c. Special-meeting agendas shall provide an opportunity for citizens to be heard. Time limitations shall be determined by policy of the Board of Directors.
- 7.4 Committee meetings.
- a. Committees shall meet as often as the committee members deem necessary to carry out their appointed duties.
  - b. Mail-outs for regular committee meetings shall be prepared and distributed at least five business days prior to the scheduled meeting date. Those for special committee meetings shall be prepared and distributed at least three business days prior to the scheduled meeting date.
  - c. Meeting agendas, both regular and specially-called, shall provide an opportunity for citizens to be heard. Time limitations shall be determined by policy of the Board of Directors.
- 7.5 Quorum and action.
- a. A quorum shall exist when there is a simple majority of directors or their designated alternates.
  - b. Vacancies will not count against determination of a quorum.
  - c. If a quorum is present, the affirmative vote of a simple majority of the directors present is the act of ARRPO.

#### **Article VIII – Support Staffing**

- 8.1 AACOG shall provide the staff and administrative support necessary to execute all ARRPO activities.
- 8.2 AACOG shall be the repository for all records of the ARRPO.
- 8.3 The AACOG General Counsel shall address all open records requests.

#### **Article IX – Amendment of Bylaws**

- 9.1 The ARRPO directors may amend these bylaws at any meeting provided both a notice of intent to consider amendments and the proposed text of the amendments are furnished to all categories of ARRPO members at least 30 days prior to such a vote.
  - 9.2 Voting shall occur only after all categories of membership have been afforded an opportunity to comment.
-

- 9.3 Approved changes shall take effect upon the affirmative vote of three-fourths of the directors present. Upon the first and subsequent amendments, the amendment date shall be noted in the bylaws history below.
- 9.4 Approved amendments will be forwarded to the ACOG Board of Directors for their information.

**Article X – Bylaws History**

- 10.1 These bylaws have been initially adopted to be effective April 29, 2009.

**Memorandum of Understanding for  
Cooperative, Comprehensive and Continuing Transportation Planning and the  
Establishment of a  
Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO)  
in the XXXXXXXX Region For**

One County and its municipalities; Two County and its municipalities outside the MPO area; Three... County and its municipalities; and the Texas Department of Transportation.

**Witnesseth**

**Whereas**, section 135 of Title 23, United States Code, declares that it is in the national interest to encourage and promote the development of transportation systems embracing various modes of transportation in a manner that will serve all areas of the State efficiently and effectively; and

**Whereas**, Texas .....provides for the establishment of Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RPOs), similar in concept to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for transportation planning in Texas's urban areas; and

**Whereas**, the establishment of a Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) will provide rural areas the opportunity to work in partnership with the Texas Department of Transportation toward the development of sound, short and long-range transportation planning for rural areas; and

**Whereas**, the establishment of a Rural Planning Organization (RPO)for the XXXXXXXX area would assist the Texas Department of Transportation in complying with the provisions of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA 21), enacted June 9, 1998, relative to the participation of local officials and the public in the transportation planning process; and,

**Whereas**, it is the desire of these local governments and agencies to establish a continuing, comprehensive, cooperative transportation planning process with the establishment of a Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) for ## counties in the XXXXXXXX region.

**Now, therefore**, the following memorandum of understanding is made.

**Section 1.** It is hereby agreed, that the Counties of One, Two, and Three... and the municipalities located within those counties not included in a Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Texas Department of Transportation intend to establish and participate in a Rural Transportation Planning Organization created for the general purposes and responsibilities outlined below:

1. To provide input into the long-range local and regional multi-modal transportation plans in cooperation with the Texas Department of Transportation.
2. To provide a forum for public participation in the rural transportation planning process.
3. To develop and prioritize suggestions for transportation projects to be included in the state's Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).
4. To provide transportation-related information to local governments and other interested organizations and persons.
5. To conduct transportation related studies and surveys for local governments and other interested entities/organizations.
6. To perform other related transportation planning activities that shall be agreed upon between the RPO and the Texas Department of Transportation.

**Section 2.** It is hereby further agreed that the transportation plans and programs and land use policies and programs for the Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) will be coordinated with the Texas Department of Transportation, the administrative entity and lead planning agency for coordinating rural transportation planning in the ##-county planning area.

**Section 3.** A Rural Planning Organization Policy Board is hereby established with the responsibility for serving as a forum for cooperative transportation planning decision making for the Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO). The policy board shall have the responsibility of keeping other local policy boards informed of the status and requirements of the transportation planning process; to assist in the dissemination and clarification of the decisions, inclinations, and policies of the policy boards; and to help ensure meaningful public participation in the rural transportation planning process.

1. The RPO policy board will be responsible for carrying out the following:
  - A. Establishment of goals, priorities, and objectives for the transportation planning process.
  - B. Review and recommend changes to adopted transportation plans for the Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO).

- C. Review and recommend a work program for transportation planning which defines work tasks and responsibilities for the various agencies participating in the Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO).
  - D. Review and recommend transportation improvement projects, which support and enhance intra-county transportation within the Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO).
2. The membership of the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee shall consist of the following:
- A. [SEE EXAMPLE BY-LAWS].
  - B. One Texas Department of Transportation member.
3. Each voting representative shall have one vote.
4. The Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) will meet as often as it is deemed necessary, appropriate and advisable.

**Section 4.** Establishment of the Policy Board. **SEE RPO BY-LAWS**

**Section 5.** It is further agreed that all participating agencies will assist in the Rural Transportation planning process by providing planning assistance, data, and inventories in accordance with the approved work program.

**Section 6.** Parties to this Memorandum of Understanding may terminate their participation in the continuing transportation planning process by giving written notice of termination to the RPO 90 days before the end of the fiscal year.

**Section 7.** In witness whereof, the parties of the Memorandum of Understanding have been authorized by appropriate and proper resolutions, and/or legislative authority to sign this Memorandum of Understanding, as of the dates shown on each of the following county signature pages.

\_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY

**This “THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR COOPERATIVE, COMPREHENSIVE, AND CONTINUING TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RURAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION IN THE XXXXXXXX RPO,”** is hereby adopted by the \_\_\_\_\_ County Board of Commissioners, this the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20##.

\_\_\_\_\_ County

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk to Board

## **APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE PROJECT PRIORITIZATION**

## **CARTPO 2008 Call for Projects & 2008 Project Scoring Guidelines**

County's submitting regional projects for CARTPO's consideration will have the opportunity to make a 12-minute presentation to CARTPO at the scoring meeting on December 5, 2008. Presentations should address each of the scoring criteria listed in bold below. Each presentation will be followed by a 5-minute question and answer period. CARTPO Voting Members present at the meeting will then score the projects utilizing the following scoring criteria:

**Local Support and/or Participation** – Is the project politically supported by local officials, regional groups, etc.? What percentage (if any) of the total project cost can be funded and/or matched by local governments?

- Little or no political support and/or local funding (0-3)
- Some political support and/or local funding (4-7)
- Substantial political support and/or local funding (8-10)

**Economic Development Impacts** – Will the proposed improvement increase economic development opportunities or improve productivity and efficiency? How will it accomplish this? Will it improve upon the existing quality of life, e.g., have a positive impact on air quality, access to work and/or recreation)? How will it accomplish this?

- Little or no economic development impacts (0-3)
- Some economic development impacts (4-7)
- Substantial economic development impacts (8-10)

**Ease of Implementation** – How difficult will it be to acquire the right-of-way necessary for the proposed improvements? Are there any outstanding environmental or engineering requirements? What are its limitations?

- Major project limitations (0-3)
- Some project limitations (4-7)
- Minor project limitations (8-10)

**Regional Impact** – What transportation impacts will the proposed improvement have on other cities and counties in the region?

- Little or no regional impact (0-3)
- Some regional impact (4-7)
- Substantial regional impact (8-10)

**Safety Considerations** – Are there safety considerations that will be addressed by this project?

- Little or no safety considerations (0-3)
- Some safety considerations (4-7)
- Substantial safety considerations (8-10)

**Current and Projected Traffic Volumes** – How high are the peak traffic volumes compared with other traffic counts in the area?

- Low traffic volumes (0-3)
- Medium traffic volumes (4-7)
- High traffic volumes (8-10)

A quorum is required to score the list of regional projects submitted to CARTPO for consideration. A quorum exists when at least one voting member from six (6) of the ten (10) counties in the CAPCOG region is present. If a quorum is present when scoring the Call for Projects, the average score of the Voting Members from each county is summed and divided by the total number of counties that voted. Voting Members must abstain from scoring projects which exist within the county they represent. The list of projects submitted for evaluation is prioritized according to the average score of the counties present and represents the act of CARTPO.

**Cross Plains Rural Transportation Council  
Project Nomination Form**

Highway or location: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Limits from: \_\_\_\_\_

Limits to: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason project is needed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other relevant information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Local entity participation: \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Entity: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form by **September 15<sup>th</sup>** to attention: **XXXXXXXXXX**, Texas Department of Transportation, 1601 Southwest Parkway, Wichita Falls, TX 76302-4906. If you have any questions, please call (940)720-7727.



## **APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE RPO RESOLUTIONS**





**RESOLUTION**

**A RESOLUTION TO FORMALIZE THE ALAMO AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS AS A RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

**Whereas;** the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has recommended that all Councils of Governments assume the responsibility of becoming Rural Planning Organizations (RPO); and

**Whereas;** the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) now has a long established role in transportation planning assistance in its twelve county area in multiple modes of transportation; and

**Whereas;** the Alamo Area Council of Governments is able to leverage various funding sources to achieve a coordinated and mutually beneficial approach to building consensus on transportation planning issues in and beyond the region.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE ALAMO AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS;**

1. That the AACOG Board of Directors hereby establishes the Area Judges Committee as the Policy Board of the RPO that is responsible for conducting regional transportation planning for the eleven-county rural region of AACOG in a process modeled after the federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) process.
2. That AACOG staff is directed to facilitate the committee's operation subject to available funding.
3. That this Resolution is effective upon adoption.

**PASSED AND APPROVED** this 27<sup>th</sup> day of August 2008.

Signed:

James E. Barden  
AACOG Chairman  
Medina County Judge

**RESOLUTION:**

**A RESOLUTION TO FORMALIZE THE BVCOG'S TRANSPORTATION PLANNING EFFORT THROUGH ITS REGIONAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION (RPO), ESTABLISHING BYLAWS AND DIRECTING STAFF TO REQUEST COUNTIES TO APPOINT MEMBERS.**

**Whereas;** in December 1998 the Brazos Valley Council of Governments established the Regional Cooperation Advisory Committee to plan and among other directives to establish goals for regional transportation; and

**Whereas;** the BVCOG further refined and established the transportation sub-committee to become know as the Regional Planning Organization (RPO) as it conducted the regional transportation planning modeled after the federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) process; and

**Whereas;** the BVCOG now has a long established role in transportation planning for its seven county area in multiple modes of transportation; and

**Whereas;** the Brazos Valley Council of Governments is able to leverage various funding sources to achieve a coordinated and mutually beneficial approach to building consensus on transportation planning issues in and beyond the region.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE BRAZOS VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS:**

1. That the Brazos Valley Council of Governments operates as the Regional Planning Organization (RPO) for the seven-county region as generally based on the committee structure and planning process found within Metropolitan Planning Organizations.
2. That the Regional Transportation Planning Committee is reaffirmed and will operate as a Technical Advisory committee to the BVCOG board of directors.
3. That the bylaws attached hereto and made a part of this resolution are approved for the committee's use.
4. That staff is directed to facilitate the committee's operation subject to available funding.
5. That this Resolution is effective upon adoption.

**PASSED AND APPROVED** this \_\_\_\_ day of April, 2008.

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board Secretary

## RESOLUTION

### Resolution In Support of the Creation of A Regional Transportation Planning Organization For The Capital Area Planning Region

**WHEREAS**, as members of the Capital Area Planning Council Executive Committee and local officials involved in member local governments of the Capital State Planning Region, we recognize our role as a vehicle to facilitate and coordinate collaborative planning in concert with and between government entities, special districts and authorities, and,

**WHEREAS**, the CAPCO region and the Austin-San Antonio Corridor are among the most rapidly growing areas in the state and nation and are expected to double in size by the year 2020, and,

**WHEREAS**, CAPCO, as the state-designated RPC for Region 12, already exists as a foundation for creating a Regional Transportation Planning Organization, and,

**WHEREAS**, the CAMPO currently serves Travis County and portions of Hays and Williamson Counties but is precluded from serving the balance of Region 12 by federal MPO guidelines, and,

**WHEREAS**, the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) specifies "with respect to each non-metropolitan area, the long-range transportation plan shall be developed in consultation with affected local officials with responsibility for transportation", and,

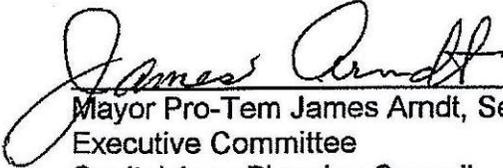
**WHEREAS**, the rapid growth, and increasing traffic congestion, in the CAPCO region makes it critically important to better coordinate transportation planning activities between local leaders, the Texas Department of Transportation, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the Capital Area Rural Transportation System, and others, and,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Capital Area Planning Council Executive Committee supports the creation of a Regional Transportation Planning Organization to facilitate regional transportation planning, and to this end, designates CAPCO members to said committee.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that said Regional Transportation Planning Organization include ex-officio representatives of TxDOT, CAMPO, CMTA, CARTS, and others as deemed appropriate by the CAPCO Executive Committee.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Judge John Doerfler, 1st Vice Chair  
Executive Committee  
Capital Area Planning Council

I hereby certify that this Resolution was adopted as amended by the Executive Committee on this 11th day of August, 1999

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Pro-Tem James Arndt, Secretary  
Executive Committee  
Capital Area Planning Council

**RESOLUTION  
019-03-2002**

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CHAIRPERSON AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO FORM A RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION (RPO) AND TO EXECUTE ALL DOCUMENTS PERTAINING TO THE OPERATION AND FOUNDATION IN SUPPORT OF NON-URBANIZED AREAS IN THE CENTRAL TEXAS REGION.

WHEREAS, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, (TEA-21), and Section 134 (a), Title 23, United States Code authorizes regional entities to form cooperative organizations to conduct transportation planning; and,

WHEREAS, these organizations are commonly known as Rural Planning Organizations, RPO's; and,

WHEREAS, RPO's provide a cooperative unified voice for rural entities to advocate for their funding and project needs, and to be meaningfully involved in integrated multi-modal transportation planning and the project programming process.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Executive Committee that:

1. The Central Texas Council of Governments form an RPO to work with the rural areas on transportation planning issues;
2. That the organization shall be known as the CTCOG RPO;
3. That the RPO will be governed by the Executive Committee of CTCOG until such time as the Executive Committee rescinds this resolution;
4. That this resolution shall be in effect immediately upon its adoption.

Duly adopted at a meeting of the Executive Committee this 25<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2002.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Judge Harlen Barker  
PRESIDENT

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Jack Calvert  
SECRETARY/TREASURER

**COASTAL BEND COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
RESOLUTION NO. 2795**

**A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE CREATION OF A RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR THE COASTAL BEND COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS TWELVE COUNTY PLANNING REGION.**

**WHEREAS**, the Coastal Bend Council of Governments, one of 24 regional planning commissions/councils of governments in Texas, recognizes that it has a legislated role to facilitate and provide regional planning services on behalf of and in concert with local governments and special purpose districts within State Planning Region 20; and

**WHEREAS**, the Coastal Bend Region has an Interstate Highway (37) and several major U. S. and State Highways providing transportation corridors within and through the rural areas of this region; and

**WHEREAS**, the possible creation of a Rural Planning Organization within the Coastal Bend Region would in no way be in conflict or duplicate the ongoing efforts of a long standing Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization; and

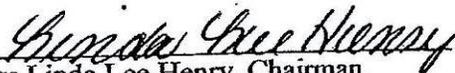
**WHEREAS**, the Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) and Section 134(a), Title 23, United States Government Code, authorizes regional entities to form cooperative organizations to conduct transportation planning; and

**WHEREAS**, these organizations are commonly known as Rural Planning Organizations (RPO's); and

**WHEREAS**, the potential for growth and increased traffic in the Coastal Bend Region would necessitate the need to better plan and coordinate transportation efforts between local government leaders, the Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Texas Department of Transportation, the Coastal Bend Council of Governments and other functional transportation entities.

**NOW, THEREFOR, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Coastal Bend Council of Governments supports the creation of a Rural Planning Organization to facilitate regional transportation planning within the twelve counties of State Planning Region 20 not already served and designates the Coastal Bend Council of Governments as the responsible entity to implement the Coastal Bend Rural Planning Organization.

**Duly adopted at a meeting of the Coastal Bend Council of Governments this 26<sup>th</sup> day of June 2009.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Judge Linda Lee Henry, Chairman

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Commissioner Al Garcia, Secretary

**CONCHO VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
RESOLUTION 05-09**

**RESOLUTION URGING THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE TO RECOGNIZE THE CONCHO  
VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS AS A RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR  
THE RURAL COUNTIES OF THE CONCHO VALLEY REGION.**

WHEREAS, the Concho Valley Council of Governments (CVCOG) is a Regional Planning Commission organized in 1967 under authority granted by the Texas Legislature in 1965 (Article 1011m, V.A.C.S.) and as a Regional Planning Commission defined under Chapter 391 Local Government Code representing the thirteen county Concho Valley Region that consists of Coke, Concho, Crockett, Irion, Kimble, Mason, McCulloch, Menard, Reagan, Schleicher, Sterling, Sutton and Tom Green Counties; and

WHEREAS, the Concho Valley Council of Governments' Executive Committee has identified the regional planning needs of transportation, economic development, community development, environmental resources, services for senior citizens, housing, emergency communications, and criminal justice a high priority need; and

WHEREAS, the Concho Valley Council of Governments has established the Concho Valley Rural Transit District to support operation of transit services for the Concho Valley Region; and

WHEREAS, the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century specifies that "with respect to each non-metropolitan area, the state-wide long-range transportation plan shall be developed in consultation with affected local officials with responsibility for transportation"; and

WHEREAS, the Concho Valley Council of Governments will function as a Rural Planning Organization with regard to regional transportation issues in cooperation with the San Angelo District of the Texas Department of Transportation, and the San Angelo Metropolitan Planning Organization.

**Now, Therefore Be It Resolved By the Concho Valley Council of Governments:**

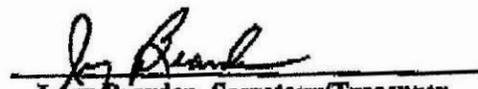
That the 79<sup>th</sup> Legislature be and hereby is urged to officially recognize the Concho Valley Council of Governments as a Rural Planning Organization for the purposes of developing and implementing a rural transportation plan to be submitted to the Texas Department of Transportation on an annual basis.

That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Offices of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, State Representatives of Districts 53, 72 and 85 the State Senator representing Districts 19, 24 and 28, the Chairman of the Texas Transportation Commission and the chairs of the following legislative committees: Senate Committee on Finance, Senate Committee on State Affairs, House Committee on Appropriations, House Committee on Transportation, House Committee on Ways and Means, and House Select Committee on Revenue and Public Education Funding.

That this resolution become effective immediately upon adoption.

**PASSED AND APPROVED, this 13th day of April, 2005.**

  
Miguel Villanueva, Vice-Chairman

  
Jerry Bearden, Secretary/Treasurer

**RESOLUTION**

***Creation of a Rural Planning Organization (RPO) for the  
Deep East Texas Council of Governments Region***

WHEREAS, the members of the Deep East Texas Council of Governments (DETCOG) recognize our role as a vehicle to facilitate and coordinate collaborative transportation planning in concert with and between local governments, special districts, authorities, education institutions and private sector; and,

WHEREAS, a Rural Planning Organization (RPO) is generally defined as a voluntary association of local governments which plans rural transportation systems and advises each state's department of transportation; and,

WHEREAS, RPO's have a variety of objectives, but perhaps the most significant is preparing a description of the transportation issues in the rural area of the region. Objectives include developing and prioritizing of short and long-range regional transportation plans in cooperation with the Texas Department of Transportation; and,

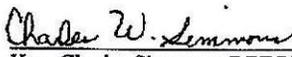
WHEREAS, the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) specifies "with respect to each non-metropolitan area, the long-range transportation plan shall be developed in consultation with local officials responsible for transportation; and,

***NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED*** by the Board of Directors of the Deep East Texas Council of Governments:

- 1) *Supports the creation of a Rural Planning Organization (RPO) to facilitate regional transportation planning within the twelve county region of DETCOG.*
- 2) *Designates DETCOG as the responsible political subdivision for implementation of The DETCOG - RPO.*

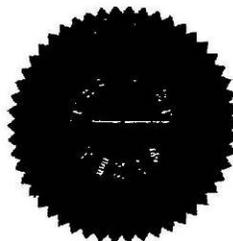
Passed and approved at a regular scheduled meeting of the Board of Directors of the Deep East Texas Council of Governments on this 26<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2008.

Deep East Texas Council of Governments

  
Hon. Charles Simmons, DETCOG President  
Nacogdoches County Commissioner

Attest:

  
Allison Harbison, Secretary  
Shelby County Treasurer



## **RESOLUTION**

### **Resolution in Support of the Creation of a Rural Planning Organization for the Heart of Texas Council Governments' six county region**

**WHEREAS**, as members of the Heart of Texas Council of Governments (HOTCOG) and local officials involved in member local governments of the Heart of Texas six county region, we recognize our role as a vehicle to facilitate and coordinate collaborative planning in concert with and between government entities, special districts and authorities, and ,

**WHEREAS**, the HOTCOG region and the IH35 corridor are among the most rapidly growing areas in the state and nation and are expected to double in size by the year 2020, and,

**WHEREAS**, the HOTCOG as the state designated Council of Governments serves Bosque, Hill, McLennan, Falls, Freestone and Limestone counties, and,

**WHEREAS**, the HOTCOG region also contains the Waco MPO serving the urbanized areas of McLennan County, and,

**WHEREAS**, the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) and section 134 (a), Title 23, United States Government Code authorizes regional entities to form cooperative organizations to conduct transportation planning; and,

**WHEREAS**, these organizations are commonly known as Rural Planning Organizations, RPO's; and,

**WHEREAS**, the rapid growth, and increasing traffic congestion, in the HOTCOG region makes it critically important to better coordinate transportation planning activities between local leaders, the Texas Department of Transportation, the Heart of Texas Council of Governments, and others, and,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Heart of Texas Council of Governments Executive Committee supports the creation of a Rural Planning Organization to facilitate regional transportation planning within and among Bosque, Hill, McLennan, Falls, Limestone and Freestone counties, and designates the HOTCOG as the responsible political subdivision for implementation of the Heart of Texas Rural Planning Organization.

**SUBMITTED AND PASSED** this Twenty-eighth Day of August, 2008, A.D., by motion made, seconded, and duly passed by the Executive Committee of the Heart of Texas Council of Governments.

Signed:

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Ken Hensel, President  
Mayor, City of Rosebud

Attest:

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Randy Riggs, Secretary-Treasurer  
Mayor Protem, City of Waco

## RESOLUTION 2008 - 01

### RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE CREATION OF A RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION (RPO) FOR THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (LRGVDC) REGION

**WHEREAS**, the members of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) recognize our role as a vehicle to facilitate and coordinate collaborative transportation planning in concert with and between government entities, special districts, authorities, education institutions, and private sector; and,

**WHEREAS**, the LRGVDC Region is one of the most rapidly growing areas in the state of Texas and the nation; and,

**WHEREAS**, the LRGVDC, as the state designated Council of Government (COG) progressively serves Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties; and,

**WHEREAS**, the LRGVDC currently serves as the administrative/fiscal agent for the Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization (HCMPO); and,

**WHEREAS**, the LRGVDC Region also contains the Brownsville MPO, and the Harlingen-San Benito MPO serving the urbanized areas of Cameron County; and,

**WHEREAS**, there is a need for coordination of transportation planning among the Region's existing MPO's and the rural areas lying outside of the current MPO urbanized area boundaries; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) specifies "with respect to each non-metropolitan area, the long-range transportation plan shall be developed in consultation with affected local officials with responsibility for transportation".

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) Board of Directors supports the creation of a Rural Planning Organization (RPO) to facilitate regional transportation planning within and among Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties, and designates the LRGVDC as the responsible political subdivision for implementation of the LRGVDC-RPO.

**ADOPTED** this 28<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2008.



Honorable Norma G. Garcia, President  
LRGVDC Board of Directors

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
PERMIAN BASIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2009-013**

**A Resolution to Create a Permian Basin Rural Transportation Board and to authorize said Board as the rural transportation policy making organization for areas outside the Midland/Odessa Metropolitan Planning Organization boundary in State Planning Region 9.**

**WHEREAS**, in May 2008 the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) identified a need for a Rural Planning Organization (RPO) to complement the planning efforts of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO); and

**WHEREAS**, the PBRPC desires to support Rural Transportation Planning Services to its members outside the Midland-Odessa MPO boundary and support coordinated planning efforts with the Midland-Odessa MPO and other transportation planning organizations ; and

**WHEREAS**, the PBRPC has historically had a role in transportation planning in the Region in multiple modes of transportation.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE PERMIAN BASIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION:**

1. That the Permian Basin Regional Planning Commission (PBRPC) Board of Directors creates the Permian Basin Rural Transportation Board (PBRTB).
2. That the Board of Directors of the PBRPC authorizes the PBRTB to be the rural transportation policy making organization in developing and prioritizing short and long range rural regional transportation plans in cooperation with TxDOT in State Planning Region 9 for those areas outside the boundaries of the Midland – Odessa MPO.
3. That the Board of Directors of the PBRPC recognizes the PBRTB as the Rural Planning Organization (RPO) for State Planning Region 9 and that the PBRPC staff will facilitate the PBRTB operation subject to available funding.
4. That the following membership is authorized to serve on the Permian Basin Rural Transportation Board – one member from the County Commissioners Court of each County in State Planning Region 9 (seventeen members), a member of a City Council or City Commission from each of three different cities with populations under 50,000, according to the most current United States Census Report, in State Planning Region 9 (three members) and the District Engineer from the TxDOT Odessa District (one member). Accordingly, the following are recognized as the Permian Basin Rural Transportation Board:
  - a. Honorable Wilburn Bednar, Glasscock County Judge
  - b. Honorable Corky Blocker, Martin County Judge
  - c. Honorable Vikki Bradley, Upton County Judge
  - d. Honorable Susan Redford, Ector County Judge
  - e. Honorable Skeet Jones, Loving County Judge
  - f. Honorable Richard H. Dolgener, Andrews County Judge
  - g. Honorable Sam Contreras, Reeves County Judge
  - h. Honorable John Farmer, Crane County Judge

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
PERMIAN BASIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2009-013**

**Continued**

- i. Honorable Tom Keyes, Gaines County Judge
- j. Honorable Bonnie Leck, Winkler County Judge
- k. Honorable Mark Barr, Howard County Judge
- l. Honorable Greg Holly, Ward County Judge
- m. Honorable Mike Bradford, Midland County Judge
- n. Honorable Sam Saleh, Dawson County Judge
- o. Honorable Joe Shuster, Pecos County Judge
- p. Honorable Leo Smith, Terrell County Judge
- q. Honorable Van L. York, Borden County Judge
- r. Honorable Lester Baker, Mayor, City of Stanton
- s. Honorable Ovidio Martinez, Mayor City of Seagraves
- t. Honorable Ted Westmoreland, Mayor City of Kermit
- u. Lauren Garduno, P.E., Interim District Engineer-TxDOT Odessa District

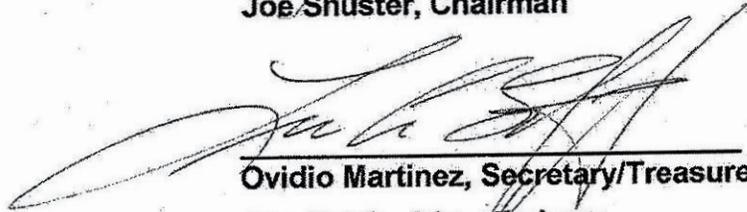
5. That the Board of Directors of the PBRPC appoints Hon. Joe Shuster, Pecos County Judge, as the chairperson of the PBRTB for organizational purposes and authorizes Judge Shuster to call a meeting of the PBRTB to develop and approve by-laws.
6. That this Resolution is effective upon adoption.

**WHEREAS**, the Permian Basin Regional Planning Commission was organized under House Bill 319 of the 59<sup>th</sup> Legislature, as amended, (Article 1011m V.A.C.S.), for the purpose of orderly planning and development of the Permian Basin region.

**PASSED AND APPROVED THIS THE 11<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2009.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Joe Shuster, Chairman**

**Attest:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Ovidio Martinez, Secretary/Treasurer**  
Leo Smith, Vice-Chairman

# **THE SOUTH PLAINS ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS**

## **RESOLUTION**

### **RESOLUTION URGING THE STATE OF TEXAS TO RECOGNIZE THE SOUTH PLAINS ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS AS THE RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR THE SOUTH PLAINS REGION**

WHEREAS, the 77<sup>th</sup> Legislature passed into law Senate Bill 200 which specifies that "In carrying out their planning and program development responsibilities, state agencies shall, to the greatest extent feasible, coordinate planning with commissions to ensure effective and orderly implementation of state programs at the regional level"; and

WHEREAS, the South Plains Association of Governments is a Regional Planning Commission authorized under Chapter 391 of the Local Governmental Code and represents the fifteen county South Plains region that consists of Bailey, Cochran, Crosby, Dickens, Floyd, Garza, Hale, Hockley, King, Lamb, Lynn, Lubbock, Motley, Terry, and Yoakum Counties; and

WHEREAS, the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century specifies that "with respect to each non-metropolitan area, the (state-wide) long-range transportation plan shall be developed in consultation with affected local officials with responsibility for transportation"; and

WHEREAS, the South Plains Association of Governments will function as the "Rural Planning Organization" with regard to regional transportation issues in cooperation with the Lubbock Metropolitan Planning Organization, Lubbock Transit District, and the Lubbock District Office of the Texas Department of Transportation.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the South Plains Association of Governments Board of Directors:

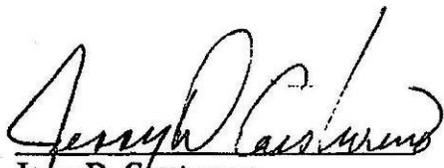
THAT the State of Texas is urged to officially recognize the South Plains Association of Governments as the Rural Planning Organization for the purposes of rural transportation planning in this region.

THAT a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, State Representatives of Districts 70, 83, 84, 85, the State Senator representing District 28, the Chairman of the Texas Transportation Commission and the chairs of the following legislative committees, Senate Committee on State Affairs, and the House Committee on Transportation.

THAT this resolution become effective immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND APPROVED, this 14<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2002.

ATTEST:

  
Jerry D. Casstevens  
Executive Director

  
Woodie McArthur, President  
Judge, Dickens County

## RESOLUTION

### Resolution in Support of the Creation of a Rural Planning Organization for the West Central Texas Council Governments' nineteen county region

**WHEREAS**, as members of the West Central Texas Council of Governments (WCTCOG) and local officials involved in member local governments of the State of Texas, State Planning Region 7 encompassing the counties of Brown, Callahan, Coleman, Comanche, Eastland, Fisher, Haskell, Jones, Kent, Knox, Mitchell, Nolan, Runnels, Scurry, Shackelford, Stephens, Stonewall, Taylor and Throckmorton counties, we recognize our role as a vehicle to facilitate and coordinate collaborative planning in concert with and between government entities, special districts and authorities and ,

**WHEREAS**, the WCTCOG region and the IH20 corridor are rapidly growing areas in the state and nation and,

**WHEREAS**, the WCTCOG region also contains the Abilene Metropolitan Planning Organization located in Taylor County which in no way would be duplicated by the creation of a Rural Planning Organization and,

**WHEREAS**, the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) and section 134 (a), Title 23, United States Government Code, authorizes regional entities to form cooperative organizations to conduct transportation planning; and,

**WHEREAS**, these organizations are commonly known as Rural Planning Organizations, RPO's; and,

**WHEREAS**, the growth, and increasing traffic, in the WCTCOG region makes it critically important to better coordinate transportation planning activities between local leaders, the Abilene MPO, the Texas Department of Transportation, the West Central Texas Council of Governments and others, and,

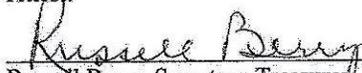
**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the West Central Texas Council of Governments Executive Committee supports the creation of a Rural Planning Organization to facilitate regional transportation planning within and among each of the counties in State Planning Region 7 not already served and designates the WCTCOG as the responsible political subdivision for implementation of the West Central Texas Rural Planning Organization.

**SUBMITTED AND PASSED** this Twenty-second Day of April 2009, A.D., by motion made, seconded, and duly passed by the Executive Committee of the West Central Texas Council of Governments.

Signed:

  
David Davis, President  
Judge, Haskell County

Attest:

  
Russell Berry, Secretary-Treasurer