

MPO STAFFING AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES



Alex Bond, AICP & Jeff Kramer, AICP
University of South Florida
Center for Urban Transportation Research



1

CUTR Webcast Series- November 4, 2010

Thanks to our Co-Sponsors

2

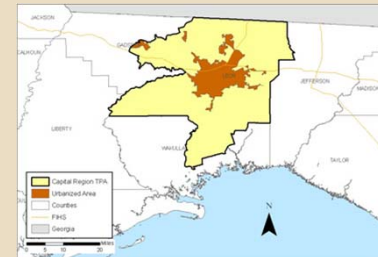
- The American Planning Association's Regional and Intergovernmental Planning Division is co-sponsoring this webcast
- AICP Certification Maintenance credits are available through the Division
 - ▣ You must have registered your name to receive credit.
 - ▣ Log on to the APA CM page to claim credit.
 - ▣ Complete the evaluation at the end of this webcast to receive credit.
- Future webcasts will be offered by the RIPD for members only. Join now to be eligible!

3

Poll Questions 1 – 3

What is an MPO?

- A regional transportation planning agency
- Plans and prioritizes transportation improvements
- Funded by a 1.25% takedown from highway programs
- Required in all areas with more than 50,000 people
- Must exist to receive Federal money
- May be independent or hosted by another agency



Research Problem

5

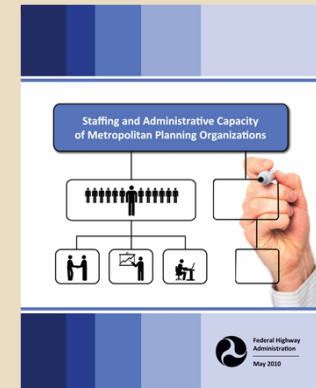
- MPO role is complex and responsibility is broad
- MPO role and work load have expanded over time
- MPO staffing and organizational capacity is critical to meeting responsibilities and expectations
- Few materials comparing strategies are available
- MPO resources are relatively limited
- To date, national research on MPO organizational structure and staffing is limited

Project Scope

6

Basic discovery of MPO practices:

- Organizational structure
- Staffing levels, specialties, salary and turnover
- Governance
- Available at www.mposurvey.com
- Funded through the FHWA Surface Transportation and Environment Research Program (STEP)

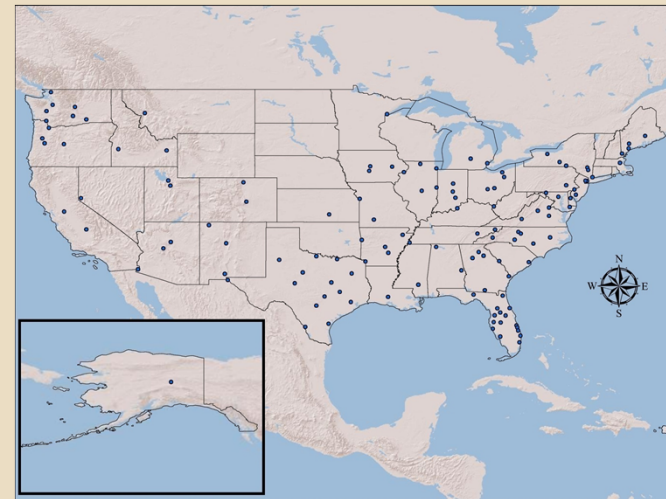


Methodology and Data Collection

7

- Online survey (www.mposurvey.com)
 - ▣ Survey in field for 3 months (March-May 2009)
 - ▣ 61-72 questions, depending on MPO characteristics
 - ▣ Recruited through association newsletters, state associations, direct solicitation
 - ▣ 133 MPOs responded (35.5% response rate)
 - ▣ Statistically valid sample with margin of error +/- 6.83
- Ten Case Studies
 - ▣ Document review
 - ▣ Interviews

Map of Survey Participants



8

Map of Case Studies



9

10

Hosting and Administration



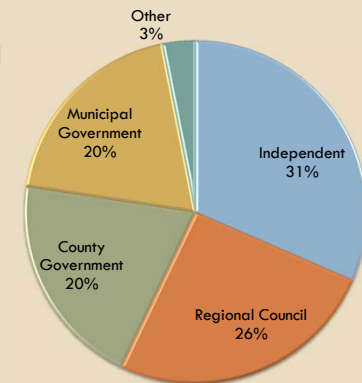
11

Poll Question 4

Types of Hosting

12

- There is a wide variety of MPO organizational structures
- More likely to be hosted if the MPO is a non-TMA
- Regional Council is most common host
- Combined, local governments host 40% of all MPOs



Advantages/Disadvantages – Hosted

13

Advantages:

- Lower overall cost
 - ▣ Administration
 - ▣ Benefits
 - ▣ Office space
- Sharing of expertise
 - ▣ Coordinated programs
 - ▣ Employees
- Capital float

Disadvantages:

- Responsibilities blurred
 - ▣ Staff
 - ▣ Board
- MPO subject to host rules, budget and oversight
 - ▣ Managerial authority and autonomy
- Policy interference
- Unfamiliarity with MPO work

Advantages/Disadvantages – Independent

14

Advantages:

- Political and administrative autonomy
- Clarity in chain of command
 - ▣ Staff
 - ▣ Board
- Agency identity
- Cleaner finances

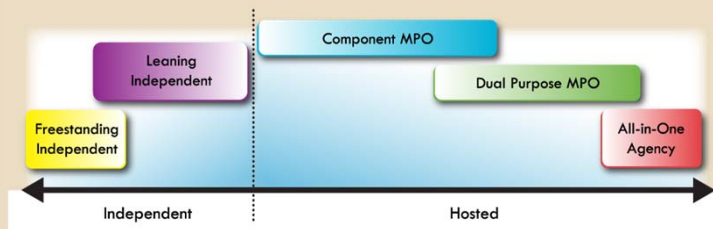
Disadvantages:

- Cash flow problems
 - ▣ Federal reimbursements
 - ▣ Matching funds
- High cost of operation
 - ▣ Administrative burdens
- Staff and administrative versatility is required

Administrative Structures

15

- Conventional wisdom: hosted vs. independent
- Research result: MPO structures fall along a continuum



Structure Types- Independent

16

Freestanding Independent (~10%)

- Handles all fiscal and administrative duties entirely in-house
- Adopts its own administrative rules
- Independent board and director
- Examples: METROPLAN (AR), Lake-Sumter (FL) MPO

Leaning Independent (~20%)

- Independent board and director
- Relies on contracts or gratis services from a local government
- Has severable contracts to provide goods and services
- Often mimics personnel policies, contracting rules, and salary bands of local government
- Examples: Bryan/College Station (TX) MPO, Corvallis (OR) MPO

Structure Types- Hosted

17

Component MPO (~30%)

- Exists as a component of a larger host
- MPO director reports to a supervisor
- Participates in host agency benefits programs
- Follows host agency administrative rules
- Indirect rate is charged
- Example: Indianapolis MPO

Dual Purpose MPO (~25%)

- Usually found at small local governments
- Local government leverages federal money to create planning capacity
- Staff performs MPO planning and local transportation planning
- Covered by host agency administrative and salary rules
- No indirect rate is charged
- Examples: Missoula MPO, Salisbury-Wicomico (MD) MPO

Structure Types- Hosted and Others

18

All-in-One (~10%)

- Usually hosted by a large metro regional council
- Difficult to differentiate MPO staff from other staff
- MPO area covers most of regional council area
- MPO known by same name as host agency
- Example: Mid-America (KS/MO) Regional Council

Examples of "The Others" (~5%)

- Transit agencies:
 - Metro Council
 - Genesee Transportation Council
 - Regional Transportation Commission of Southern NV
- Transportation Authority:
 - South Jersey TPO
- Universities:
 - North Jersey TPA
- State DOTs
 - New York MTC

19

Board Size, Composition and Voting



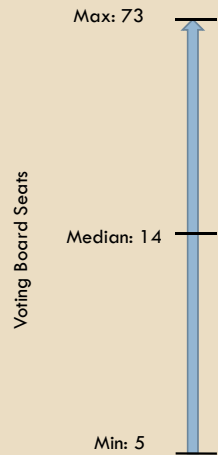
20

Poll Questions 5 – 7

Board Size – Voting Seats

21

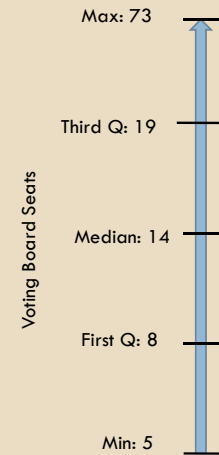
- Wide range of MPO Board sizes
 - 5 to 73 voting members



Board Size – Voting Seats

22

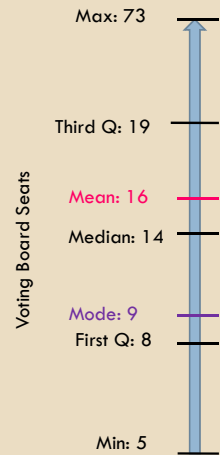
- Wide range of MPO Board sizes
 - 5 to 73 voting members
- Bottom quartile has 8 or fewer
- Top quartile has 19 or more



Board Size – Voting Seats

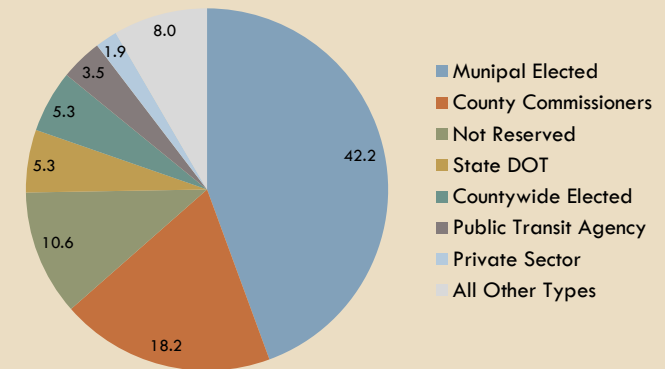
23

- Wide range of MPO Board sizes
 - 5 to 73 voting members
- Bottom quartile has 8 or fewer
- Top quartile has 19 or more
- High outliers upwardly influence the mean of 16
- Most common response was 9



Board Composition – Percent of All Seats

24



Board Composition – Voting Rights

25

- ▣ One member-one vote is the prevailing voting structure
 - ▣ Allocation of seats by population can give more seats to larger local governments
- ▣ Weighted voting
 - ▣ 13.5% of MPOs in the sample
 - ▣ Many MPOs with weighted voting have never used it
- ▣ “Rotating” voting seats
 - ▣ 27% of MPOs in the sample have a “rotating” voting seat
- ▣ Other voting systems: Consensus Voting, Golden Vote

Board Composition – Non-Voting

26

- ▣ Board representation for those without a voting seat
- ▣ 63% (84 of 133) have non-voting board members
- ▣ Mean of 5 seats at MPOs providing non-voting seats
- ▣ Examples include:

▣ Small local govts within MPO boundary	▣ State legislators
▣ Neighboring local govts/MPOs	▣ Business groups
▣ Federal agencies	▣ RTPOs
▣ Chairs of MPO committees	▣ Modal authorities
▣ Private sector	▣ School boards
	▣ State agencies

27

The MPO Workforce



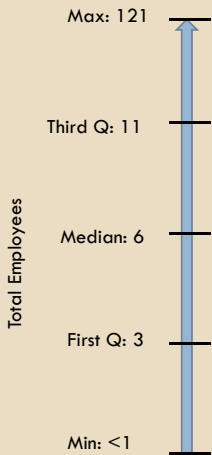
28

Poll Questions 8 – 9

Number of Employees

29

- Ranged from 121 to less than one employee
- A dozen high outliers skew the mean higher. Median is more instructive.
- Median MPO: 5 full-time and 1 part-time employees (6 total)
 - ▣ Three-quarters of MPOs have less than 11 total staff
 - ▣ A quarter of MPOs have 3 or fewer total staff



Median Staff Size by Population Class

30

Population in Planning Area	Total Employees (median)	Maximum Total Employees
50,000-100,000	3	16
100,000-200,000	5	19
200,000-500,000	7	20
500,000-1,000,000	13	33
1 million or more	37	121
All MPOs	6	121

Employment, etc.

31

- Part time employees are found at 73% of MPOs
- One employee per 47,963 people
- Approximately 4,200 MPO employees nationwide



Specialties on Staff

32

- MPOs were asked if any staff member spent more than half of his/her time in a specialized area

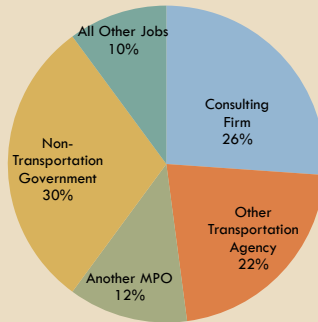
Specialty	Percent of MPOs with this Specialty	Median Staff Size
GIS	44%	9
Travel Demand Modeling	39%	12
Transit	36%	10
Bicycle and Pedestrian	31%	8.5
Public Involvement	25%	12
Safety	13%	10

Only selected results are shown

Employee Turnover

33

- MPO universe experiences 12.5% turnover/year
 - Twenty or more employees: 4.1%
 - Less than three: 20.1%
- 40% left transportation sector
- Just over a quarter went to consulting firms



Other Topics in the Survey

34

- Salary Scales
- Employee Benefits
- Organization Funding
- State Governance
- MPO Directors
- Aging Workforce
- Intergovernmental Efforts
- Indirect Rate
- Employee Tenure
- Consultants

Contact Us

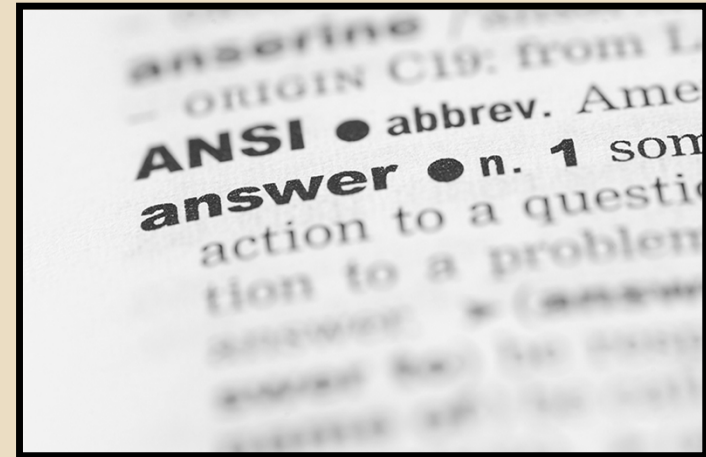
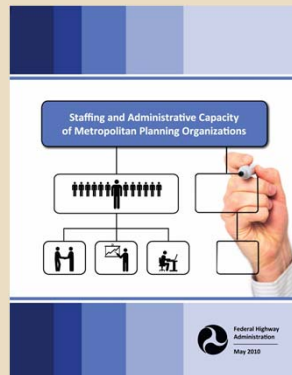
35

Download the full report at
www.mposurvey.com

Jeff Kramer (813) 974-1397
Kramer@cutr.usf.edu

Alex Bond (813) 974-9779
ALBond@cutr.usf.edu

Karen Seggerman (813) 974-5723
Seggerman@cutr.usf.edu



36