

**TRB Planning Conference - May 23, 2012**  
**Case Study 5: Communicating with Decision-Makers:**  
***“Transformation” - Broward 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan***

The Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization (Broward MPO) is one of three MPOs in the Miami Urbanized Area, which includes portions of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach Counties. The Broward MPO Board consists primarily of elected officials representing Broward County and its 31 municipalities.

In 2009, the Broward MPO approved the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), a landmark document with an emphasis on transit and multi-modal mobility, known as Transformation 2035. For many years, the Broward MPO Board emphasized transit in its Vision, yet the previous LRTPs emphasized investments in roadway improvements. How did communications with the decision-makers contribute to establishing the Transformation Vision?

**DIRECT COMMUNICATION**

Prior to 2010, the Broward MPO was a Division of a Department of the Broward County government. Broward County provided staff for the Broward MPO through a servicing agreement, with payroll coming from federal and local sources, which left the Broward MPO staff in a position of “trying to serve two masters.” The Broward MPO Board had authority to hire the Executive Director, and the County Administrator had firing authority. Staff struggled to maintain a balance when the direction from County administration differed from the direction from the Broward MPO Board.

When the Broward MPO separated from Broward County government, the working relationship with the elected members on the Broward MPO Board changed. The lines of communications became clearer. The Broward MPO Board directs the Executive Director, who leads the activities of the MPO staff. Staff works directly with the Board to inform their decision-making.

**ITERATIVE COMMUNICATION**

In previous years, Broward MPO staff received administrative direction that was not consistent with the direction from the MPO Board, its Advisory Boards, and project Steering Committees. This became clear to the Board during the development of the 2035 LRTP. One example occurred when staff led the Board through an exercise from the public meetings to direct the allocation of transportation dollars. The results showed the elected officials and the public shared a strong preference for investing in transit and multi-modal connectivity. This marked the moment when the Board members realized they had the authority and public support to achieve their Vision. The Board directed staff to change the funding allocations and complete the LRTP as a Transformation document.

As the LRTP moved toward approval, the Broward MPO Director and staff made an effort to engage the public and show stakeholders what they LRTP would mean to them, including presentations to City Commission showing maps of potential multi-modal improvements in each of the municipal Commission districts. These Commission presentations reinforced the 2035 LRTP Vision at the local level for the elected officials on the Board.

### **HONEST COMMUNICATION**

The changes to the MPO structure led to re-calibration of the working relationships among the MPO Board, staff and agencies. The MPO staff had to re-examine all its activities and confirm its required duties. No longer was it acceptable for staff to say, “That’s how we always do it.”

Decision-makers include agency and municipal staff. During the transition from the County, the MPO staff and partner agencies put two major planning projects on pause to determine why they were off-track and whether to try to salvage them. (Both are now advancing strongly.) MPO staff worked with the Florida Department of Transportation staff to direct transportation funds to achieve the multi-modal vision. The relationships with the two transit agencies has shifted since the MPO no longer acted directly on behalf of Broward County government. Throughout Broward, the elected officials and municipal staff are looking at how to advance the Vision at the local level.