

## Small Community Research and Peer Exchange

*Requested by:*

American Association of State Highway  
and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)

Standing Committee on Planning

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September 2009

The information contained in this report was prepared as part of NCHRP Project 08-36, Task 78, National Cooperative Highway Research Program, Transportation Research Board.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This study was requested by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and conducted as part of National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Project 08-36. The NCHRP is supported by annual voluntary contributions from state Departments of Transportation. Project 08-36 is intended to fund quick-response studies on behalf of the AASHTO Standing Committee on Planning. The report was prepared by AECOM USA. The work was guided by an oversight panel, which included Libby Rushley, Neil Vollmer, Travis Marshall and Michael Anderson. The project was managed by Nanda Srinivasan, NCHRP Senior Program Officer.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) 08-36, Task 78, entitled “Small Community Research and Peer Exchange,” is composed of three main activities: (1) a brief review of the literature for case studies and related materials specifically related to smaller communities to identify major themes; (2) a survey of transportation planning professionals serving smaller communities (population range 50,000 to 200,000) to identify common perceptions; and (3) a peer exchange to discuss initial findings, identify and discuss other potential topics for future study, and discuss mechanisms that can be used to share information with other small Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

The objectives of this research are to:

- Identify knowledge gaps or the need for technical tools appropriate for planning at a small community scale
- Identify successes in supporting planners in small communities where they exist
- Suggest research topics for consideration by the panel as future NCHRP 8-36 project statements
- Identify mechanisms for sharing information with and among MPOs serving small communities

The balance of this report is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a short summary of the major themes identified in the literature review. Section 3 summarizes the main findings of the survey of planners. And Section 4 summarizes the findings of the peer exchange. A variety of supporting materials, including the full literature review and survey results, are attached in the Appendices.

## 2. THEMES IN THE CASE STUDY LITERATURE

As a means to canvass the experience of planners in small communities, published case studies were reviewed to (1) identify commonly identified gaps in information or tools discussed in the literature, and (2) identify material relevant to planning in a small community context, particularly successful methods or approaches to overcoming challenges.

Case studies were assembled from a broad range of sources including information from stakeholder organizations such as the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) and National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), Transportation Research Board (TRB) databases and publications, case studies made available through the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) Transportation Planning Capacity Building (TPCB) Rural and Small Community Transportation Planning Initiative, and materials from the National Conferences on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities. The review was not comprehensive; rather, it focused on more recent case studies and those selected to feature a diversity of planning contexts. The following discussion draws out some of the common themes identified in the cases; the full review with citations is provided in Appendix A.

A viewpoint repeated in multiple documents reviewed for this project is that “research and products should be sensitive to variations in the sizes of the MPO audience. For example, while Transportation Management Area (TMA) and small urban MPOs may face similar issues in their decision-making and other processes, the mechanism for addressing those issues may be very different and occur in very different environments.”<sup>1</sup>

The following provides a brief summary of some of the main themes found in the literature:

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<sup>1</sup> Kramer, Jeff. “National Metropolitan Planning Organization Peer Exchange Proceedings,” June 2004. Transportation Research Circular Number E-C066. This is the citation for the quotation provided above; similar statements are found elsewhere in the literature reviewed for this project.

- There is evidence of threshold issues for planners, such as rural areas crossing the threshold to an urbanized area and smaller MPOs crossing the threshold of 200,000 population and successfully evolving to address different requirements. For example, one study concluded there was a gap in the planning process for rural communities near rapidly growing urbanized areas and new urban centers because local officials are sometimes unaware of the requirements for metropolitan planning to qualify for urban area funding after designation as an urbanized area.
- Collaboration with other agencies/organizations is a repeated theme. Often, partnerships are raised in the context of securing technical support such as geographic information system (GIS) or travel demand modeling services. A different perspective on partnerships argued that MPO planners may find it difficult to adequately guide the planning process, particularly when the MPO is not the lead agency for a project. A potential solution suggested for this issue is for the MPO to co-host planning events with other agencies. Such an approach leverages resources, builds partnerships, and increases the MPO's involvement in the planning process and its visibility to the public.
- Some research suggests that population alone is not the best predictor of the appropriate analysis tool and that local issues and goals should also be considered. While planning tools such as travel demand models can be scaled to the size of the community, local issues must also be considered; population size is not a proxy for complexity. Other research echoes this theme, maintaining that each community is unique and many factors beyond a community's size will impact the success of a transportation project.
- The TIP/LRP process creates challenges across a number of dimensions. For example, a challenge faced by smaller MPOs is dealing with changes to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)/Long-Range Plan (LRP) and keeping them current, often in response to a state adding or removing projects. A related concern is the validity of cost information for projects in the TIP or LRP that carry forward across planning cycles without an adjustment to the project cost. Presenting the plan and managing the underlying material provides another challenge; providing plan information in formats that ensure the material continues to be referenced is critical in a planning environment where staff wears more than one hat and does not have the luxury of specializing.
- Data and related issues are raised in a number of contexts. One study recommended separating TMA from non-TMA data to make it easier for new and smaller MPOs to find the information relevant to them on FHWA and similar sites. A related suggestion was for state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) to compile a comprehensive list of studies and plans and make them available through its website so that MPOs could determine what data is available. The availability and sufficiency of third-party freight and land use data is a concern for many small communities. Many studies find that a logical role for an MPO is to serve as a central repository for data collected from various sources.

### 3. FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY OF PLANNERS

A survey of planners served as a second conduit through which to collect information on the experience and challenges faced by those working in a small community MPO setting. The Transportation in Small Communities online survey was designed to evaluate the level of knowledge, resources, and planning tools used by small MPOs and identify gaps in knowledge, data, and tools. The survey contained four sections:

1. Please tell us about your organization. This section asked multiple-choice questions about the organization such as community size and staff size.

2. Activities. This section focused on the planning process, its participants, and issues encountered.
3. Resources. This section focused on the resources available to conduct planning activities.
4. Tools. This section focused on the planning tools available to conduct planning activities and the challenges/limitations of planning tools and data.

Each section consisted of multiple-choice questions with the opportunity to volunteer additional information in written responses. One of the findings of the survey was that many of the challenges facing MPOs serving small communities are similar to those in larger community, including the overwhelming challenge of securing funding. While funding is an issue for all MPOs, several survey respondents pointed out that funding constraints for MPOs serving small communities are even greater given that they have the same Federal requirements to meet as larger MPOs, but are more likely to receive less Federal and state money based on their community size. One respondent suggested that there needs to be an established minimum amount of Federal funding for all MPOs in order to meet basic Federal requirements because many states use a population-based distribution of planning funds that leaves many small areas with inadequate basic funding.

The challenge in meeting Federal requirements was another issue raised by the survey results. There is a general concern that the planning process and requirements are “one size fits all” and do not allow for flexibility, particularly for MPOs in small, urban areas. As a result, many respondents indicated that they spend so much time meeting state and Federal requirements and “chasing document deadlines” that staff is unable to collect and analyze data to more effectively plan for transportation problems in their respective communities. In a variant of this response, even agencies experiencing success in meeting the Federal requirements report making sacrifices in other transportation planning areas due to funding, staff, data, or other resource constraints.

The survey responses also highlight that small MPOs are not a homogeneous group. Established and comparatively new MPOs had different levels of confidence with regard to the Federal process and their specific role within their communities. Many respondents, but particularly those in the smaller size range, noted that partnerships with other agencies would be very helpful. Many of the responding agencies reported heavy reliance on the support of local, state, and Federal agencies to meet their transportation planning requirements and needs, and the survey responses revealed that not all agencies experience the same level of support and cooperation. Initiatives to foster partnerships between Federal and state agencies and MPOs could help MPOs serving small communities receive the assistance that they need to meet basic planning requirements and the transportation needs of their communities. Also, more streamlined state and Federal requirements might ease resource pressures. For example, seven respondents indicated that their biggest challenge is dealing with the fact that state requirements are not consistent with Federal requirements or that there are too many state and Federal requirements surrounding planning, constructing, and funding.

The potential value of partnering also came up in the context of technical support. Several respondents indicated that they would benefit from additional partnering with state DOTs on travel demand modeling, including having the states do the modeling for the regions or provide MPOs with access to consultants that could fulfill modeling needs. Some states already provide travel demand modeling assistance to MPOs, but survey responses indicated that more states should. An additional area of support would be the release of guidebooks on planning activities from the perspective of MPOs serving small communities. Many of the organizations that responded to the survey have small staffs that are stretched thin and are not able to specialize in areas such as public outreach and travel demand modeling. Providing guidance materials, such as a public outreach kit or a how-to-achieve-success guidebook, would be a significant benefit to planners in small communities that have to be good in all aspects of planning, but who cannot specialize in any one area.

#### 4. PEER EXCHANGE

On the afternoon of September 19, 2008, following the close of the Tools of the Trade Conference in Portland, Oregon, a peer exchange was held as part of NCHRP Project 8-36, Task 78, Small Community Research and Peer Exchange. The peer exchange focused on the challenges facing planners in MPOs that serve small and medium-sized communities,<sup>2</sup> relative to their larger urban peers, even as they pursue a common goal of ensuring that expenditures for transportation projects and programs are based on a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process.

The primary purpose of the peer exchange was to facilitate an open exchange of information on experiences, concerns, and opportunities related to transportation planning in a small and medium-sized MPO setting. A secondary purpose of the peer exchange was to identify a near-term action agenda for improving the state of the practice and mechanisms for sharing information on tools, data resources, and approaches to meeting Federal and state requirements that are tailored to the needs of small and medium-sized communities.

This report serves to document the insights raised during the meeting and to share these perspectives with the larger transportation planning community. Peer exchanges offer a unique opportunity to not only engage in discussion and share experiences and lessons learned, but also identify potential solutions and prioritize areas for additional advancement through research, technical assistance, and other activities.

Invitations to the peer exchange were extended to senior staff members of small MPOs, representatives of state DOTs who regularly work with the smaller MPOs in their states, and city planners who similarly work with MPO staffs serving small communities. To ensure that a variety of perspectives were represented, participants were selected from across the country with input from the NCHRP 8-36 Task 78 oversight panel in order to create a mix of organizations with regard to region, institutional setting, and length of time since establishment. Appendix C contains the list of peer exchange participants.

The peer exchange was structured around three main questions, with discussion guided by a meeting facilitator. The first question concerned how smaller MPOs differ from larger MPOs. Respondents were asked to identify any and all differences and then to group them to the degree possible. An open discussion followed. The second question concerned how these differences translate into challenges/obstacles for planners serving small communities. Respondents were similarly asked to identify any and all challenges and then group them to the degree possible, followed by open discussion. The final part of the peer exchange was an open discussion of the remaining questions.

The remainder of this section provides a summary of peer exchange participants' responses. Because of the brief time available for the exchange, participants were also asked to respond to a brief questionnaire to ensure coverage of the main issues. The results of both are presented below. To provide some background for the exchange, a brief summary of the major themes of the literature and the responses to the survey of professional planners was provided in advance for review. The literature review is provided in Appendix A, and the full survey results are provided in Appendix B.

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<sup>2</sup> Defined here as communities with a population above the 50,000 threshold for which Federal regulation requires the formation of an MPO for any urbanized area (UA) and below the 200,000 threshold that designates TMAs.

#### 4.1. Peer Exchange Format

The peer exchange was held during the afternoon of the final day of TRB's Tools of the Trade Conference. Prior to the peer exchange, participants received an invitation that requested they identify the top two or three issues facing their respective organization and a summary of the Survey of Metropolitan Planning Organizations Serving Small Communities Technical Memorandum that included the individual written responses. Participants were invited to bring materials about their organization or key projects.

Upon arrival, peer exchange participants received an agenda, a summary of key themes identified in the literature review, and a statement of the background to and objectives of the peer exchange. Participants were also requested to complete a questionnaire. The survey and exchange materials are included in the Appendices to this summary. A condensed format was used in order to make maximum use of the afternoon time slot and ensure that all participants' viewpoints could be heard. The available time did not permit individual presentations by the participants. The exchange was an open discussion in response to a set of exercises introduced by a meeting facilitator. The following sections provide an overview of the peer exchange discussion.

#### 4.2 Group Responses

The peer exchange began with each participant introducing himself or herself and mentioning one important milestone or distinguishing characteristic of his or her organization, which are identified below. Participants who made comments included the following:

- David Baltz, City of Salem
- Thera Black, Thurston Regional Planning Council
- Marsha Fiol, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Suzette Mallette, North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Amanda Martin, Iowa Department of Transportation
- Libby Rushley, Ohio Department of Transportation
- Page Scott, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments
- Phil Wheeler, Rochester Olmsted Council of Governments

David Baltz, City of Salem. City works with the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments (COG). The biggest item on the MPO's agenda is the Willamette River crossing project. Salem currently has one bridge over the river.

Thera Black, Thurston Regional Planning Council. Community has just crossed over the 200,000 mark—population in the region is about 238,000. Major issues are related to growth. The MPO is just beginning to get Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) improvement program funding. It is working to take a unified regional approach that does not differentiate between MPO boundary and region and is looking at Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) issues.

Marsha Fiol, Virginia Department of Transportation. Works with MPOs in the state. One initiative is tracking communities likely to be designated MPOs in the near term and identifying requirements and supporting them in the transition to MPO-community status.

Suzette Mallette, North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization. MPO serves Fort Collins, Loveland, and Greeley. Over past 10 years it has begun to hit mid-size— it is transitioning to being a larger MPO.



Amanda Martin, Iowa Department of Transportation. Iowa DOT works with MPOs across the State and has strong ties to the University. DOT tries to serve as a liaison between MPOs and Federal agencies.

Libby Rushley, Ohio Department of Transportation. Wears many hats, but has been working with the non-TMAs, especially Sandusky, to help them transition to an MPO structure.

Page Scott, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments. The major issue facing her organization is that it is losing its longtime director and source of institutional knowledge.

Phil Wheeler, Rochester Olmsted Council of Governments. Key initiatives underway currently include the Long-Range Plan (which is just starting), a corridor study, and an outer ring study.

Jeff Moore, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, was delayed and joined the exchange following introductions.

Michael Anderson, University of Alabama at Huntsville and a member of the committee sponsoring the exchange, joined midway through the session to listen.

Characteristics That Make Small MPOs Different– Results of Structured Exercise

<i>Flexible Close Working Relationships</i>	<i>Multi-Tasking Generalist Staff</i>	<i>Weak Invisible Political Clout (Less Power)</i>	<i>Overwhelming Federal Requirements</i>	<i>Fewer Funding Mechanisms</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better able to prioritize projects</li> <li>• Greater interpersonal connection</li> <li>• Less formal decision-making</li> <li>• Better opportunity to learn from/use resources developed by large MPOs</li> <li>• More direct access to local data (parcels, pupils, etc.)</li> <li>• More direct access to sub-groups in the community</li> <li>• More interconnected community leadership</li> <li>• More direct access to development info (proposal or pre-proposal)</li> <li>• Less complexity</li> <li>• Except for university towns, generally more limited access to research</li> <li>• More opportunities for special projects</li> <li>• Closer interaction with all members (staff and elected officials)</li> <li>• More appropriate size/scale for committees/board</li> <li>• More flexible and responsive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual staff members wear more hats</li> <li>• Smaller staff size</li> <li>• Narrower range of staff capabilities</li> <li>• Human resources are less specialized, on average</li> <li>• Multi-tasking staff members are more generalist</li> <li>• Less able to take advantage of economies of scale</li> <li>• Moderate ability to provide technical support to member agencies</li> <li>• Staff resources are comparatively more limited</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small MPO perceived to have fewer responsibilities than larger MPOs</li> <li>• Less political clout than exists in larger MPOs</li> <li>• Receive less attention because state/national focus is primarily on major metropolitan issues</li> <li>• Residual skepticism to planning is greater in small towns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater share of attention is focused on meeting requirements as opposed to real planning</li> <li>• Bureaucratic requirements per resource are more burdensome</li> <li>• Federal requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CPG money allocation</li> <li>• Financial resources are more moderate</li> <li>• Funding streams less varied than in larger MPOs</li> <li>• Less funding and fewer resources are available than in larger MPOs</li> </ul>

### Open Discussion on Characteristics That Make Small MPOs Different

Following the facilitated exercise, the group had an open exchange on four broad issues identified in the literature review and survey conducted prior to the Peer Exchange: (1) Meeting Federal Requirements; (2) Funding; (3) Variety of Institutional Settings/ Small MPO Communities; and (4) New MPOs. The following is listing of the thoughts and ideas raised during the discussion.

#### Meeting Federal Requirements

- Noticed that the monthly Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and policy meetings focus on routine matters; a lot of time is spent on changes to work program and not much time or less time for the data program or to provide expertise to client agencies. Time spent preparing for meetings takes away from time for other things.
- Guidance from state/Federal– often set up for bigger organizations. Smaller MPOs, especially new ones, may not recognize areas where there is flexibility in the process.
- MPOs can accomplish more work when they are not bound by bureaucratic constraints. Work is needed to streamline the “check the box”-type routine matters and maximize time for analysis.
- Look for ways to streamline the process unless it is written into the law. Many MPOs do not see flexibility inherent in legislation.
- Some MPOs get hammered by states/feds on the bureaucratic matters.
- Large base of requirements and there are no economies of scale for small MPOs.

#### Funding

- Sometimes the way planning dollars are distributed does not provide enough money for all the things that need to be done. MPOs need a base level of funding to get requirements completed.
- Some states supplement the funding allocations with additional money. Minnesota supplements the planning money with state money; it comes out of general fund. Iowa provides half of the 20 percent match.
- Smaller MPOs are better able to prioritize projects; easier to get consensus– small MPOs do not have money to program so that makes it simpler to identify projects.
- If given the choice between the feds taking away all funding and requirements for MPOs below 100K or keeping the funding and the requirements, the perception is that most MPOs would opt to keep receiving the funding.
- MPOs have fewer funding streams.

#### Variety of Institutional Settings; Variety of Small MPO Communities

- Size composition of member communities affects cooperation; smaller MPO member communities are perceived as more cooperative.
- The perception is that the board structure of the MPO can influence who gets funding.
- There is a function of “We (the MPO) are doing things this way because we have always done it this way.”
- Small MPOs are usually just starting modeling exercises.

- As we (small MPO) strive for a multimodal system, we want a transit system, but we do not have the urban density/economies currently to support the system for which we are striving. The conflict is that we do not want to wait until we get big and then retrofit, we want to get it set up right, but do not have the resources now.
- Regions have to be adaptive- tailor requirements to their own situations.

#### New MPOs

- Are responding to new ways of doing things. In Ohio, most MPOs have their own way of doing things; new MPOs are likely to revert to the old way because they have not seen the benefits of the new way of doing it.
- OH DOT- watching larger MPOs that might go over 200,000 in the next Census. In the past, planners missed the smaller cities that grew together and did not lay the groundwork.
- Established MPOs have their niche. The new MPOs have not found their niche and are struggling with Federal requirements.
- New MPOs in KY not invested- takes time for an MPO to have an identifiable role in the ongoing process. Initially it might seem that a county got an MPO and a fellow (the local planner) got another set of meetings. There is conflict at times between requirements vs. real planning.

## Challenges/Obstacles for Planners Serving Small Communities- Results of Structured Exercise

### Engine to Keep the Data Going

- Getting, interpreting, and managing socioeconomic, etc. info
- Performing appropriate travel demand model update activities in a timely manner
- Because of funding we often cannot do more robust modeling or analysis of alternatives - what opportunities have we missed?
- Data collection or ability to analyze
- Quality of traffic modeling and data program

### Relevance of MPO

- Addressing conflicting or at least divergent customer needs
- Fostering acceptance of "innovations" (bike lanes, roundabouts, back-in diagonal parking, etc.)
- Lack of authority/jurisdiction to make things happen (e.g., we do not build projects or issue permits)
- Uncertainty and apprehension about the future role of the MPO - "wait and see"
- Relevance in time of minimal funding availability
- Responsibility of being the transportation experts - guide or follow?
- Doing relevant work - are these the modes you are looking for?
- Relevance of MPO

### Two-Way Communication With Public and Stakeholders

- Public participation (PP) takes time and advanced planning. Unfamiliarity with public participation can delay timeline with inexperienced participants
- Attract and retain interested participants in the MPO process
- Citizen involvement - how to engage on a planning level (long range)
- Bring new players into process

### Staff Retention

- Host influence on MPO
- Time availability for special request from member agencies
- Staff retention

### Knowing and Tapping Into the Knowledge Base

- Federal requirements and flexibility - some small MPOs need help with identifying the range of appropriate flexibility in order to identify their appropriate response to Federal requirements
- Lots of research has been done but we rarely have time to go find it or stay abreast of best practices

### Spending Time to Carry Out MPO Mission

- Linking land use and transportation decisions
- Our local partners need money for most basic system needs - hard for them to see relevance in our focus on big picture/long-range issues/opps
- Freight is a large-scale issue
- Air quality
- How did that happen?
- Producing the unique visualization products that would help the decision-makers program better projects
- Competing with other pressing "headline" issues for limited time and attention of decision-makers
- Systems preservation versus expansion - balanced plans
- Being proactive with unique special planning studies that move the metro area into a better planning arena

### Institutional Structures Operate Differently From Location to Location

Discussion about the specific challenges that we are faced with at a small MPO. Many of the issues identified above also apply to the large MPOs. How is the small MPO particularly sensitive to these issues?

One challenge is learning how to be an MPO when newly established.

- In Virginia, the DOT (VDOT) creates small urban area transportation studies. The goal is to pick areas likely to become MPOs and work with them to start building the base of model capability so that they have a technical report in place when they start out. Can be used for jurisdictions and for economic development. Small things that can be printed up and dropped in the mail. They are also up on the web. (See note below.) People start relying on it and expecting it. Then when communities become MPOs their role has started to become understood by the community.
- Marsha Fiol brought examples to the exchange. Examples of Virginia's plans and a description of the program are available on the web at the following locations:  
[http://virginiadot.org/projects/sm\\_urbanplans/SUA\\_Mainbottom.asp](http://virginiadot.org/projects/sm_urbanplans/SUA_Mainbottom.asp) (actual plans) and  
[http://virginiadot.org/projects/sm\\_urbanplans/SUA\\_index.asp](http://virginiadot.org/projects/sm_urbanplans/SUA_index.asp) (for a description of the VDOT program).
- How do you know what areas are becoming MPOs? VDOT follows Census boundaries and population and works in GIS to track the trends.

Another challenge is in how we spend our time and do it in ways that are relevant and important.

- Relevance of the MPO. Why are we here? Our public asks what it is that we do. Is the MPO relevant? If there is little money for building new projects, is the MPO providing service?
- The MPO's role varies from area to area. MPO does transportation planning and local planning, which varies by region. Does the MPO have a clear mission statement? Unlike Iowa and Virginia that provide help to the small MPOs, Colorado does not. Colorado MPOs are on their own in figuring out how to interpret guidance.
- Need a balance in having flexibility and in providing technical experience. Iowa is proactive in providing guidance and has quarterly meetings for MPOs and DOT to all meet and talk together.
- Lots of Federal requirements– how do you interpret all these Federal requirements and become more proactive. Assessed on where folks were in compliance and provided help on getting the gaps filled. Feds did not get it from headquarters. They (regional feds) are figuring it out. Iowa DOT pushed on behalf of the MPOs. The states and MPOs are in it together. If an MPO is not meeting requirements, it messes up the state's transportation plan.
- Ohio sees the same thing with conformity. In it together– MPOs and states.
- A key part of navigating the Federal requirements is being aware of the information that is out there and knowing how to take advantage of it.

- MPOs are asked to address conflicting needs. Are MPOs relevant because we address these issues? If MPOs are seen only as addressing funding issues, we are doomed. But if it is understood that there are other tasks, then there is a role. New MPOs have not found those “other things.”
- In Rochester, the MPO also serves as a COG. Served by the city/county planning department. Land use does not always get into standards. City and county independently adopt the COG and MPO plan. There is integration of land use and transportation decision-making.
- Most of the communities covered by MPOs do not have long-term land use plans.
- Traffic modeling (because of the specialized skill and data required) and staff retention are two ongoing challenges.
- MPO host influences MPO role, especially with new MPOs. My MPO director has been pulled off to deal with economic development/water issues.
- Public involvement is an ongoing need. Who are our customers? How do we get them to talk to us? Citizens advisory.
- New MPOs are checking the box; state does not always know what to tell them. Need more guidance. Until we go through compliance reviews and hear “that’s okay,” we do not know where we stand and are nervous about moving forward with other activities.
- An additional challenge is building a knowledge base and tapping into that knowledge base. Need an “MPO for Dummies.” Want more information on best practices. Current literature is like a fire hose. More reports come in e-mail than one can possibly read. Sip of info and get drowned.
- Very helpful to share among MPOs. Need more of this [the peer exchange].

Technical modeling is another challenge.

- Where do projects come from? Travel demand. Collection of data/defending the data; upstanding the model. Do not understand the limitations or its proper application. Feeding the model. Needs come from the model. Socioeconomic data. Validating the model. Getting precise. Are we generally right and not precisely wrong? We can spend a lot of time getting model 2 percent more accurate. More planners need to know about modeling and we are the spokespeople. Built on assumptions. Many planners are not familiar with assumptions and with modeling but may have to explain to the public.
- We build regional models for a regional scale but get requests for a tiny sub-area. Spend all that money on the model and it is not good enough. Need to defend staff and budget spend.
- Virginia has regional models and diversity of models across MPOs. Public and private participants. Working inside the model so that there is consistency across the state. VDOT is responsible for creating the model. MPOs can use the model. MPOs may ask VDOT to run the model.
- Very few agencies look at the accuracy of their modeling. It should be embedded to look at the accuracy. Rochester has looked– very accurate. Some of Ohio’s projections have been evaluated.

- Transportation Research Council asked VDOT to validate forecasts. So many things outside the technical analysis that affect the analysis. Model is in a box and then planners have to explain. Cannot always be about the model.
- CO DOT does not do modeling. MPOs– a lot of variation across the states in how MPOs do work.
- Iowa does things that are very similar to VDOT. When an MPO loses a modeler, DOT takes over until staff is replaced. Different institutional structures affect how an MPO operates. Not everyone can find the staff that they need.

#### Prioritize Challenges and Recommended Implementation Ideas

- Difficult to prioritize; the needs of a new MPO are quite different from an established small MPO.
- Are there common needs, independent of “newness”?
- Suggestion to study institutional arrangements in terms of who is responsible for what. Research different models of how the MPO work gets done. Different institutional arrangements. Under certain institutional arrangements resource constraints are less. Some structures are not legal under different state laws. It is not impossible to have funding.
- How do we share information? There are a lot of good ideas. What is the means by which MPOs can share information? Small MPOs– find research for large urban regions. How to find examples from small areas?
- Information needs a population lens and also needs an institutional lens.
- COG and MPO blending is unique. You can have them under the same roof. We aspire to do something and the only way it will work is if we go back to take steps to achieve relationship building and buy on. This is what we work toward– the understanding and shared policies and goals.
- How do you build that institutional structure to get folks working together? In 1965 the Rochester Olmsted planning study was organized. Took single host issue out of the MPO planning issue. Coordinated system. All three entities adopt the same plan.
- How do you get there? Agree with what is in plan, but do not go back and do the enabling.
- Identify the funding gaps.
- How do we get the info to you? How do we set something in motion that relates to your size and relates to you?
- It needs to be dynamic. As soon as you print it, the information is obsolete. It needs to be refreshed and kept updated.
- State of Washington model might work. Counties and cities could pay a fee and join research group.
- Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington is a wonderful resource.



- Need a clearinghouse for information.
- How would you measure the success of an institutional arrangement?
- Helpful to know what is done in other areas.
- What about a case study of Rochester MPO because of its institutional structure?

### 4.3 Participants' Individual Responses to the Questionnaire

The following summarizes the individual responses to the questionnaires. Not all participants responded to all questions.

What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?

T. Black, Thurston Regional Planning Council:

- Funding– decline in dollars for planning and programming; future uncertainty.
- Climate change response– meaningful tools, analyses, mitigation, and adaptation measures.
- Metropolitan fringe issues (driven by proximity)– freight/industrial growth, rate/type of growth, outbound commute.

S. Mallette, North Front Range MPO:

- Funding– without funding MPOs start losing their relevance.

P. Scott, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments:

- Funding for preserving the existing system.
- Transportation system improvements that will enhance the economic vitality of our region (cannot compete with congestion relief projects in other areas).
- Alternatives/access to transportation services.

A. Martin, Iowa Department of Transportation:

- Shortage of funding and an aging infrastructure.
- Air quality conformity standards that we [in Iowa] will have to face due to our state going into non-attainment.
- Additional Federal requirements, but little additional funding.

P. Wheeler, Rochester-Olmsted Council of Governments:

- Funding for capacity enhancements; funding for Transportation Demand Management (TDM) alternatives to capacity enhancements; planning sufficiently in advance to protect ROW [right of way] while meeting NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act requirements].

D. Baltz, City of Salem, Oregon:

- Lack of funding for street maintenance.
- Lack of funding for capital transportation projects.
- Coming to a decision on the Willamette River Crossing project (also funding).

M. Fiol, Virginia Department of Transportation:

- Requirements vs. resources.

What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?

S. Mallette, North Front Range MPO:

- Transit– capacity expansion.

P. Scott, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments:

- Mapping– responding to member requests for data.
- Attending meetings.

A. Martin, Iowa Department of Transportation:

- From the DOT's perspective, MPOs spend most of their resources to develop the "core products" such as the LRTP [Long-Range Transportation Plan], TIP, TPWP [Transportation Planning Work Program], and Human Service Coordination Plan. There does not seem to be enough time to educate the public, perform special projects, and coordinate with the various stakeholders to make planning and programming better.

P. Wheeler, Rochester-Olmsted Council of Governments:

- Model updates, public participation generally, corridor studies, LRTP update.

D. Baltz, City of Salem, Oregon:

- Transportation plans and corridor studies.

M. Fiol, Virginia Department of Transportation:

- State transportation planning.

What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date? What factors contributed to the success?

T. Black, Thurston Regional Planning Council:

- Served community for over 40 years.
- Intra-regional coordination of transportation/land use plans underpin every other identifiable success for the organization. The coordination is attributable to strong partnerships, good communication, and informed and committed elected officials and local and regional staff.

S. Mallette, North Front Range MPO:

- Becoming an independent MPO without a host government.

P. Scott, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments:

- Utilizing STP [Surface Transportation Program] funds for regional transportation planning.
- Data and products that support planning and benefit individual member agencies (e.g., digital ortho photos, Origin & Destination study to support regional transportation model).

A. Martin, Iowa Department of Transportation:

- Planning has become a lot better over the years in Iowa, due to strong partnerships with the MPOs and DOT and Feds.
- Building partnerships with MPOs, DOT providing guidance for planning requirements, having a "one-stop shop" approach to getting planning answers from DOT.

P. Wheeler, Rochester-Olmsted Council of Governments:

- Adherence to LRTP (adopted as local plan by county and city, along with incorporated into land development regulations and funding).

Anonymous, Organization unspecified:

- Coordination and cooperation in model development, state MPO.

D. Baltz, City of Salem, Oregon:

- Starting the River Crossing EIS [Environmental Impact Statement].
- Getting a \$100 million bond in good shape on the November ballot.
- Updating our transportation system development charges (impact fees).

M. Fiol, Virginia Department of Transportation:

- In light of today's topic ... using the Small Urban Area Transportation Studies to transition from urban to MPO planning.

What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process? Of those, are there some that are related to the size of your community, that is, these impediments would not be an issue if you were a larger organization serving a larger community?

T. Black, Thurston Regional Planning Council:

- My region aspires to be a transit-friendly, multimodal, high-quality small urban city when it grows up. But our size limits us in some regards in terms of the critical mass and economic clout to support transit (efficient transit) or influence the kind of mixed-use development we say we want.

S. Mallette, North Front Range MPO:

- Parochialism– larger communities in the MPO are more protective of their projects and control. Smaller communities are more able to see the regional picture. This attitude stops regional collaboration.

P. Scott, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments:

- Challenges– attracting and retaining interested participants (including my board members). I think there are so many other more pressing issues that take participants' attention that it is hard to engaged small town part-time elected officials in a long-range transportation plan, let alone get the average citizen interested and engaged.

A. Martin, Iowa Department of Transportation:

- From the DOT's perspective: staff retention/staff capabilities, additional requirements by the feds and little additional funding and aging infrastructure but lack of funding to maintain.

P. Wheeler, Rochester-Olmsted Council of Governments:

- Recurring adherence to transportation plan in land use decisions.
- Gaining state acceptance of expansion needs would be easier if we had more clout.

Anonymous, Organization unspecified:

- Funding.

- Land use coordination.

D. Baltz, City of Salem, Oregon:

- Beyond the big issues related to funding projects and maintenance, we need to find political support and funding for creating a pedestrian and bike (non-motorized) plan.

M. Fiol, Virginia Department of Transportation:

- Resources vs. requirements– that is our biggest issue for all transportation planning entities. Not only are there less funds to plan for, but also fewer funds to plan with.

How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?  
About new tools or data resources?

T. Black, Thurston Regional Planning Council:

- Through AMPO, TRB, our state DOT, peers.

S. Mallette, North Front Range MPO:

- Listserves, the DOT, other MPOs (usually larger).

P. Scott, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments:

- Conferences, training courses (NTI [National Transit Institute], NHI [National Highway Institute]), conversations with peers, forwarded newsletters, e-mail lists.

A. Martin, Iowa Department of Transportation:

- In Iowa, DOT takes a proactive approach to help the MPOs become aware of new planning requirements. Iowa DOT also has developed several guidance documents to help MPOs with existing planning requirements.

P. Wheeler, Rochester-Olmsted Council of Governments:

- Coordinate through MnDOT [Minnesota DOT] and interaction with peers in other MPOs; online resources.

Anonymous, Organization unspecified:

- TRB.
- Other research resources– try to share with MPOs.

D. Baltz, City of Salem, Oregon:

- We learn a lot through the MPO TAC meetings.

M. Fiol, Virginia Department of Transportation:

- DOT shares knowledge, awareness, and proposals for how to address issues when applicable.

Other thoughts/comments/suggestions?

S. Mallette, North Front Range MPO:

- A listserve through FHWA/FTA on most current issues.

D. Baltz, City of Salem, Oregon:

- Hopeful thoughts: ITS shows a great potential for very cost-effective investments. The new traffic model that our MPO is moving to (VISUM and VISIR) shows promise to greatly improve the model's usefulness to us.

M. Fiol, Virginia Department of Transportation:

- There are many similar challenges. There is also a clear difference between the needs of a new MPO vs. the needs of a more established MPO.

## 5. CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Collectively, the review of case studies, the survey of planners serving small communities, and the peer exchange discussion itself suggests the following points:

- Community size is an important consideration, but other variables such as institutional structure and local issues are important factors to consider when selecting tools and planning processes for application in a small community setting.
- Small community MPOs are not alike. Aside from a variety of institutional structures, the role of the state DOT in supporting the MPOs and their “vintage” are important distinguishing factors that influence the types of information and tools that they need. Time since establishment is particularly important; the needs of MPOs established within the previous 5 years differ from those with a longer history of serving the community.
- Efforts such as those in Virginia and Ohio to track communities likely to be designated in the near future are important in helping these new organizations become established and effective.
- This issue of funding is raised frequently, but there is considerable divergence in how the funding issue is a particularly “small MPO” issue as opposed to larger MPOs where funding is also an issue. Points raised include (1) small MPOs have fewer funding streams; (2) there are no economies of scale in meeting Federal requirements in a small MPO; and (3) MPOs must complete the same requirements as larger MPOs but with typically less funding– arguing for a minimum threshold of funding for every MPO.
- The value of partnerships with other agencies and other MPOs is raised repeatedly in several contexts including as a means to (1) share information and learn to interpret Federal guidance; (2) acquire needed technical/analytical resources to supplement the MPO’s own staff; (3) develop a small community agenda and communicate it to the state legislature as in Arizona; and (4) advance projects.
- The need to share information that is timely and relevant to the mission of an MPO serving a small community was identified in the literature, the survey, and the peer exchange. Suggested methods to accomplish this information sharing include a listserve; a quarterly meeting hosted by the state DOT, as in Iowa; a subscription service modeled on the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington State; a series of webinars; and a clearinghouse for information such as a website or electronic newsletter that is regularly distributed. Information needs to be dynamic; as soon as you print, it is obsolete. Need to be able to sort by more than community size; the age of the organization, institutional structure, and relationship to DOT are other important variables.

The survey, literature review and peer exchange discussion collectively describe planning practitioners’ common understanding of the issues facing MPOs serving small communities. The limitations of the summary above suggest some fruitful and interesting possible avenues for future research that might advance the state of the planning practice among small communities.

The most important avenue for future research lies in elaborating on where and how the challenges facing MPOs in small communities have translated into meaningful differences in outcomes relative to other communities. A review of case studies drawn from small community settings readily identified themes

describing resource constraints in terms of funding and staffing, and the related issue of planning tool applications, but found little mention of how these challenges translated into poorer outcomes than in larger community settings that also struggle with resource issues. This is not to say that the common perception that there are challenges unique to small communities is mistaken, but rather to say that the literature does not appear to have focused on the impact that these challenges have on planning outcomes.

**Measuring Success.** There have been studies in the past calling for performance measures that would document differences in outcomes, such as the 2003 National Metropolitan Planning Organization Peer Exchange, but the literature on how to implement such metrics is not well developed, particularly in the context of a small community MPO. For example, what is the best way to establish transportation planning performance measures for small MPOs? How to best to measure the effectiveness of the planning process and the efficiency with which resources are applied in the process? Are there measurable differences in quality of planning outcome, across MPOs of different sizes or institutional contexts?

At present, MPOs serving small communities do not undergo certification reviews. Would small MPOs benefit from a program of peer reviews in lieu of full certifications similar to MPOs in larger communities? Would this be a cost-effective method to share information and gain feedback on the efficacy of their process without becoming administratively burdensome? Could a voluntary pilot program be designed to test the concept?

**Benchmarking MPOs.** At present, there is no overall set of benchmarks against which a small MPO can compare its own performance. The establishment of an “industry average,” a regularly reported “State of the MPO” study, or the equivalent of a “National Transit Database” would permit individual MPOs to compare themselves to others based on size, region, peer community type, and other dimensions. This would both highlight what the MPO did well, a success case story, as well as identify areas for future improvement. Implementing such an approach would require consensus on the appropriate performance measures to track, as well as an initiative to collect the information.

**Sharing Information.** Both the establishment of an MPO database and the opportunity to participate in a peer review, either as reviewer or a member of the organization that is reviewed, supports the goal of information exchange. In addition, numerous survey respondents identified web sites and list serves as valuable resources but stressed the need to have fresh information. A distance-learning approach might address this issue and works well for resource strapped small MPOs, permitting staff to participate in workshops with their peers without creating money issues and difficulties associated with leaving the office for business travel.

FHWA’s “Talking Freight” seminar provides one model. <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/freightplanning/talking.htm> The web-based seminars are part of a broader Freight Professional Development Program aimed at providing technical assistance, training, tools, and information to help the freight and planning workforce meet challenges. Seminars are held on a monthly basis throughout the year and are open at no cost to all interested parties. Seminars are recorded and the transcript and presentation materials are available online for review at any time. While this requires some resources to organize the logistics and maintain an active program, it is an approach with a very large potential reach, is readily available to the small MPO community, and is flexible enough to respond to current events and rapidly changing requirements and guidance on a short time frame.



## APPENDIX A: THEMES IDENTIFIED IN CASE STUDIES OF SMALL MPOS

As part of the broader project effort, the consultant team reviewed case studies and related literature to identify knowledge gaps, potential lessons learned, and recommendations that directly address the challenges of transportation planners who serve small communities. The themes in the literature that are discussed below were selected in order to provide background for the peer exchange participants; the review is not intended to be an encyclopedic review of all literature on planning in the context of small communities.

The following is a brief summary of some of the main themes found in the literature:

- There is evidence of threshold issues for planners, such as rural areas crossing the threshold to an urbanized area and smaller MPOs crossing the threshold of 200,000 population and successfully evolving to address different requirements. For example, one study concluded there is a gap in the planning process for rural communities near rapidly growing urbanized areas and new urban centers because local officials are sometimes unaware of the requirements for metropolitan planning to qualify for urban area funding after designation as an urbanized area.
- Collaboration with other agencies/organizations is a repeated theme. Often, the use of partnerships is raised in the context of securing technical support such as GIS or travel demand modeling services. A different perspective on partnerships argued that MPO planners may find it difficult to adequately guide the planning process, particularly when the MPO is not the lead agency for a project. A potential solution suggested for this issue is for the MPO to co-host planning events with other agencies. Such an approach leverages resources, builds partnerships, and increases the MPO's involvement in the planning process and its visibility to the public.
- Some research suggests that population alone is not the best predictor of the appropriate analysis tool and that local issues and goals should also be considered. While planning tools such as travel demand models can be scaled to the size of the community, local issues must also be considered; population size is not a proxy for complexity. Other research echoes this theme, maintaining that each community is unique and many factors beyond a community's size will impact the success of a transportation project.
- The TIP/LRP process creates challenges across a number of dimensions. For example, a challenge faced by smaller MPOs is dealing with changes to the TIP/LRP and keeping it current, often in response to a state adding or removing projects. A related concern is validity of cost information for projects in the TIP or LRP that carry forward across planning cycles without an adjustment to the project cost. Presenting the plan and managing the underlying material provides another challenge; providing plan information in formats that ensure the material continues to be referenced is critical in a planning environment where staff wears more than one hat and does not have the luxury of specializing.
- Data and related issues are raised in a number of contexts. One study recommended separating TMA from non-TMA data to make it easier for new and smaller MPOs to find the information relevant to them on FHWA and similar sites. A related suggestion is for state DOTs to compile a comprehensive list of studies and plans and make them available through their websites so that MPOs can determine what data is available. The availability and sufficiency of third-party freight and land use data is a concern for many small communities. Many studies find that a logical role for an MPO is to serve as a central repository for data collected from various sources.

## Selected Case Studies With a Small Community Emphasis

Ashby, Matthew J. 2006. "PlanCheyenne - Co-Planning for MPOs," Presented at North Carolina National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities. Cheyenne is the capital city of Wyoming and comprises nearly one-fifth of the state's total population of approximately 510,000 people. Working in this small community context, *PlanCheyenne* utilized staff participation and feedback in developing the formatting concepts for the plan; the so-called compartmentalization approach. In reviewing how current planning staff utilized previous plans, participants concluded that staff reports to planning commission and elected officials only included elements of the plan that were quickly referenced. Particularly in a small MPO where staff must wear many hats, efficient management and communication of information is essential. The adopted land use was included, but policies, principles, and other concepts from the plan were often overlooked because the ideas were buried within a cumbersome narrative. To remedy this critical issue, *PlanCheyenne* undertook an extensive formatting effort to compartmentalize all information contained within the plan into the smallest logical sections possible. Each section can stand alone, with individual covers and index pages.

Cary, William E. 2002. "Keys to Repairing and Restarting Stalled Roadway Projects," Presented at Eighth National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities, Cincinnati, OH.

The paper focuses on techniques to advance projects that have languished. The examples are all drawn from small communities— projects in cities with populations of 3,500, 5,000, 10,000, 35,000, and 120,000. The paper outlines a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) approach as a crucial activity in starting and/or restarting projects. This approach has been used effectively on numerous project planning efforts. Advisory Committee meetings are a very effective means of identifying issues and concerns, building community consensus, and encouraging specific local input. The PAC, by serving as a liaison between MPO staff and the community, serves as a partner to MPO staff in surfacing issues and in public outreach, leveraging MPO staff resources.

Crawford, Jason A. 2007. "Congestion Monitoring Measures and Procedures for Small to Medium-Sized Communities." College Station, TX: Texas A&M University. Texas Transportation Institute. Report Number TTI PSR 5571-S.

Congestion is not unique to large metropolitan areas; small communities also face congestion issues, frequently along state highways. This paper is unusual in that it addresses congestion in the context of a small community. The paper states that "the primary objective of this research is to develop and test a framework for congestion monitoring in small to medium-sized communities, including economical (low-cost) monitoring techniques and the normal range of improvements for small to medium-sized communities." This statement implicitly recognizes that while small communities face many of the same issues as their larger counterparts, the range of solutions is different. The report outlines two pilot studies of where performance measures and solutions are developed for small community congestion problems.

Durham, Mack, and Gallagher, Susan. 2006. "Bozeman Bicycle Network Plan," Presented at the Tenth National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities, Nashville, TN.

This paper describes a low-cost spreadsheet model to use in prioritizing bicycle transportation improvements. The case study is in Bozeman, MT. The priority ranking was done using a simple Excel spreadsheet that automatically summed the weighted scores for each criterion to provide an overall score for each road segment. This research produced a prioritized list of potential bicycle facility improvement projects using an iterative approach that quantified information obtained through physical inspection,

meeting with the public, the Bozeman Area Bicycle Advisory Board's input, the Bicycle Level of Service (BLOS) analysis, and knowledge gained through City of Bozeman employees.

Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program. 2004. "Best Practices for Small and Medium-Sized Metropolitan Planning Organizations," Accessed at <http://www.planning.dot.gov/Peer/Arkansas/arkansas.htm>

The Peer Exchange was designed to share and discuss effective practices used by small and medium-sized MPOs. Recommendations generated for specific topics are listed in this report. In particular, the report recommends that the FHWA [planning.dot.gov](http://www.planning.dot.gov) website should divide its materials into two categories to make it easier for new and smaller MPOs to find the information relevant to them. The larger point is that not all information developed for larger urban settings is transferable to application in a small community setting. By providing a means to search or sort databases by community size, small community planners can more readily access the information most relevant to their own organizational needs.

Federal Highway Administration. 2006. "Rapidly Urbanizing/Overview Report," Accessed at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/metro/rapurbov.htm>

Report contains six case studies, five of which are small communities: Lake County, FL (just crossed the 200,000 population threshold in 2000); Dalton, GA; Coeur d'Alene, ID; Bowling Green, KY; and St. George, Utah. The report also contains supporting materials and a literature review of its own. The study provided evidence of a gap in the planning process for rural communities near rapidly growing urbanized areas and new urban centers because local officials are sometimes unaware of the requirements for metropolitan planning to qualify for urban area funding after designation as an urbanized area. An additional finding is that many new MPOs discover that establishing the credibility of the technical committee early on (with by-laws, regular meetings, meeting notes, and attendance records) will smooth the transition to the formalities of the planning process.

Huntsinger, Leta F., Stone, John R. and Khattak, Asad J. 2006. "Planning Analysis Toolbox for Small Urban Areas in North Carolina," Presented at the Tenth National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities, Nashville, TN.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) sponsored research designed to develop best practice guidelines for travel demand modeling for a wide range of community sizes and staff expertise. As such, the goal was to develop not only a set of tools and techniques, but also a framework for staff development and training. This paper provides a set of guidelines for recommended practice in conducting travel forecasting analysis for communities with a population of less than 50,000. The authors considered various transportation and community issues in addition to community size. They found that travel demand models can be scaled to the size and needs of the community where a dedicated model developer on staff may not be a feasible option. The research also suggests that population alone is not the best predictor of the appropriate analysis tool and that local issues and goals should also be considered. Put another way, population size is not a perfect proxy for community complexity; local issues and conditions may warrant a more intensive analytical approach than community size alone might suggest. Small communities are not homogeneous.

Lima, Peter M.; Bohannon, Rob; Arthur, Cathy D.; Cupell, Patrick; and Jarvis, Jess. 2002. "An Air Quality Outreach Program for a Growing Small Urban Area," Presented at Eighth National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities, Cincinnati, OH. This paper describes actions taken by a small urban area prior to designation as an MPO. In this case study, the community addressed the question of sustaining its current clean air environment by first defining an Air Quality Vision and then developing an Educational Air Quality Outreach Program. The Central Yavapai County area is composed of the TriCities of Prescott, Prescott Valley, and Chino Valley and includes the Yavapai Prescott Indian Tribe and portions of Yavapai County. Because the community is

expected to become an MPO, it is possible that federal requirements will apply if local air quality begins to deteriorate. This case study is unusual because it outlines how a small community can be proactive and take action before air quality deteriorates and a community is faced with air quality requirements.

National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation. 2009. "Metropolitan and Rural Transportation Planning: Case Studies and Checklists for Regional Collaboration," Accessed at <http://66.132.139.69/uploads/rpompo.pdf>

This report provides case studies of communities where collaboration across regional planning boundaries has been successful. Examples include the collaboration among Arizona's small urban MPOs and rural councils of governments (COGs) to host an annual Rural Transportation Summit to enhance professional development for planning staff, elected officials, technical committee members, and other stakeholders. The event fosters peer networking, information sharing, and collaboration on issues. One result of the discussions held at early summits was the decision by the MPOs and COGs to form the Rural Transportation Advocacy Council (RTAC) in 2001. The RTAC staff helps local officials stay informed and educated. The MPOs and COGs' partnership ensures that a unified voice for rural and small metropolitan regions is heard in the state legislature and statewide transportation planning process. Another example is Alabama's Planning Mentor Network, which fosters collaboration between the state's regional development organizations and its established MPOs.

National Association of Regional Councils. December 2008. "St. Joseph Area Transportation Study Organization: A Case Study for Transit Security," Case study developed as part of the Transit Security Planning Project is a joint project between NARC and the Federal Transit Administration. Accessed at <http://narc.org/activities/transportation/transit-security-planning-project.html>

The passage of the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act - a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) increased the number of required planning factors that MPOs must include in their Transportation Improvement Programs. Under prior legislation, MPOs were required to account for a "safety and security" planning factor; SAFETEA-LU divided this combined factor into two separate components: "safety" and "security." The case study describes how the St. Joseph Area Transportation Study Organization (SJATSO) has developed effective coordination and communication on security issues among the various operating agencies and key facilities in the region, providing an example of the success and challenge faced by a small MPO in integrating this planning factor into its transportation plan. It also provides another example of an MPO working in partnership with other agencies.

Schrank, David L. 2002. A Methodology for Analyzing Mobility Levels in Small Cities: Lessons Learned in Grand Junction, CO. Eighth National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities, Cincinnati, OH.

This paper shows the results of an analysis to measure the mobility level in Grand Junction, CO. Lessons learned include (1) a data collection plan is critical to the study process; (2) pre-collection and post-collection meetings should be scheduled; (3) local feedback on raw data and findings is needed; (4) this analysis is most useful at a corridor level and not on a segment-by-segment basis; and (5) the data collected in this analysis may also be useful for other analyses. The paper demonstrates a methodology that works within a small community setting; the lessons learned are not themselves unique to small communities.

Schuetz, Petra. 2006. "When Big Projects Come to Small Places," Presented at the Tenth National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities, Nashville, TN. This paper describes how a smaller community built a successful campaign around a large project with unique ideas, public-private partnerships, and analysis of performance measures that strengthened the transportation planning process at all levels. An important goal of the project was to combine ODOT project

implementation with other community transportation priorities and values emphasizing providing up-to-date information, alternative routes, and modes of transportation.

Smadi, Ayman. 2006. "Supporting Transportation Planning in Small MPOs Through Partnerships and Innovative Methods." Presented at the Tenth National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities, Nashville, TN.

MPOs must develop and maintain transportation planning models to support a multitude of system decisions and transportation and land use policies. In many instances, the smaller MPOs lack the staff resources and expertise necessary to develop, run, and maintain transportation planning models. Many smaller MPOs have difficulty recruiting or retaining skilled transportation modelers. This paper presents an innovative approach that uses a partnership between academia and local, state, and federal transportation agencies to meet transportation modeling demands in North Dakota. The program facilitates pooling of resources, sharing of knowledge, and ensuring consistency across the State.

Stoddard III, Albert T. Ph.D., P.E., and . Kosman, Kyle PAICP. 2006. "Implementation of a Public Transportation System in Casper, Wyoming," National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities, Nashville, TN.

This paper describes the planning and implementation process for a public transportation system in Casper, WY, a city of approximately 50,000 people. Planners surveyed existing resources and found that a number of agencies were funding transportation services for clients, but there was no coordination of these programs. There was significant funding of transportation services in the community that could potentially be used to fund a public transportation service if it could meet the needs of these clients.

Tolon, Marsha. 2002. "Is the Merger of NEPA and the Planning Process Economical?" Eighth National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities, Cincinnati, OH.

The paper outlines a process to efficiently manage a NEPA process within a small community setting. Known as the Reinventing NEPA process, the paper describes how it was applied in Washington State. The NEPA process was merged with the planning process to streamline the process and build partnerships among stakeholders, project work groups, and federal and state agencies. The approach describes an economical merger of NEPA and the planning process that can be applied in a smaller community setting.

Turnbell, Katherine F. 2006. The Metropolitan Planning Organization, Present and Future: Summary of a Conference. Transportation Research Board, Washington, DC.

The conference goals were to explore (1) the organizational structure of MPOs, including their operating and personnel relationships with other governmental institutions; (2) the current state of the practice for regional decision-making among MPOs of various sizes; (3) approaches to integrating a wide array of additional considerations into the MPO planning process, including freight, operations, safety, asset management, and environment; (4) approaches to institutionalizing an integrated approach to comprehensive planning, beyond developing transportation plans; and (5) development of relationships with local decision-making bodies within the MPO region that are responsible for carrying out the MPO-developed vision for the region. The discussion of MPO roles and current state of the practice includes a description of the evolution of the MPO and a discussion of whether the existing size distinctions still make sense. One suggestion is that the possibility for greater regulatory flexibility for smaller MPOs might be an issue for consideration in reauthorization.

Wagner, Nancy. 2002. "Planning and Implementing the First Public Transit System in Charlotte County, FL," Presented at the Eighth National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities, Cincinnati, OH.

This paper gathers ideas from the Charlotte County experience that may benefit other communities that are establishing a new transit system in a small to medium-sized community. The paper finds that there is no single “right way” to develop a transit program. Each community is unique and many factors beyond community size impact success. Some of these factors include service market, capability, and local conditions.

Williams, Kristine M., Karen E. Seggerman, and Jeffrey Kramer. 2006. “Integrating Access Management into Local Transportation Planning,” Presented at the Tenth National Conference on Transportation Planning for Small and Medium-Sized Communities, Nashville, TN.

This paper presents findings from NCHRP Project 08-46 on integrating access management into local transportation planning. Local practices were identified through a combination of methods. The local governments surveyed ranged from small towns to large metropolitan counties in various geographic regions of the United States. The paper argues that every community, no matter how small, should plan its desired major street system and adopt the necessary implementing mechanisms, including access management, rather than evaluating access issues on a case-by-case basis. By incorporating access management in the planning process, local governments can improve the quality of their planning efforts, strengthen internal and inter-governmental coordination, and establish a strong foundation for successful long-term implementation of their transportation and land use plans.

## APPENDIX B: SURVEY OF PLANNERS

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) that serve small communities<sup>3</sup> face a distinct set of transportation planning challenges, relative to their large urban peers, even as they pursue a common goal of ensuring that expenditures for transportation projects and programs are based on a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process. To better understand the planning challenges and issues facing small MPOs, AECOM Consult conducted an online survey of all MPOs serving a population of less than 200,000.

The Transportation in Small Communities survey was designed to evaluate the level of knowledge, resources, and planning tools used by small MPOs and identify gaps in knowledge, data, and tools. The survey contained four sections:

1. Please tell us about your organization. This section asked multiple-choice questions about the organization such as community size and staff size.
2. Activities. This section focused on the planning process, its participants, and issues encountered.
3. Resources. This section focused on the resources available to conduct planning activities.
4. Tools. This section focused on the planning tools available to conduct planning activities and the challenges/limitations of planning tools and data.

Each section consisted of multiple-choice questions and written responses and was designed to take a total of 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

To assist with the creation and collection of the survey, AECOM Consult used the online survey tool SurveyMonkey.com. SurveyMonkey.com provided an efficient, flexible way to create the survey permitting numerous question formats, collect responses through e-mail invitations, and download and aggregate survey responses. The use of SurveyMonkey.com allowed AECOM to dedicate more time to analyzing survey responses because it provided a simple way to monitor response rates and collect and download the survey responses.

Once SurveyMonkey.com was selected as the online survey tool, the FHWA MPO Database was used to identify the MPOs serving a population of less than 200,000 and assemble the available e-mail addresses of their executive directors and/or transportation planners. An e-mail invitation was sent through SurveyMonkey.com to 193 agencies asking them to participate in the online survey. Each agency was sent an agency-specific link to the survey that allowed only one completion per agency. The link could be forwarded to others within the agency for assistance with various sections of the survey; however, the link took them directly to the survey for their agency.

This technical memorandum summarizes the findings of the Transportation Planning in Small Communities online survey. The results and responses for each section of the online survey are presented in Section 2. Section 3 highlights the transportation planning successes and challenges reported by survey respondents and identifies respondent suggestions that might alleviate or reduce these challenges. The blank survey form is contained in Appendix B.1 and all survey responses are presented in Appendix B.2.

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<sup>3</sup> Defined here as communities with a population above the 50,000 threshold for which federal regulation requires the formation of an MPO for any urbanized area (UA) and below the 200,000 threshold that designates Transportation Management Areas (TMAs).

## 2.0 SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESPONSES

The Transportation Planning in Small Communities survey invitation was e-mailed to 193 MPOs on July 24, 2008; 37 e-mails were returned due to wrong addresses or personnel no longer with the organization. After additional research to find new contacts for these organizations, 37 new invitations were e-mailed on July 29, 2008. A reminder e-mail was sent to MPOs that had not responded to the invitation as of August 1, 2008, encouraging them to participate in the survey before the August 8, 2008 deadline. One organization opted out of the survey due to time constraints because the MPO is currently a one-person organization.

By the August 8, 2008 deadline, 56 MPOs completed the survey, 46 fully and 10 partially, for a response rate of 29.2 percent. Responses were received from 29 states and represent a valuable mix of regions throughout the country. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the responses by state and region, respectively.

Table 1: Transportation Planning in Small Communities Survey Responses by State

	Partially Complete	Fully Complete
AL	1	1
AK		1
AZ		1
AR		1
CA		1
CO		2
CT		1
GA	1	1
ID		1
IL		2
IN		5
IA		1
KY		1
ME		3
MD		1
MI	1	1
MN		2
NV	2	
NM	1	2
NY		3
NC	1	2
OH		2
OR		2
SD		1
TN		1
TX	1	1
WA		2
WI	2	3
VA		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.



Table 2: Transportation Planning in Small Communities Survey Responses by Region

	Partially Complete	Fully Complete
Northeast	0	8
Midwest	3	17
South	4	9
Mountain	3	5
West	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

While the sample size of the survey was slightly smaller than the desired 40 percent response rate, the variety of responses from states throughout the country provided a good pulse on the major issues facing transportation planners in MPOs serving small communities. The results of the survey will provide a solid starting point for discussions during the Peer Exchange to be held in September 2008, during the Transportation Research Board's 11th Annual Tools of the Trade Conference in Portland, Oregon.

[Please Tell Us About Your Organization](#)

The responses to the first section of the survey provided a description of the agencies responding by establishing the newness of the agency, staff size, size of community served, characteristics of the community served, and how well the role of the MPO is understood by the community served. All 56 survey respondents completed this section of the survey, with the exception of the question on how well the role of the MPO is understood by the community, which had 55 responses.

The typical survey respondent (32 percent) was from an established MPO (in existence for more than 5 years) with six or fewer full-time equivalent (FTE) staff that serve a community with a population of 100,000 or fewer. One in five respondents (21 percent) were from a newly established MPO, which helped provide important insight into the transportation issues facing both newly established and established MPOs. The majority of respondents (64 percent) had FTE staff totaling between one and three; however, 89 percent had six or fewer staff members. Issues regarding having enough staff to perform all essential activities in-house were a recurring theme among respondents. Of the 56 respondents, 30 (54 percent) served a population of 100,000 or fewer, with most of those respondents (20) serving a population between 50,000 and 75,000, and 11 respondents served a population of 150,000 or more, providing an excellent sample of the issues facing both the MPOs serving very small populations and those that are on the brink of breaking the 200,000 milestone. All but two respondents characterized their communities as small urban or urban; however, the economic situation of these small urban or urban communities varied between stable (56 percent), struggling (26 percent), and growing (19 percent), providing a reasonable sample of the issues facing small urban or urban MPOs with various economic situations. However, due to the lack of rural or exurban responses to the survey, insight into the transportation planning issues facing these communities was limited.

The survey responses indicated that the role of MPOs is not well understood in the community as a whole, but is fairly well understood by government officials and decision-makers. Twenty-five percent of the 36 respondents that believed that the role of the MPO was not understood indicated that while the role was not understood well by the community as a whole, government officials and decision-makers were familiar with the role of the MPO, and three more indicated that the level of community understanding is improving with continued outreach. Even those agencies that responded that the MPO role was well understood indicated that the role was not necessarily understood by all members of the community. Of the 19 respondents that stated the role of the MPO was well understood, 11 reported that the role was well understood by government officials and decision-makers; two clarified that the activities of the MPO were well understood,

but not necessarily the MPO process; and five specifically mentioned that the role was well understood, but not necessarily by the general public. One agency conducted some informal polling to determine why there was a lack of interest in the MPO by the general public despite frequent public meetings and outreach; they determined that the lack of interest stemmed from the lack of construction funds, which created the public perception that all the MPO does is plan, not construct projects.

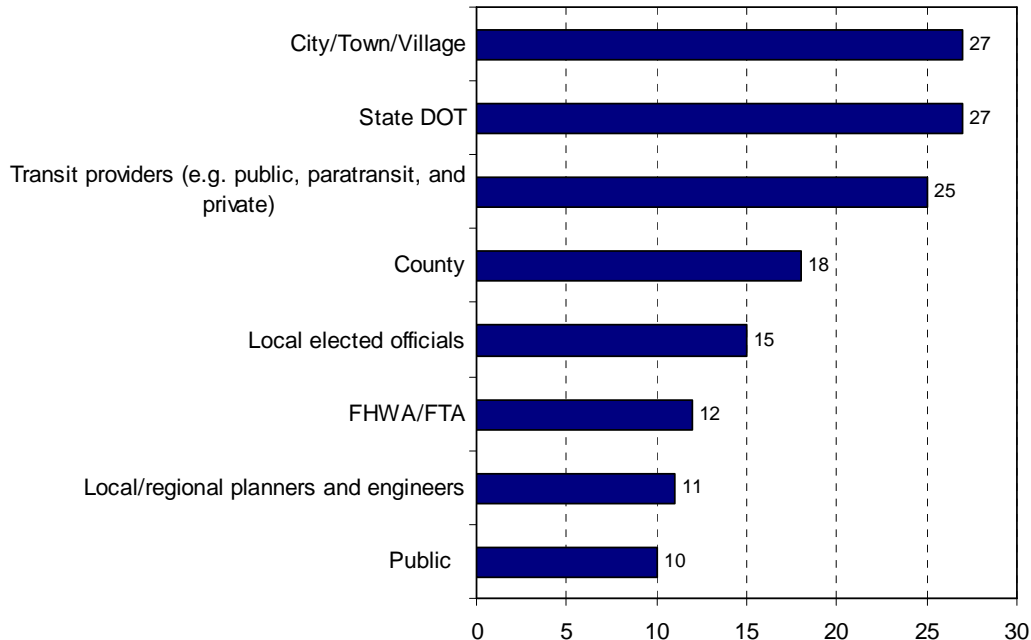
### Activities

The next section of the survey focused on the activities of the MPO, specifically the participants in the MPO planning process and the MPO transportation planning tasks. The survey attempted to identify traditional and non-traditional participants in the transportation planning process and the level of success achieved. The questions about the MPO tasks attempted to identify activities, successes, and issues associated with transportation planning tasks, including recommending projects to the state and public involvement. In general, 48 survey respondents completed this section of the survey. A few questions were skipped, but there were no fewer than 42 responses to any question in the Activities section of the survey.

### Participants

In general, the MPOs involved a wide variety of agencies and groups in the transportation planning process, and 74 percent of respondents involved non-traditional participants with varying levels of success. The most commonly listed major participants in the transportation planning process were the city/town/village, state DOT, transit providers, county, local elected officials, FHWA/FTA, local/regional planners and engineers, and the public. Exhibit 1 highlights the participants in the planning process that were mentioned by 10 or more of the respondents.

Exhibit 1: Major Participants in the Transportation Process



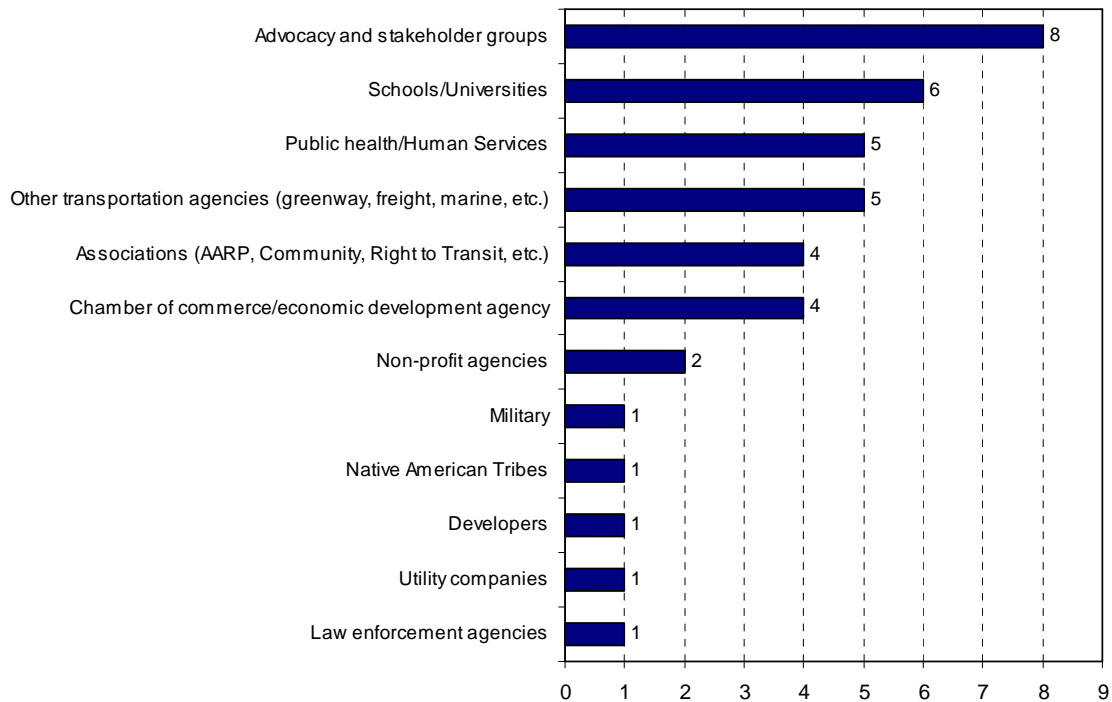
Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

Other major participants in the transportation planning process that received multiple mentions in the survey included other transportation agencies (e.g., railroads, ports, and airports), universities and colleges,

councils of governments, planning districts, public works agencies, and advocacy groups (e.g., bike/pedestrian, elderly, and disabled).

In addition to more traditional participants, almost three-quarters of the responding agencies involved non-traditional participants in the planning process. The most commonly mentioned non-traditional participants in the survey included public advocacy groups (e.g., bike/pedestrian, elderly, and disabled), schools and universities, public health/human services agencies, other transportation agencies (e.g., greenway, airports, marine, and freight), associations (e.g., Right to Transit and community/neighborhood groups), and chambers of commerce/economic development agencies. Exhibit 2 summarizes non-traditional participants in the transportation planning process mentioned by survey respondents. Of particular note concerning the non-traditional participants is that all of them were acknowledged by at least one survey respondent as one of the major participants in the transportation planning process, indicating that the role of non-traditional participants in the planning process is expanding and at such a rate that the non-traditional label may no longer be appropriate.

**Exhibit 2: Non-Traditional Participants in the Transportation Planning Process**

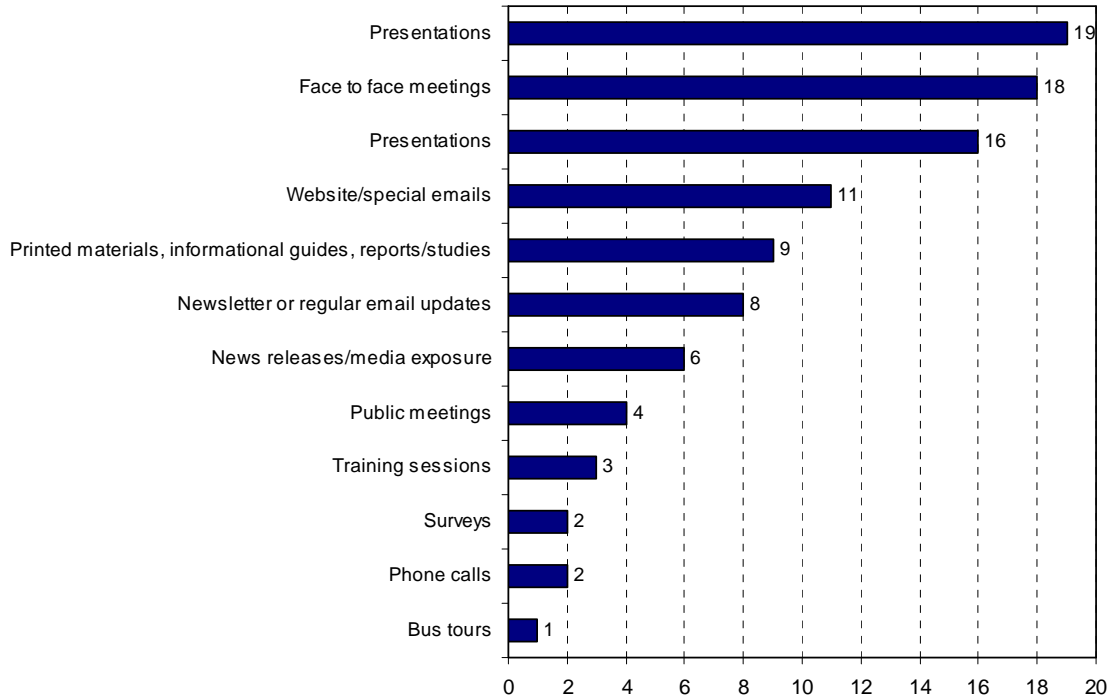


Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

Keeping traditional and non-traditional participants in the transportation planning process informed and supportive of the MPO and its projects requires frequent communication and significant time commitments by MPO staff. The survey attempted to identify the key means of communication and education used by MPOs in order to determine if there is a more effective or successful means by which to maintain these essential relationships with decision-makers and opinion-makers. The survey responses indicated that the education of key decision-makers and opinion-makers in the community on the transportation planning process generally focuses on the use of policy and committee meetings; face-to-face meetings with individuals or groups; and presentations to government officials, stakeholders, and other interested groups.

However, a large number of MPOs are using websites, e-mails, and newsletters to keep participants and decision-makers up-to-date on projects, studies, and happenings at the MPO. Exhibit 3 summarizes the methods used by the survey respondents to communicate and educate participants in the transportation planning process. The survey responses indicated that it is hard to beat face-to-face encounters with participants and decision-makers, but that other less personal means of communication, through websites, newsletters, and e-mails, are key components to maintaining these relationships on an ongoing basis.

Exhibit 3: Methods Used to Communicate With and Educate Participants in Transportation Planning Process

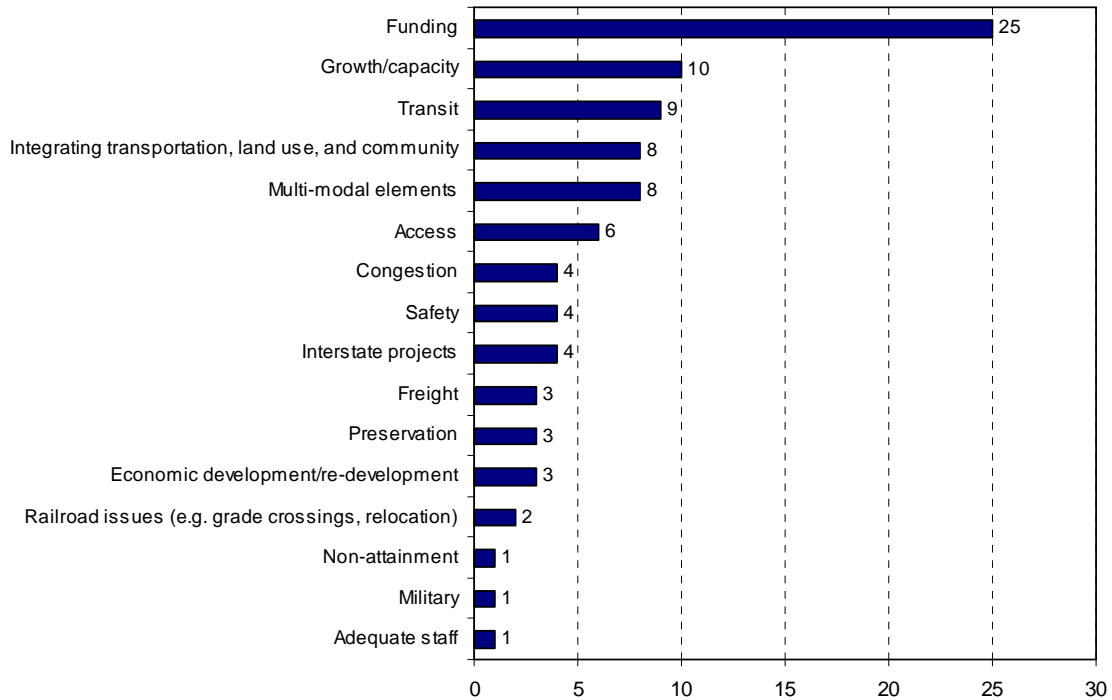


Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

### Tasks

MPOs serving small communities face a wide variety of issues throughout the transportation planning process; however, the online survey revealed that funding issues are the most prevalent and are the key to many other concerns. More than half of the 48 respondents listed funding among the most important issues facing their communities. The next closest response, mentioned by 21 percent of respondents, was significant population growth and meeting the capacity needs of their growing communities. As shown in Exhibit 4, transit and land use are also significant concerns.

**Exhibit 4: Most Important Transportation Planning Issues Facing Your Community**

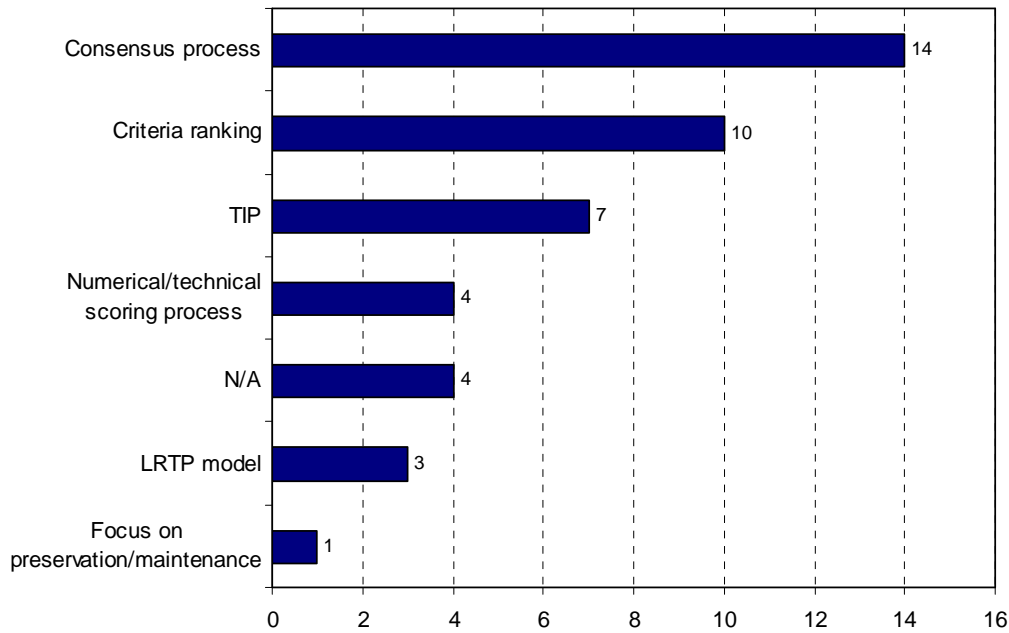


Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

While funding is central to the transportation planning issues mentioned in the survey responses, MPOs must still address the transportation problems in their communities. The transportation problems addressed most often by the respondents included intersection operation problems and safety, both of which were included by more than 50 percent of the 48 respondents. In addition, congestion bottlenecks, freight access/economic development, and other special needs were included by more than one-third of the respondents. The most prominent special needs or other problems mentioned were addressing communities’ multimodal needs, emergency evacuation, seasonal populations, transit, capacity, and incident management.

Given the large variety of transportation problems facing small MPOs and the limited funding available, the selection of projects to recommend to the state for inclusion in the state Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and/or Long-Range Plan (LRP) is of vital importance to these MPOs and communities. The survey results indicated that a variety of methods are used to select or recommend projects to the states, with the most common response being the use of a consensus process of talking it out with stakeholders. Exhibit 5 summarizes the methods used by the respondents. The survey responses revealed that a growing number of MPOs are prioritizing projects by applying a criteria ranking system or a technical, numerical process. Several agencies mentioned the development of a ranking system for project recommendation as an important success or development in recent years.

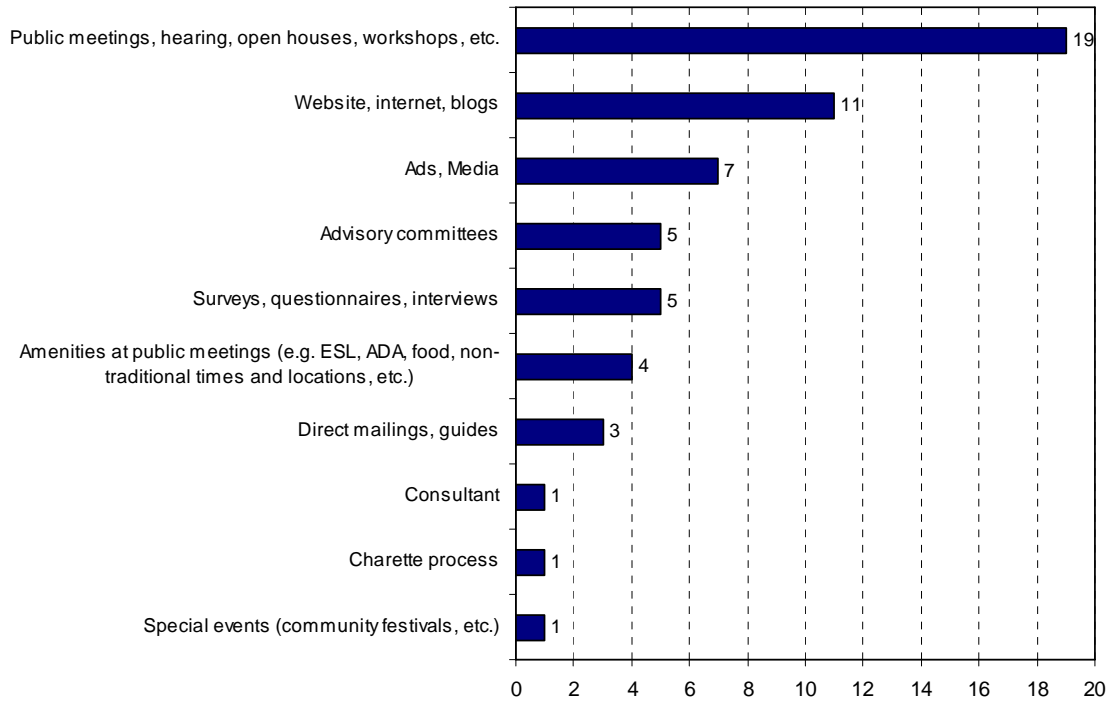
Exhibit 5: Methods Used to Select or Recommend Projects to the State



Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

Another key to getting transportation projects funded and included in state TIPs and LRPs is gaining the support of the public. Public support is garnered primarily through the MPOs' public involvement activities. In general, the survey respondents believed that there has been moderate to little success resulting from their public involvement efforts. Only 22 percent of the 44 respondents classified their public involvement efforts as successful or very successful. The innovative public involvement activities most commonly used by the respondents included public meetings (including open houses and workshops) and the use of the agency's website or Internet blogs, as shown in Exhibit 6. An important aspect of all the innovative public involvement activities mentioned by the survey respondents was making the activities accessible to the public not only through advertising the events, but also through amenities, such as having food at events, timing events for after work or weekends, holding events at non-traditional locations (e.g., libraries or festivals), and providing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant and multi-lingual events and materials. The more accessible the public involvement efforts are for all members of the community, the greater the opportunity for successful public involvement.

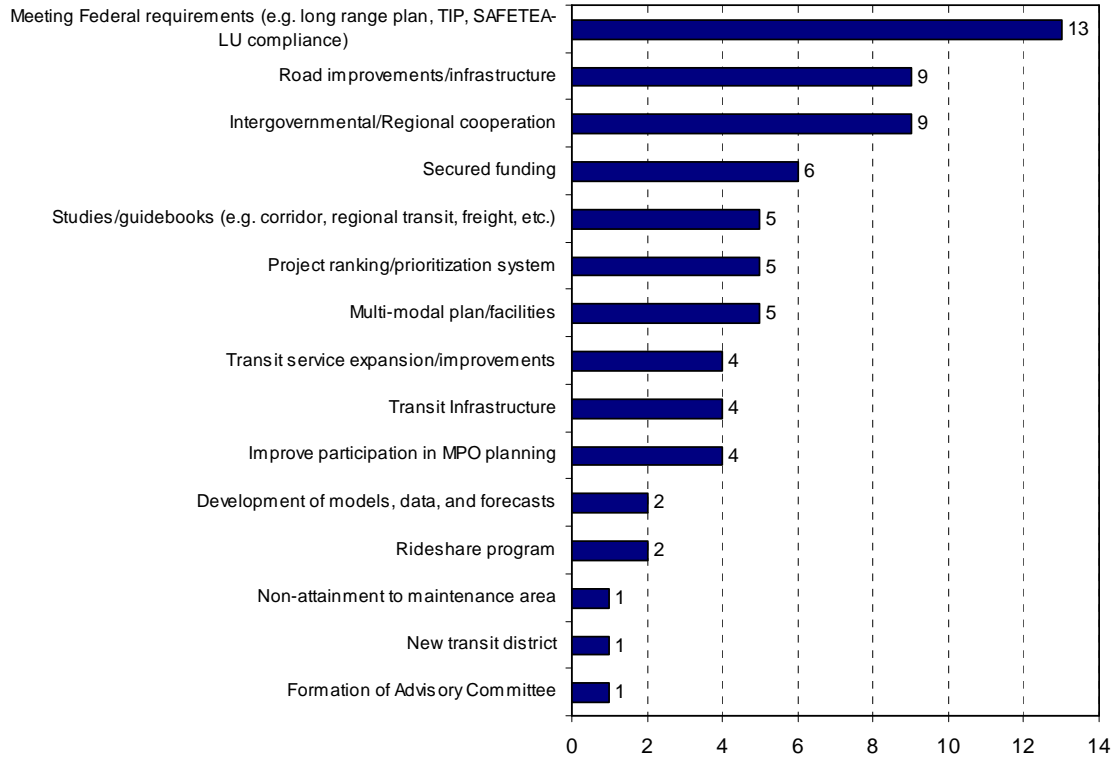
Exhibit 6: Innovative Public Involvement Activities



Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

Given the variety of issues and problems facing MPOs serving small communities, it is logical that the successes of these agencies are just as varied. The most important successes that were mentioned by more than 20 percent of the 42 respondents were meeting federal requirements (such as the TIP, LRTP, and SAFETEA-LU compliance), implementing road improvements or infrastructure, and inter-governmental/regional cooperation. Exhibit 7 summarizes all successes mentioned by the survey respondents. Given the many issues and obstacles facing MPOs serving small communities, these successes inspire what is possible even with limited funding, multiple stakeholders, and limited public interest/support. Accomplishing these successes was not necessarily an easy task, but through hard work, cooperation, community and regional support, and a little luck (yes, it was mentioned by several respondents as a success factor), success can be achieved. A summary of the factors that contributed to the successful initiatives that are highlighted in Exhibit 7 is outlined in Exhibit 8.

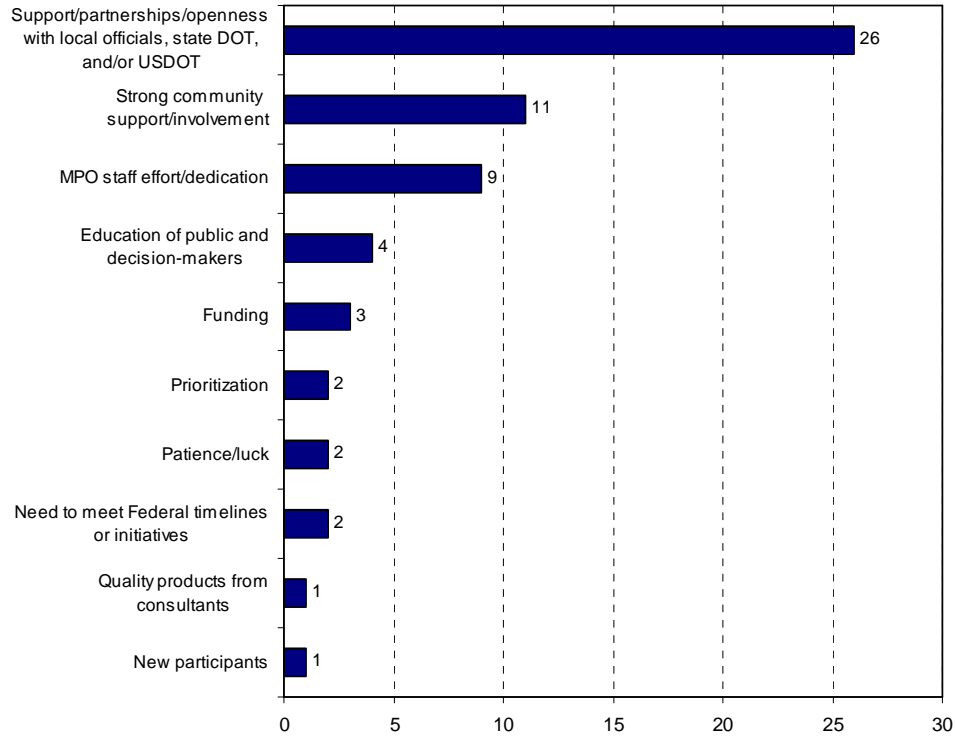
**Exhibit 7: Most Important Successes Achieved to Date**



Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.



**Exhibit 8: Factors Contributing to the Most Important Successes to Date**



Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

Resources

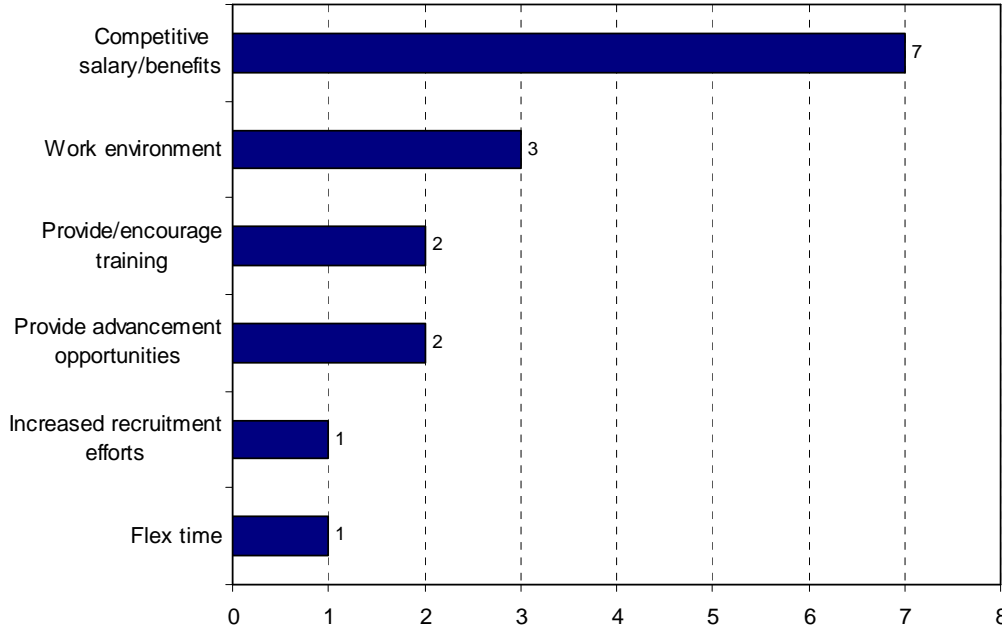
The next section of the survey focused on the resources available to MPOs serving small communities to conduct planning activities. The survey questions were particularly focused on the application of staff to activities, staff retention, and the activities that require the largest share of budget or funds. In general, 46 survey respondents completed this section of the survey. A few questions were skipped, but there were no fewer than 44 responses to any question that applied to all respondents in the Resources section of the survey. One question asked respondents to explain if they answered yes to the previous question; in this instance, 27 of the 29 respondents that answered yes did in fact provide a further explanation.

Based on the survey responses, transportation planning activities consume most of the staff and budget resources of MPOs serving small communities. Almost half of all respondents indicated that 75 percent or more of their staff works on transportation planning activities and that 75 percent or more of their budget is spent on transportation planning; almost 75 percent of respondents indicated that 50 percent or more of their staff and budget are dedicated to transportation planning activities. On the other hand, only 10 percent of respondents estimated that 25 percent or less of their staff and budgets are used for transportation planning.

Approximately 90 percent of the survey respondents have professional planners on staff. The number of professional planners on staff varied between 0.5 and eight FTEs; however, 73 percent of respondents had two or fewer professional planners. Given the small number of planners on staff to perform transportation planning activities, it is important for MPOs serving small communities to retain experienced planners who are knowledgeable about the process and the particular issues of their community. The majority of respondents indicated that they did not have a problem with retention of planners; however, 40 percent indicated that retention has been or is an issue. To improve retention, agencies have provided a variety of

benefits, as shown in Exhibit 9, including increases in salaries, good health and retirement benefits, opportunities for advancement, training, and a flexible work environment.

Exhibit 9: Measures Taken to Improve Retention



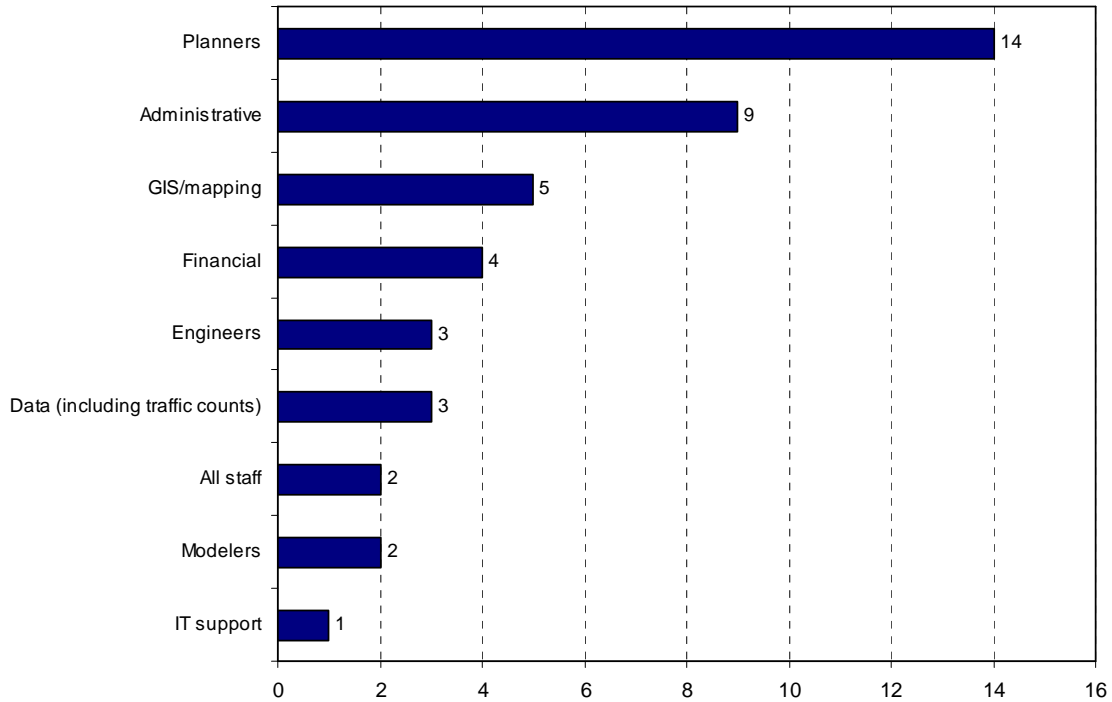
Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

Despite these measures, retention is still a major issue for many agencies given the limited control many MPOs have in setting salaries, which in many instances may not be competitive with the current transportation planning labor market. Several respondents believed that there was little to be done given the discrepancy in salary, the size of the agency, and/or the agency's location, all of which contributed to the high turnover in planning positions. To help combat these forces, many agencies concentrate their focus on providing excellent working conditions and contemporary technology.

Similar responses and issues with retention were present for travel demand modelers; however, not as many survey respondents were as concerned about having modelers on staff. Given the small staff sizes, employees must be good at all aspects of planning and they cannot afford to focus solely on modeling. As a result, 45 percent of the respondents said that they address travel demand issues by outsourcing modeling activities to either a consultant or the state DOT and another 25 percent simply stated that it is not a priority to have a modeler on staff. While respondents may like to have a travel demand modeler on staff, for many it is just not possible given resource constraints, and as a result they have found other options to meet travel demand requirements.

Given the resource constraints of MPOs serving small communities, many resources including staff are shared with other organizations. Of the 47 respondents, 29 (62 percent) indicated that they share resources or staff with other organizations. The majority of resources are shared with county or local governments (59 percent), planning districts/councils of government (19 percent), or transit providers (15 percent). The types of resources or staff shared ranged from IT support to engineers and planners to the entire staff, as shown in Exhibit 10.

Exhibit 10: Resources and Staff Shared With Other Organizations

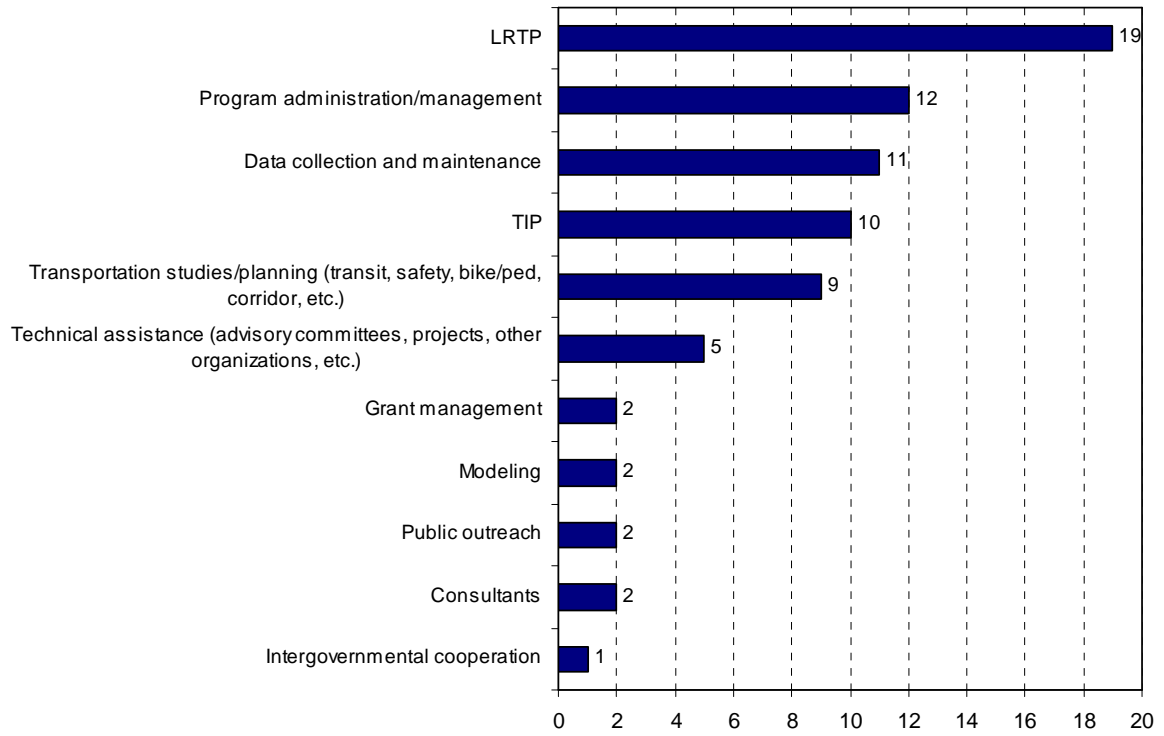


Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

Given the prevalence of shared resources with other organizations, it is essential that the level of cooperation with partner agencies is good. Fortunately, all but one of the 27 survey respondents (out of a possible 29 who answered yes to sharing resources) characterized their cooperation levels as good, very good, or excellent, and only one indicated that the cooperation level was fair. The respondents indicated that the strength of these relationships was tied to frequent meetings, coordinated budgets, and involvement in nearly identical projects, all of which lead to greater understanding of the problems and issues facing the cooperating agencies and the region.

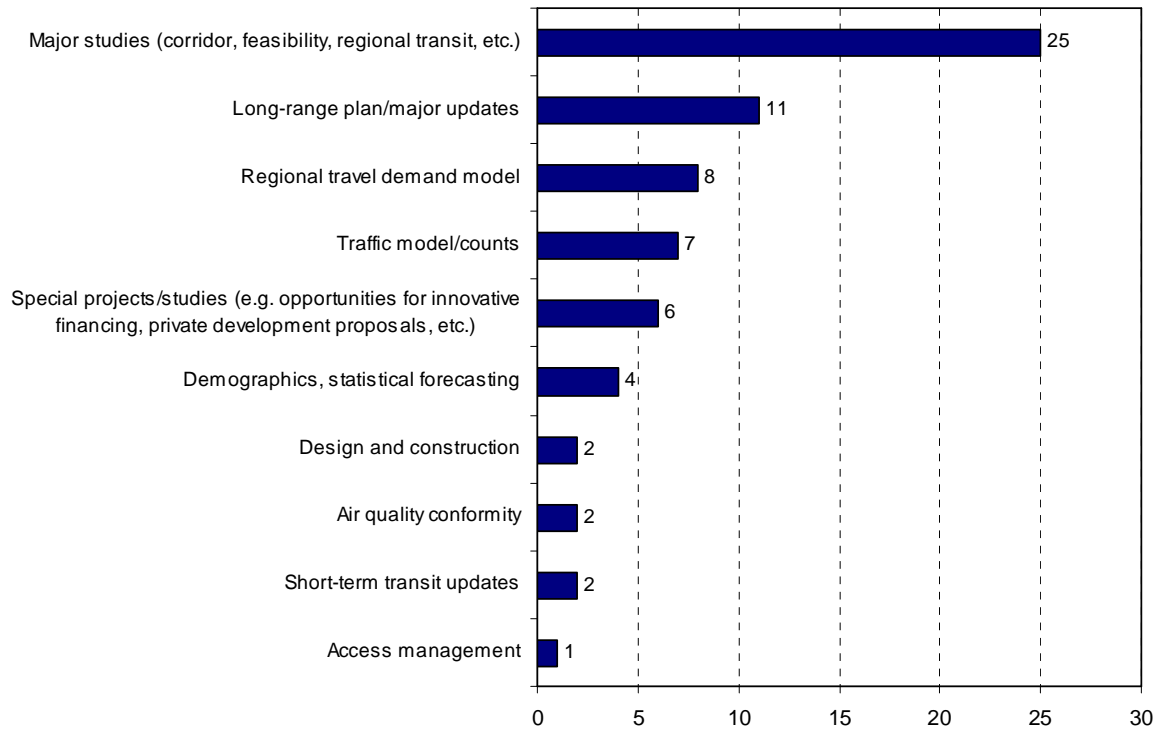
The tasks that used the largest share of respondents' resources were long-range planning, program administration/management, data collection and maintenance, and the TIP. Exhibit 11 summarizes the transportation tasks requiring the greatest resources. To help meet the resource requirements of these tasks, more than 75 percent of the survey respondents outsourced at least some transportation planning activities to other departments or agencies. The most frequently outsourced transportation activities included major studies, long-range plans or updates, and the regional travel demand model as shown in Exhibit 12.

Exhibit 11: Transportation Tasks Requiring the Greatest Agency Resources



Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

**Exhibit 12: Transportation Tasks Outsourced to Other Departments or Organizations**



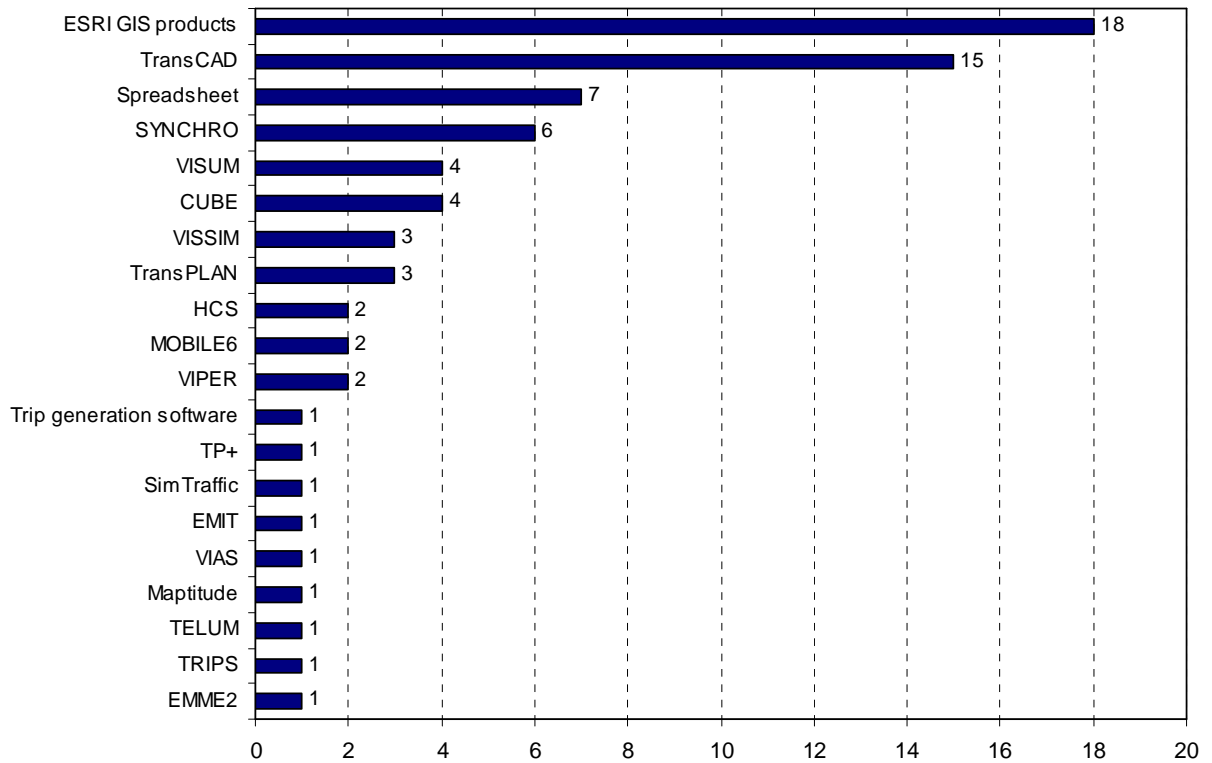
Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

**Tools**

The last section of the survey focused on the planning tools available to conduct planning activities. The survey questions were particularly focused on the challenges and limitations of these tools and the data required to use them and additional tools that would assist in planning efforts. In general, 44 survey respondents completed the tools section of the survey. A few questions were skipped, but there were no fewer than 42 responses to any question except the one asking what resources or tools would assist in planning efforts, in which there were only 28 responses.

More than 80 percent of survey respondents (38) indicated that they use models or software tools to assist in transportation planning activities. The majority of models or analytical tools used by the respondents were Geographic Information System (GIS) tools, travel demand models, and traffic simulation tools, as shown in Exhibit 13.

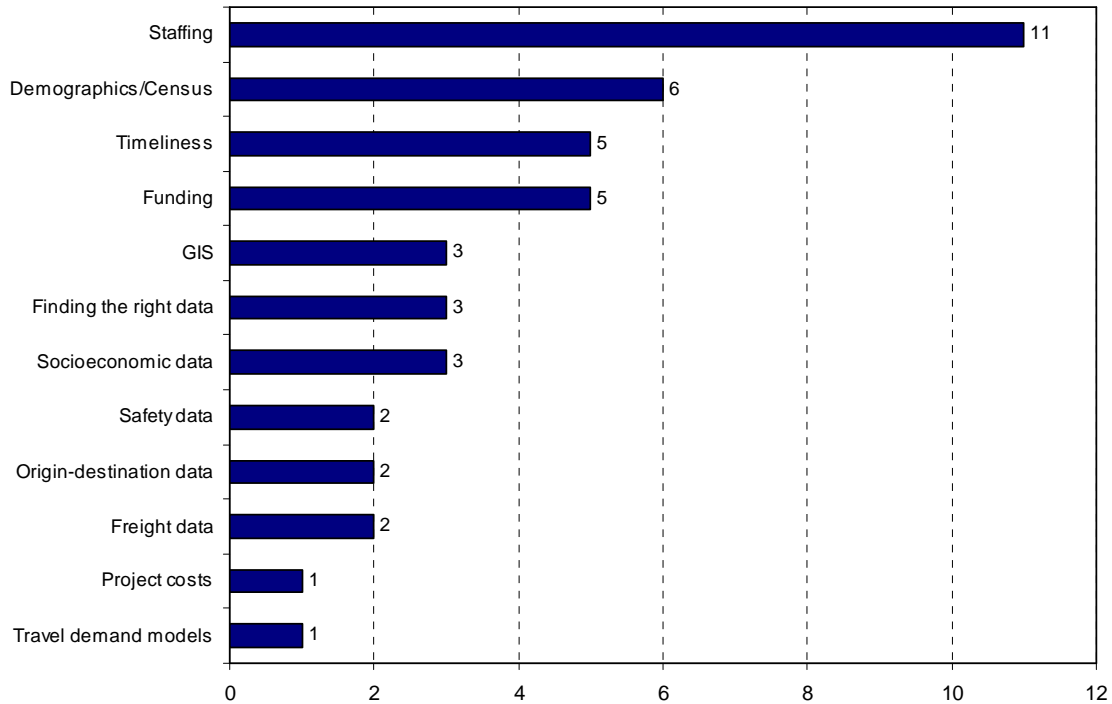
**Exhibit 13: Models and Analytical Tools Used for Planning Activities**



Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

While many survey respondents use models and analytical tools in their planning activities, 77 percent indicated that they face data challenges and limitations in their planning activities. The most common challenge or limitation was staff related- 25 percent of the 44 respondents mentioned that there was not adequate staff to collect or maintain the data needed for optimal planning. Other common data limitations were demographic/Census related, timeliness, and funding for needed data. These limitations are summarized in Exhibit 14.

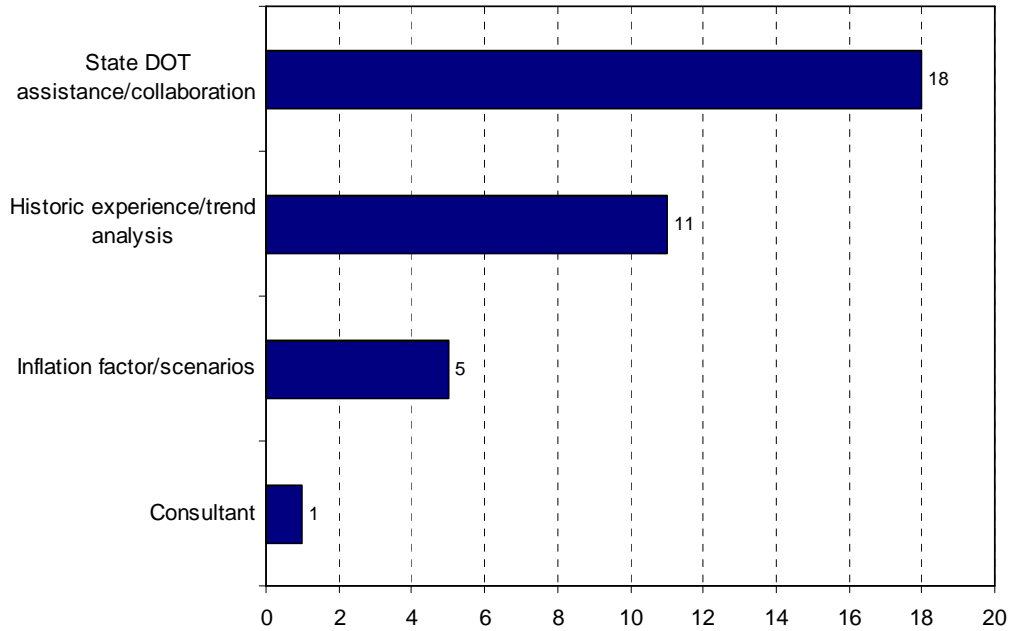
**Exhibit 14: Data Challenges or Limitations in Planning Activities**



Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

Another transportation planning activity that requires the use of analytical tools is the development of forecasts of future revenues and funding streams for financially constrained TIPs and long-range plans. Almost 90 percent of survey respondents partnered with the state DOT to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing federal “year of expenditure requirements.” The methods used to forecast these future revenues varied in complexity with the vast majority relying heavily on state DOT provided data. The revenue forecasting methods employed by survey respondents are summarized in Exhibit 15.

**Exhibit 15: Methods Used to Forecast Future Revenues and Funding Streams**



Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

While a majority of survey respondents are already using planning tools and models, 58 percent of respondents indicated that they have learned of analytical tools or models that would help with transportation planning activities, but could not use them because they are too costly, required too much staff time to support, or are too data intensive. The most commonly desired tools mentioned by survey respondents were generic such as travel demand (however, different TransCAD versions or scenario tools were specifically mentioned by several respondents), traffic simulation models, land use models, a FHWA TIP development/maintenance tool, and GIS tools. Based on the survey responses, cost and staff time are the primary reasons for inability to use these tools.

The tools used and data challenges faced by responding MPOs serving a population of 100,000 or more varied slightly from those respondents serving a population of fewer than 100,000. The respondents serving larger communities were more likely to use GIS tools and a larger variety of travel demand software.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the data challenges faced by larger communities were more likely to be timeliness, finding the right data, accurate socioeconomic data, and availability of freight data as opposed to demographic or Census-related challenges, GIS, origin-destination data, project cost data, or travel demand data. Staffing, funding, and safety data were data challenges experienced by survey respondents regardless of community size. Based on the survey responses, MPOs serving larger communities also were more likely to use historical experience or trend analysis (50 percent) to forecast future revenues and funding streams than rely on assistance from the state DOT or use inflation factors.

The tools used and data challenges faced by newly established MPO respondents tended to be more basic. Half of the 12 newly established MPOs responded to the models and tools used question, and of those six, half used GIS, spreadsheets, and travel demand software. The difference in the travel demand software

<sup>4</sup> In this instance, more likely means that more than 50 percent of all responses were from MPOs serving communities with a population of 100,000 or more.



used compared to that used by established MPOs was primarily the lack of variety– two used TransCAD and one used VISSUM. In addition, the data challenges faced by newly established MPO respondents were more likely to be basic to meeting transportation planning data needs, including those related to funding, staffing, outdated origin-destination data, and travel demand model related, rather than related to timeliness, GIS, or finding the right data.<sup>5</sup> Based on the survey responses, newly established MPOs were more likely to rely on state DOT assistance (70 percent) to forecast future revenues and funding streams than rely on historical experience or trend analysis.

### 3.0 CONCLUSIONS

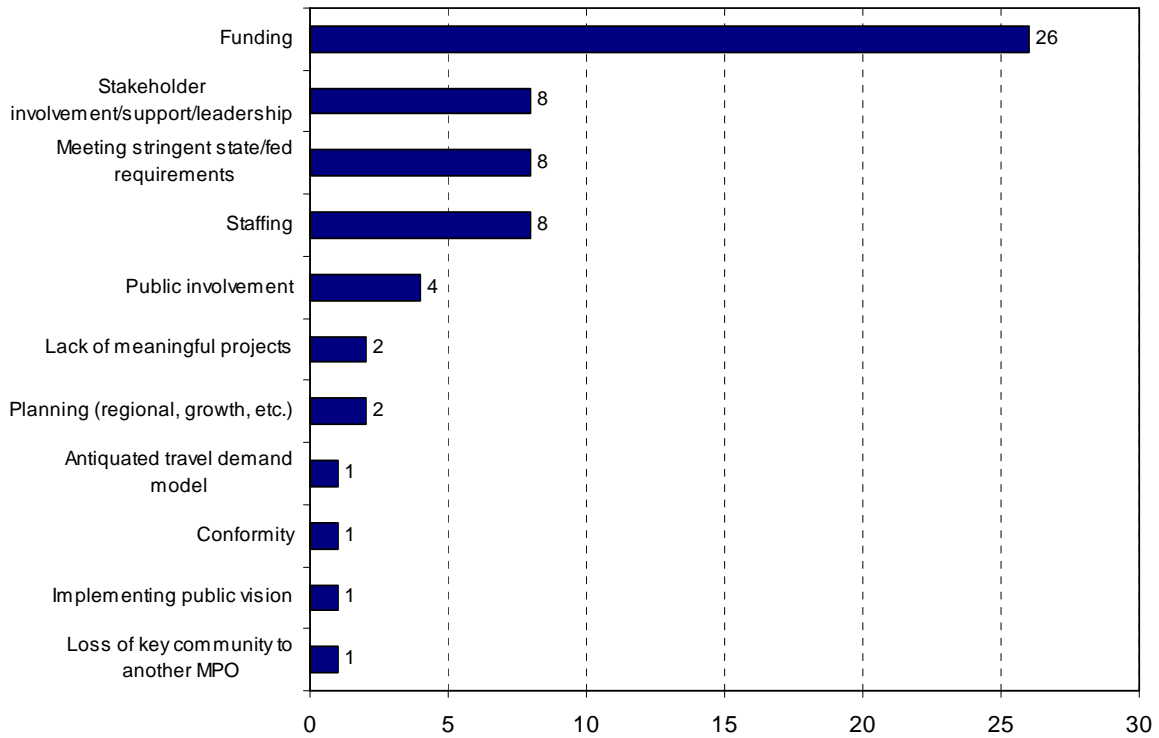
The Transportation Planning in Small Communities online survey completed by 56 agencies (46 fully and 10 partially) highlights several areas in the planning process where organizations have had success, such as in meeting federal planning requirements, generating support and cooperation across multiple stakeholders and communities, developing systems for prioritizing and ranking local projects to recommend to the state, and improving and expanding transportation infrastructure and service. However, even agencies experiencing these successes must often make sacrifices in other transportation planning areas due to funding, staff, data, or other resources constraints. In addition, there are other organizations that are struggling to achieve success in these areas, including meeting basic federal and state planning requirements. As a result, there are sometimes gaps in professional expertise or in the efficiency with which MPOs in small communities. These issues are not unique to small MPOs but they are perceived to be more prevalent among those organizations serving small communities.

The challenges facing MPOs serving small communities are similar, including the overwhelming challenge of securing funding, regardless of community size or newness of the MPO. Even MPOs that have experienced success with varying aspects of the planning process recognize that funding is a key component to their success and will continue to be key to any future successes. Exhibit 16 presents the biggest challenges survey respondents face as part of the transportation planning process.

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<sup>5</sup> In this instance, more likely means that more than 50 percent of all responses were from newly established MPOs.

Exhibit 16: Biggest Challenges Faced as Part of the Transportation Planning Process

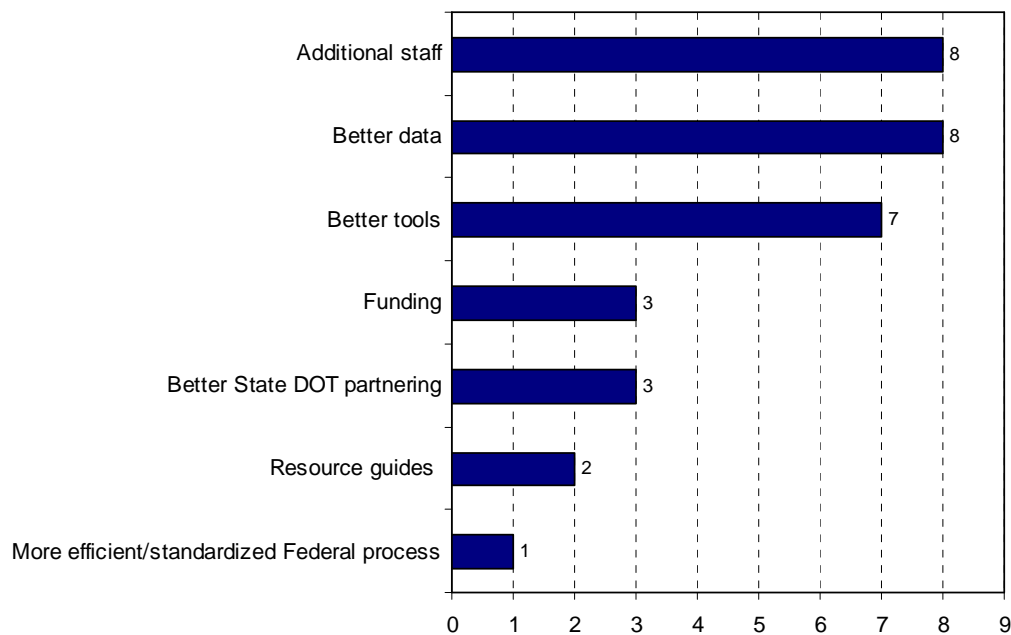


Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

The other common challenges expressed by survey respondents were stakeholder support and leadership, meeting stringent state and federal planning requirements, and having adequate staffing, especially for those MPOs serving communities of 100,000 or fewer or newly established MPOs. There is a general concern that the planning process and requirements are “one size fits all” and do not allow for flexibility, particularly for MPOs in small, urban areas. As a result, many respondents indicated that they spend so much time meeting state and federal requirements and “chasing document deadlines” that staff is unable to collect and analyze data to more effectively plan for transportation problems in their respective communities. Another area of concern is ensuring that the MPO maintains its role in transportation planning in the community as other organizations (particularly state DOTs) are defining regional needs that differ from those defined as part of the metropolitan planning process. These challenges are compounded by the high turnover in planning staff experienced by many MPOs serving smaller communities. With frequent staff changes, it is a continuous challenge to keep staff up to date on planning requirements, processes, and looming deadlines.

The resources and tools that would most assist in the planning efforts of all survey respondents, regardless of community size or newness of the MPO, were additional staff, better data, and better tools, as shown in Exhibit 17. Central to almost all of the resources and tools listed is funding. Funding is an issue for all MPOs, but several survey respondents pointed out that funding constraints for MPOs serving small communities are even greater given that they must meet the same federal requirements as larger MPOs yet are more likely to receive less federal and state money based on their community size. One respondent suggested that there needs to be an established minimum amount of federal funding for all MPOs in order to meet basic federal requirements because many states use a population-based distribution of planning funds that leaves many small areas with inadequate basic funding.

**Exhibit 17: Resources or Tools That Would Assist in Planning Efforts**



Source: AECOM Consult, Inc.

In addition to funding, survey responses primarily from MPOs serving communities of 100,000 or fewer or newer MPOs indicated that MPOs serving small communities would benefit greatly from better partnering with state DOTs and additional guidance, including more resource guides dedicated to MPOs serving small communities. Several respondents indicated that they would benefit greatly from additional partnering with state DOTs on travel demand modeling, including having the states do the modeling for the regions or provide MPOs with access to consultants who could fulfill modeling needs. Some states already provide travel demand modeling assistance to MPOs, but survey responses indicated that more states should. An additional area of support is the release of guidebooks on planning activities from the perspective of MPOs serving small communities. Many of the organizations that responded to the survey have small staffs that are stretched thin and are not able to specialize in areas such as public outreach and travel demand modeling. Providing guidance materials, such as a public outreach kit or a how-to-achieve-success guidebook, would be a significant benefit to planners in small communities that have to be good in all aspects of planning but cannot specialize in any one area.

MPOs serving small communities have the same federal and state planning requirements as organizations serving much larger areas, but many have more limited resources in terms of staff, funding, data, and tools. As a result, many of the responding agencies must rely heavily on the support of local, state, and federal agencies to meet their transportation planning requirements and needs, and the survey responses revealed that not all agencies experience the same level of support and cooperation. Initiatives to foster partnerships between federal/state agencies and MPOs could help MPOs serving small communities receive the assistance that they need to meet basic planning requirements and the transportation needs of their communities. More streamlined state and federal requirements might ease resource pressures— seven respondents indicated that their biggest challenge is dealing with the fact that state requirements are not consistent with federal requirements or that there are too many state and federal requirements surrounding planning, constructing, and funding.

## APPENDIX B.1: BLANK SURVEY FORM

This appendix contains the blank survey form used to develop the survey on the SurveyMonkey.com website.

### Please Tell Us About Your Organization.

1. Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
2. How many FTE staff do you have?
  - a. 1-3
  - b. 4-6
  - c. 7-9
  - d. 10 or more
  
3. What size community (population) do you serve?
  - a. 50,000 to 75,000
  - b. 75,001 to 100,000
  - c. 100,001 to 125,000
  - d. 125,001 to 150,000
  - e. 150,001 to 175,000
  - f. 175,001 to 200,000
  
4. How would you characterize your community?
  - a. Rural
  - b. Exurban
  - c. Small urban, struggling economy
  - d. Small urban, stable economy
  - e. Small urban, rapidly growing economy
  - f. Other– please specify
  
5. Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

Please explain.

### Activities

6. Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?
  
7. Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

If yes, how have you involved them and has it been successful?
  
8. How do you educate key decision-makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?
  
9. What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?
  
10. What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?

11. Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants? If yes, which tasks/activities are outsourced?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, please specify:

12. What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?

13. What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?

- a. Congestion bottlenecks
- b. Freight access/economic development
- c. Safety
- d. Special needs (emergency evacuation, seasonal visitor population, border issues, other), please specify.

14. How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?

15. What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?

16. What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?

17. What are the biggest challenges that you face as part of the transportation planning process?

### Resources

18. What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?

- a. 0-15%
- b. 15<25%
- c. 25<35%
- d. 35<50%
- e. 50<75%
- f. 75+%

19. How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?

- a. 0-15%
- b. 15< 25%
- c. 25<35%
- d. 35<50%
- e. 50<75%
- f. 75+%

20. What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?

21. How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?

22. Do you have professional planners on your staff?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, how many?

23. Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, what has your organization done to improve retention?

24. Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, how has your organization addressed this issue?

25. Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, which staff roles are shared and with what other organization?

26. If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?

#### Tools

27. Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, please explain.

28. What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?

29. Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, please explain.

30. Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?

- a. Yes
- b. No

How do you forecast future revenues and funding streams?

31. What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.

## APPENDIX B.2: RESPONSES

Each response to the Transportation Planning in Small Communities online survey is included in this Appendix, including both partially and fully complete responses. The responses are shown just as they were submitted to the SurveyMonkey.com website, with only the information that might identify a respondent removed and noted with {}.

	Respondent A	Respondent B
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	175,001 to 200,000	175,001 to 200,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, struggling economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	Yes
	The MPO's role is not understood, but the MPO's parent organization (the county planning department) is very active and well-known in the metropolitan area.	
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Planners, engineers, transit representatives, public health professionals, bicycle and pedestrian advocates, specialized transportation service (paratransit) providers, advocates for the elderly and people with disabilities, environmental agency representatives, citizens, and others.	Road and transit agencies; chief elected officials and staff from member communities.
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
	Public health professionals have helped us to promote walking and bicycling programs throughout the metropolitan area. One of the more successful initiatives is the establishment of walking and bicycling committees in three metro area communities.	Have some contacts and participation with regional aviation, rail, and marine transport. Also some participation from organizations such as AARP, Right to Transit, others. Efforts have been moderately successful.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	The approach we take depends on the situation, but it seems that the most effective way to educate decision-makers is through face-to-face meetings with individuals or small groups.	(1) Presentations to County Board and other officials, (2) packet of background information for new members, (3) Individual meetings with officials as needed
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	I suppose the most important issue that pertains to people is the need to increase transit service frequency and coverage, and the most important freight issue is the need to establish additional intermodal terminals in the area.	(1) Lack of adequate funding to maintain transportation system, (2) uncertain future local funding for MPO
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	The MPO staff handles virtually all of the surface transportation planning tasks with the metropolitan area. The staff also handles a variety of transportation planning tasks in the area immediately outside the metropolitan planning area.	Preparation of UWP, TIP, and MTP and conduct public involvement activities. Conduct annual pavement evaluation {} for state Asset Management program.

	Respondent A	Respondent B
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	No	No
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?		Use numerical scoring process in conjunction with technical staff evaluation to recommend tentative project list to full Planning Committee and Policy Body
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Intersection operation problems	Intersection operation problems
	Safety	Safety
	Accessibility for people who cannot drive.	
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Our most successful public involvement efforts have been through our management of and participation in neighborhood and community comprehensive plans. Since people tend to participate in planning efforts that they believe will directly affect them (often when the planning efforts anger or scare them), we've found that coming to their communities, neighborhoods, or even their homes makes them feel more comfortable and willing to take the time to participate.	Use combination of regular public meetings/public hearings, information posted on website, and open house style meetings. Do not receive a great deal of participation from general public, but that is also at least partially due to non-controversial nature of most projects: our focus is on preservation of the current system.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	One example of a success is that we recommended, planned, and worked with two communities and the county highway department to build the first roundabouts in (the state) in (date). Since then, 20 additional roundabouts have been built in the county, and many other roundabouts have been built throughout the state.	Most important has been a general revitalization of the MPO over the past few years. Before that, interest and participation had dropped off. Now, elected officials at both county and local levels have a much better grasp of the importance of the MPO process.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	MPO staff spent hundreds of hours meeting with individuals and groups, making presentations at state, national, and international conferences, and working with the media to educate the public and decision-makers about roundabouts.	A number of new players at various levels.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Fear of change and lack of sufficient funding.	(1) Securing adequate funding to maintain existing transportation infrastructure. (2) Securing adequate local funding to maintain the MPO- county and local units are strapped for cash. Will need to revamp our funding mechanisms to use soft match.
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	75% or more	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	75% or more	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	It's hard to say, but I'd guess that transit planning and GIS activities utilize the largest share of the MPO's resources.	Overall program management (meetings, agendas, minutes, etc.); Short-range planning (TIP maintenance); data collection and management.
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Primarily through conversations with state and federal transportation representatives.	(State DOT), FHWA, other technical assistance organizations.



	Respondent A	Respondent B
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	All of them.	2
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	No
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	No	No
		As a small MPO, the state DOT {} maintains the travel demand model for the MPO.
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	No
	The MPO shares its staff with its parent organization (the {} County Planning Department).	
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	The level of cooperation with the {} County Planning Department is very high.	
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	Yes
	Our challenges are likely the same as the challenges faced by many other small MPOs (lack of current population information, etc.).	Small staff makes it difficult to maintain/update databases.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	The MPO uses a wide variety of GIS tools in its planning activities. The MPO also works with the {} State Department of Transportation to develop and maintain a metropolitan area traffic model.	Travel demand model, crash data analysis.
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	Yes

	Respondent A	Respondent B
		High-level simulation software is out of reach for our day-to-day activities. However, we have assisted road agencies with purchase of sim. software and may gain some benefits from it in the future.
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	Mainly by assuming that existing funding sources will be available in the future.	
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
	Public health professionals have helped us to promote walking and bicycling programs throughout the metropolitan area. One of the more successful initiatives is the establishment of walking and bicycling committees in three metro area communities.	Have some contacts and participation with regional aviation, rail, and marine transport. Also some participation from organizations such as AARP, Right to Transit, others. Efforts have been moderately successful.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	The approach we take depends on the situation, but it seems that the most effective way to educate decision-makers is through face-to-face meetings with individuals or small groups.	(1) Presentations to County Board and other officials, (2) packet of background information for new members, (3) Individual meetings with officials as needed
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	I suppose the most important issue that pertains to people is the need to increase transit service frequency and coverage, and the most important freight issue is the need to establish additional intermodal terminals in the area.	(1) Lack of adequate funding to maintain transportation system, (2) uncertain future local funding for MPO
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	The MPO staff handles virtually all of the surface transportation planning tasks with the metropolitan area. The staff also handles a variety of transportation planning tasks in the area immediately outside the metropolitan planning area.	Preparation of UWP, TIP, and MTP and conduct public involvement activities. Conduct annual pavement evaluation {} for state Asset Management program.
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	No	No
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?		Use numerical scoring process in conjunction with technical staff evaluation to recommend tentative project list to full Planning Committee and Policy Body
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Intersection operation problems	Intersection operation problems
	Safety	Safety

	Respondent A	Respondent B
	Accessibility for people who cannot drive.	
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Our most successful public involvement efforts have been through our management of and participation in neighborhood and community comprehensive plans. Since people tend to participate in planning efforts that they believe will directly affect them (often when the planning efforts anger or scare them), we've found that coming to their communities, neighborhoods, or even their homes makes them feel more comfortable and willing to take the time to participate.	Use combination of regular public meetings/public hearings, information posted on website, and open house style meetings. Do not receive a great deal of participation from general public, but that is also at least partially due to non-controversial nature of most projects: our focus is on preservation of the current system.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	One example of a success is that we recommended, planned, and worked with two communities and the county highway department to build the first roundabouts in (the state) in (date). Since then, 20 additional roundabouts have been built in the county, and many other roundabouts have been built throughout the state.	Most important has been a general revitalization of the MPO over the past few years. Before that, interest and participation had dropped off. Now, elected officials at both county and local levels have a much better grasp of the importance of the MPO process.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	MPO staff spent hundreds of hours meeting with individuals and groups, making presentations at state, national, and international conferences, and working with the media to educate the public and decision-makers about roundabouts.	A number of new players at various levels.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Fear of change and lack of sufficient funding.	(1) Securing adequate funding to maintain existing transportation infrastructure. (2) Securing adequate local funding to maintain the MPO- county and local units are strapped for cash. Will need to revamp our funding mechanisms to use soft match.
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	75% or more	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	75% or more	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	It's hard to say, but I'd guess that transit planning and GIS activities utilize the largest share of the MPO's resources.	Overall program management (Meetings, agendas, minutes, etc.); Short range planning (TIP maintenance); data collection and management.
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Primarily through conversations with state and federal transportation representatives.	{State DOT}, FHWA, other technical assistance organizations.
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	All of them.	2
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	No

	Respondent A	Respondent B
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	No	No
		As a small MPO, the state DOT {} maintains the travel demand model for the MPO.
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	No
	The MPO shares its staff with its parent organization (the {} County Planning Department).	
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	The level of cooperation with the {} County Planning Department is very high.	
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	Yes
	Our challenges are likely the same as the challenges faced by many other small MPOs (lack of current population information, etc.).	Small staff makes it difficult to maintain/update databases.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	The MPO uses a wide variety of GIS tools in its planning activities. The MPO also works with the {} State) Department of Transportation to develop and maintain a metropolitan area traffic model.	Travel demand model, crash data analysis.
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	Yes
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	Mainly by assuming that existing funding sources will be available in the future.	
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		

	Respondent C	Respondent D
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	10 or more	10 or more
What size community (population) do you serve?	175,001 to 200,000	150,001 to 175,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, stable economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	Yes	Yes
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Counties, Cities, Village and Towns, {State} DOT, FHWA, Transit and/or Transportation providers.	City, County, MPO, {State} DOT and US DOT
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	No
	With limited success we solicit involvement from minority advocacy groups and stakeholders.	
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Newsletters, Public Information meetings, presentations at Chambers of Commerce and various clubs, Rotary, JCs etc., Newspaper ads.	Through newsletters, web page, surveys
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	How to fully fund fixed route transit and specialized public transportation	Funds
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	All federal requirements including the unified work program, LRTPs and TIPs, Public Involvement and education.	Development of LRTP, TIP, UPWP, special street and highway studies
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	No	No
	Not typical, but we are currently working with a consultant to develop a regional travel demand model.	
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	We have developed ranking criteria for the TIP and other programs based on the type of project. A funding availability criteria has been developed designed to spread the projects around the MPO areas.	Planning process
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Intersection operation problems	Congestion bottlenecks
	Safety	Intersection operation problems
		Freight access/economic development
		Safety
		Capacity, Bike-Ped

	Respondent C	Respondent D
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	It is tough to get the public interested in planning, but we host public information meetings and workshops and place ads in local newspapers and newsletters and post meeting information on the various websites.	Visual preference survey resulted in about 1,500 surveys taken
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Meeting federal planning requirements and developing an adopted long-term vision for the metropolitan area.	Implementation of road improvement program
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Support from local governments, {State} DOT and FHWA.	Partnering with {State} DOT and passing of a {local option sales tax} to fund LRTP projects.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Lack of staff/funding to implement innovative planning approaches and research.	Having enough funds to implement projects
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	35>50%	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	35>50%	15>25%
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Land use, traffic and socioeconomic data collection.	LRTP
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	FHWA, {State} DOT, AMPO, Research - ultimately federal and state guidance	Seminars and AMPO
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	8	5
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	Yes	No
	Trying to stay competitive with salaries, fairly good benefits, flex time, clean productive work environment. It has been difficult to compete with pay from private consultants.	
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	No
	Offer training and opportunities for staff to become more involved in modeling. We have had fairly consistent in-house travel modeling capabilities.	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	No
	We share staff with {} Transit and with the Counties for assistance with specialized transportation programs that meet federal requirements for funding.	

	Respondent C	Respondent D
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	The strategy has been to assist and provide support to other agencies to the extent possible.	
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	No
	Difficulty getting good socioeconomic data, difficulty getting good freight data.	
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	Cube/TP+ and Viper primarily.	GIS, TP+, Viper, Trip generation software
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	Yes	No
	Most of the tools are very data and time (Cost) intensive, including the Cube 4-step process we currently use. However, the data set used in the model also drives are land use and sewer service area planning program.	
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	Typically we have used historic expenditures and project information, combined with need assessments and inventories.	{State} DOT completed a study to determine the increase annual cost of street and highway projects; the same methodology is used locally.
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	More staff. We would like to enhance our public involvement capabilities with more interactive technologies and visualization tools like sim-traffic or paramics that may be easier for the public to comprehend.	

	Respondent E	Respondent F
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	Yes
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	50,000 to 75,000	50,000 to 75,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, struggling economy	Small urban, stable economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	Yes	
	Primarily by our activities. Many people might not understand the MPO process.	It is well understood by public officials. It is not understood by the public.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	{State} DOT, local government elected officials, public works and transit managers.	Elected officials from member jurisdictions
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	No
	Good outreach on specific projects. We go to the effected parties rather than expect them to come to us.	
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Policy meetings, transportation guides, frequent media exposure.	Very carefully
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Transportation and access supportive of economic development and transit needs of the community.	Lack of transportation funds
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	All initial studies related to transportation projects expected to use federal funds, land use and transportation impacts, transit needs, bicycle and pedestrian issues, safety planning, ITS and Incident Management and technical assistance to local communities.	Regional Transportation Plan, Short range transportation planning, Transportation programming, Transit planning, programming and coordination, Corridor improvement
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	No
	Periodically major studies are done by consultants.	
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	TIP selection process and studies undertaken by the MPO.	Prioritization based on adopted set of criteria
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Intersection operation problems	Intersection operation problems
	Freight access/economic development	Freight access/economic development
	Safety	Safety
	Incident management and transit needs	
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Transportation guide is circulated widely in the community. Good PR for public meetings for projects.	The MPO has a fairly good relationship with the public. We try to involve the public at early stages of the project and seek input.



	Respondent E	Respondent F
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Completion of major parts of our transportation infrastructure including conversion of State Route {} to I-{}. New transit center and needed buses and equipment.	Development of the Regional Transportation Plan
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Strong community support for MPO goals and strong local, state and federal support from elected officials.	Strong public involvement
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	New tasks but not new revenue or new staff.	State regulations and are not consistent with Federal Regulations
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	75% or more	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	75% or more	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	There are numerous tasks of equal importance.	Planning and programming
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	FHWA, {State} DOT, AMPO, {State} MPO Association.	Bulletins, e-mails
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	2	2
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	Yes
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	N/A	No
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	Yes
	General administration, data acquisition, traffic counts from DOT and local agencies. GIS service go in both directions. Transit planning is a shared task with the County and the private operator.	Planning Regional Council of Governments
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	Excellent. Our history of implementation of what is planned is a good motivation for our partners.	Good Sharing funds
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	Yes
	Maintaining good and current GIS information about the transportation system is labor intensive.	Always. Census data are not adequate. Origin-Destination data are most needed. Household surveys are extremely expensive. Travel Demand Models are inadequate
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	No local model. We have created a local crash reporting system.	A hybrid that is mostly EMME2 made by {State} DOT.
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	Yes	Yes

	Respondent E	Respondent F
	We had a model at one time. Might be useful but not for the cost in money and staff time.	
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	Historical trends and projections based on best available information.	MPOs worked with State DOT and developed a reasonable financial forecast
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	A more comprehensive GIS system - which is under development by {State} DOT and the MPO.	Regionalized data

	Respondent G	Respondent H
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	7-9	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	50,000 to 75,000	100,001 to 125,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, rapidly growing economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
		Over the last 15 months we have dramatically increased awareness of the MPO in the community and plan to continue to do so.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	City, County, State DOT, and Council of Governments	City, County, USDOD, USDOT, {State} DOT
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
		We have had varying success with this. Some community groups have really worked out well. Other stakeholders have not.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	By using a variety of methods, mainly brief presentations, or by e-mail or executive summaries	Through {advisory committee} meetings, at least quarterly one-on-one meeting with member agencies, key stakeholder communication, our website, media contacts.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Highway Funding	Meeting the dramatic growth expected in the next 5-10 years.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	All with the exception of transportation modeling	MPO staff regularly engage in work across all planning tasks.
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes
	Large projects such as MTP Updates or Demographics. Sometimes some special projects such as a NRHMR Study.	Certain special studies may be outsourced from time to time for specific reasons.
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	Project selection is not a major part of our process. Our major projects are on state highways and therefore choosing those projects is not an issue.	{State} DOT has a 2-year TIP development cycle. The MPO also reviews and prioritizes multimodal network needs.
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Intersection operation problems	Congestion bottlenecks
	Emergency evacuation	Intersection operation problems
		Freight access/economic development
		Safety

	Respondent G	Respondent H
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	It depends on the topic!	Over the last 15 months we have increased public involvement dramatically. By using multiple workshop/drop in style meetings, special events participation (such as neighborhood festivals), the Internet, media contacts, and working with key community stakeholders we have been able to get a very high and successful return on our public participation investment.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?		Implementation of several major transportation projects and an overall increase in member agency participation.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?		Increased staff efforts and cooperation from {State} DOT and other stakeholders.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Public Involvement and meeting continuing stringent requirements handed down by the Federal Government. The Planning Process does not need to be a one size fits all. There needs to be more flexibility especially with small urban areas.	Continued increases and sustained stakeholder involvement as well as adequate planning for the large mid-term growth we are facing.
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	35>50%	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	75% or more	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Just the paper work involved in getting projects to the letting. The TIPs, MTPs and the UPWPs.	L RTP updates
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Various conferences, CEs and workshops	State MPO/RPO association, conferences, Internet, etc.
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	3	3
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	Yes	Yes
		Increased recruitment efforts
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	No
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	No	Yes
		Admin and some planning staff.
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		Good
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?		No
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?		ArcGIS, TransCAD

	Respondent G	Respondent H
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?		Yes
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?		Yes
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		

	Respondent I	Respondent J
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	Yes	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	7-9
What size community (population) do you serve?	75,001 to 100,000	175,001 to 200,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, rapidly growing economy	Small urban, struggling economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
	Many people do not fully understand the role/purpose of the MPO. Many people (including some of our Board members) believe the MPO has more power than it actually does. While we have a lot of responsibility under federal and state laws and rules, we have very little true power.	I believe most citizens of our community do not know we exist. The individuals and organizations involved with transportation funding know about us.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	One city, one county, and the state DOT	The (regional transportation planning agency), three cities, one county, the bus authority, and a senior nutrition program.
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	No	Yes
	Not yet - but we are developing our public participation plan and hope to identify opportunities for involving non-traditional players.	One of our programs involves blueprint planning. We have met with groups and associations which are not normally involved in the planning process. We believe it has been very successful.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Information items on Board/committee agendas, printed materials, links to websites	Provide educational presentations and updates. Meet and discuss and answer questions.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Our region has experienced significant population growth (more than 40%) since the 2000 Census. Rapidly escalating costs and limited revenue sources have not allowed us to implement new infrastructure or programs (roads, bike/ped facilities, transit systems) fast enough to keep pace with growth.	Funding, funding, funding (a lack thereof). For both local roads and state highways.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	The non-technical components of our long-range plan. Development/maintenance of the TIP. Various federal/state requirements (Title VI, EJ, etc.).	Prepare the RTP, RTIP, and FTIP.
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes
	The state DOT maintains/runs our travel demand model. Our long-range plan identifies several areas/corridors that need further study. We rely upon the city or DOT to fund/develop those studies. To date, we have contracted for technical support for our long range plan (intersection analyses, crash analyses, etc.).	Programming/updating the traffic model, traffic impact fee studies, environmental impact reports.

	Respondent I	Respondent J
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	Our long range plan identified a select few high-priority projects on the state system. The DOT is currently funding corridor or NEPA studies for the 2 highest priorities. The DOT is facing severe funding constraints. We are realistically looking at a situation where the DOT will be solely focused on preservation/maintenance only in the coming years. Given that constraint, we may not need a formal process.	Meet with our stakeholders
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Congestion bottlenecks	Congestion bottlenecks
	Intersection operation problems	Intersection operation problems
	Freight access/economic development	Safety
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	To date, I think our PI efforts have been minimally successful. We formed a Citizens Advisory Committee. We spent about one year educating them about the MPO process. We have a core group of committed members that has identified a number of priorities (new website, development and implementation of an effective Public Participation Plan, etc.). I'm hopeful that they will help improve our PI efforts and identify some innovative activities to better reach the public.	Mostly successful. The most innovative activity has been proactively promoting presentations before groups and organizations.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Adoption of our first long range plan and the TIP. Formation and development of the Citizens Advisory Committee. Formation of an ad hoc Freight Advisory Committee that helped identify freight corridors and some freight specific projects.	Obtained funding for our most important projects.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	The significant growth in our region has elevated transportation issues near the top of public issues/concerns. The need to meet federal timelines was probably the single biggest factor that contributed to our "success."	Patience, time, prioritizing.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Insufficient staff resources to adequately track and participate in the many projects/programs underway locally and statewide.	Funding, funding, funding. For local roads and state highways (including interstate highways).
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	35>50%	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	35>50%	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Staff our 3 committees (Policy Board, Technical Advisory Comm, and Citizen Advisory Comm) consume significant staff resources. Providing staff to various local and statewide projects and committees also consumes significant staff resources.	Meetings, collaboration, accounting.

	Respondent I	Respondent J
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	FHWA {} Division staff and {State} DOT staff keep up apprised of new/existing reqs. FHWA staff also provides guidance on how to address the reqs. Staff from the state's MPOs and FHWA meet quarterly to discuss issues of common concern/interest. That venue provides a great setting to learn what others are doing.	Organizations {Statewide association of council of governments}, {State} DOT contacts.
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	1	4
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	No
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	No	No
	We don't have in-house modeling capabilities. We outsourced that function to the state DOT.	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	Yes
	{Our} MPO only has one city. We contract with that city to provide IT support, financial support, and limited admin support.	Our planners and accountant are shared with the county public works department.
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	MPO staff, city staff, county staff, and state staff have a very good working relationship. We are nearly all involved in the same projects. Having that common understanding of the issues facing our region is probably the single most important item to helping maintain cooperation.	There is a high level of cooperation. We are in the same building.
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	Yes
	The last household travel survey conducted in our area was completed in the mid-1990s. The region has doubled-tripled in that time. There is obvious concern about the use of that data in our travel demand model. The cost of obtaining new HH survey data will cost approximately \$150,000. That is a significant cost that the MPO will struggle to cover. In addition, we do not have much new data beyond the 2000 Census. As an area that has rapidly grown since that time, some critical data may be very out of date.	It is not always easy to find the data we want. The data we want does not always exist.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	We maintain a travel demand model. We also used intersection software to develop our long range plan. Our member entities use various traffic analysis software for corridor/area studies.	Traffic model, land use scenario model, GIS, databases, spreadsheets.
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	Yes	Yes



	Respondent I	Respondent J
	I am aware of new tools being developed released by FHWA for TIP development/maintenance. I have also heard of other tools that may be of use. Given our very limited staff (1 FTE for the past 3 years, 2 FTE in the current fiscal year), we simply have not had adequate staffing to learn and maintain these programs.	We are a relatively small organization. Cost, time, and difficulty of use all matter.
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	The state DOT develops and maintains long range fiscal forecasts for federal and state revenues. Those forecasts are used by each of the MPOs in {the state}. We hired a consultant to develop a process for forecasting local revenues. In the future, we will use that methodology in-house to update those forecasts.	Past revenues and {State} DOT's expectations.
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		Don't know.

	Respondent K	Respondent L
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	Yes	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	75,001 to 100,000	50,000 to 75,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, stable economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
	Since the MPO was established in 200{X}, it has taken some time for the member entities to fully understand what an MPO is and its role. Public participation in the MPO process has been good, but turnout is never significant. Slowly but surely, various groups have asked the MPO to provide presentations to help educate people. Recently, the MPO created an advisory group to assist with development of a Bike/Pedestrian Plan. This group, along with recent newspaper articles on the plan, has helped spread the word about the MPO.	The people involved understand the process but the average person believes the State DOT does the planning.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	The four member entities, state DOT, local transit operator	Municipal officials, State DOT, FHWA, and FTA
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?		No
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	The Policy Committee, made up of elected officials, governs the planning process. For critical activities, the local councils receive presentations and status reports. City managers and several elected officials receive agendas and other important notices from the MPO.	Using the Policy Committee members.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Incorporating multimodal elements into transportation planning and corridor studies; integrating transportation and land use connections.	Shrinking and unstable funding for construction.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Development/oversight/maintenance of the MTP, TIP, and UPWP. Scenario runs using the MPO traffic model. Policy development. Participation and input into local corridor studies.	Traffic counting, pavement management, modeling, signal warrants, GIS activities.
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes
	Traffic counts are contracted out to a consultant.	Corridor studies, large plans updates such as bicycle or pedestrian plans, unique studies such as opportunities for innovative financing.
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	Prioritizing projects through the TIP process.	Municipalities submit projects that are evaluated using a detailed technical rating system using the data that we routinely collect.
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Congestion bottlenecks	Intersection operation problems

	Respondent K	Respondent L
	Safety	
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Successful public participation occurred in 200(X) when the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Group was created.	The Public involvement is most successful for the long range plans and UPWP processes.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Completion of the first long range transportation plan for this area. Completion of a Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan for the MPO.	Project ranking system, better communication between municipalities and the State DOT.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Good cooperation and resources provided by the member agencies; Good input from the public.	The ranking system was technically based so the politics are removed from the process and the improvement in communication is an effort that has become a priority by all parties to stop problems before they become too large.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	A small staff limits the ability to take on all of the transportation activities that we would like.	So much to do with less money.
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	50>75%	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	50>75%	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	General and comprehensive planning	Data collection
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Membership with APA and ITE	Conferences, webinars, online reading
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	2	1
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	Yes	No
	Reevaluation of salary	
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	No
	With just a staff of two, the MPO cannot afford to have a planner dedicated to just modeling and its related activities. Oversight and use of the model is an activity shared by the planners. Learning the model becomes part of the job.	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	Yes
	GIS products and maps are shared with others. Traffic count data is made available to all.	A rural transportation planner in the regional planning agency is housed in our office building and we use him when we can or need to.

	Respondent K	Respondent L
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	Cooperation is satisfactory. There is a long history of the neighboring cities assisting each other as necessary.	The level of cooperation is excellent since it levels out the swings in workloads and funding for both agencies.
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?		Yes
		It is hard to get good demographic info in small urban areas.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?		We use TRIPS and SIMCRO
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?		No
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?		Yes
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		

	Respondent M	Respondent N
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	4-6
What size community (population) do you serve?	100,001 to 125,000	50,000 to 75,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Rural
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
	We do a training program for newly elected officials and presentations to the general public who sign up for {local} Governmental Operations classes {}. However, this represents a very small percentage of our population. While the people who attend the classes are interested they had never heard of our organization before the class. Most of the citizens consider the MPO another layer of government that is important (after taking the classes and coming in contact with the staff) but otherwise have little if any need to contact us. They go through their elected officials and let them handle the details.	
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	The Transit System, NAACP, Neighborhood Associations, Member Jurisdictions, regional transportation staff with various agencies	Businesses, environmental agencies, local jurisdictions, non-profits, the public
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	
	We do an outreach program to attend local meetings of existing neighborhood and civic groups. In the outreach program we explain who we are, what we do, existing projects and proposed projects in the region. Meeting with small groups one on one seems to be the best practice at present. However, if a project does not directly affect them they are nice but not really interested.	
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	We have briefings for them after they are elected and also have an MPO {} class for them with assistance from the {State} Department of Transportation.	Meetings, going to city council meetings, boards.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Funding for transportation projects or lack of funding.	Re-development in an environmentally sustainable way that also supports local economy and community. Providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities, improving transit.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Long Range Transportation Plan Transportation Improvement Program UPWP Transit/Ride sharing/Van Pool studies	Long-range plans.
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes

	Respondent M	Respondent N
	Travel Demand Forecasting Air Quality Conformity (future if we lose our "Attainment" status under the new regulations).	Some help with long-range plans, mostly formatting. Smaller studies, such as short-range plans, or project-specific studies.
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	We go through a regional "vetting" process where all MPO members review and rank projects. However, local citizens also have the right to contact their elected officials directly and make their needs known. In some cases this goes directly to State Legislatures.	
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Intersection operation problems	Seasonal population, bike/ped issues
	Safety	
	Emergency evacuation for elder and handicapped is an issue that involves us with Transit, Fire, Police and Emergency Management Agency.	
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Attending existing public meetings have been the best success for us.	
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Completion of the Long Range Transportation Plan and direct involvement in implementing ITS projects for a congested corridor.	
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Funding and the ability to cut through the bureaucratic process by having trained staff (and keeping them).	
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Keeping qualified staff. Three years ago we had a complete turnover in staff for the MPO. Getting everyone back up to speed (including myself) has been a challenge especially when everyone left just before major projects where due.	
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	75% or more	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	75% or more	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Maintenance of data required for transportation planning.	Long-range plans
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Through the state planning staff.	
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	No
	2	

	Respondent M	Respondent N
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	Yes	
	Yes, unfortunately the organization has done little despite our recommendations.	
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	
	We hire consultants.	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	No	
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	
	We need a regional approach to data collection. Our smaller jurisdictions do not have the capability (staff) to maintain data.	
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	ArcGIS, TransCAD	
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	Yes	
	We are debating the use of TransCAD in-house vs. Consultants. No decision has been made at present.	
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	
	We base our future revenues on our annual allocations from the federal government, historical budgets, and the ability of local jurisdictions to issue bonds for transportation projects.	
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	An additional staff person to assist with Transit planning, a better region-wide traffic count project, and better land-use data from all of our jurisdictions.	

	Respondent O	Respondent P
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	Yes
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	75,001 to 100,000	50,000 to 75,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, stable economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
	Understand the need for federal requirements, but the issues around transportation are not as easily understood.	Our MPO has been existence for about 5 years, so there has naturally been a learning curve for the community. The first couple years of our existence were spent more on organizational matters, limiting exposure to the community. Those that are regularly involved with the MPO have a good grasp of the MPO's purpose; those not involved, not so much. We plan to focus more on increasing our exposure over the next few years.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Communities, bicycle and ped groups, and neighborhood groups.	State Highway, local elected officials (municipal and county), public works staff from local jurisdictions
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	No	Yes
		The involvement with non-traditional players has been recent, following the adoption and implementation of our Public Participation Plan. This has only occurred over the last few months, so an evaluation of successful vs. unsuccessful is premature at this point.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Monthly meeting we use the project presentation to explain the process. Every two years we review the requirement and process used by the MPO.	Training sessions; active participation in our MPO Council meetings; regular information-sharing meetings with other local elected officials not on the MPO Council
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Large cost projects which are needed to bridge disconnected system due to interstate and railroad.	Funding; congestion, due to a rural road system not keeping pace with development to a small urban area
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Modeling, projects, public involvement, and agency coordination	Staff typically handles primarily administrative activities. Also manages contracts with consultants
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes
	Demographics	Detailed corridor studies



	Respondent O	Respondent P
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	Statewide committee of rural and urban groups meets to recommend project from specific area to state.	Information-sharing between staffs of local jurisdictions, followed by briefings with elected officials
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Intersection operation problems	Congestion bottlenecks
		Intersection operation problems
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Isolated projects like intersection capacity have little public involvement. Pedestrian, bicycle, and LRTP has good participation and involvement.	The Public Participation Plan has just been adopted - premature to evaluate. The Plan emphasizes information dissemination through the MPO website; other jurisdictions' websites; identification of special interest groups that will be notified of all MPO activities
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?		The completion of two Corridor Studies that have focused attention on the solutions of problems affecting the corridors.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?		Collaborative efforts between the various jurisdictions involved.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Lack of funds to implement projects and gaining political support for others.	Funding; leadership at the local elected level
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	50>75%	0-15%
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	50>75%	0-15%
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Planning projects	Special studies, which in our case refers to the Corridor Studies
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Training and conferences	Through our membership with AMPO; but primarily through our liaison with State Highway officials
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	1	1
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	No
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	No	No
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	No	Yes

	Respondent O	Respondent P
		Shared staff with engineering departments of member jurisdictions
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		Cooperation has been excellent
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	No
	GIS information, but we have resolved this with a creation of regional GIS committee.	
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	TransCAD, Synchro, ARCVIEW	GIS; modeling to this point has been done by our consultants in conjunction with the corridor studies
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	Yes	Yes
	Land use models	All of the above - too costly, additional staff would be needed, especially.
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	We use running historic number and CIP from local agencies to determine the future five year average revenue	These are provided by the DOT.
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		MPO is staffed by land use planners; dedicated MPO staff with a transportation engineering background with modeling experience would be helpful

	Respondent Q	Respondent R
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	4-6
What size community (population) do you serve?	75,001 to 100,000	50,000 to 75,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, stable economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
	It's difficult to have significant public participation in MPO proceedings. Information about the MPO functions etc. is disseminated through various channels but whether it reaches the target audience is debatable.	
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Elected officials, governmental agencies, community groups, consultants and ordinary citizens	{City and county} staff
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	No	No
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Having experts make presentations on topics of interest, providing information from publications and reports	MPO meetings, Planning Commission meeting, City Council meeting, County Commission meeting
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Pedestrian amenities; accessibility of amenities; safety.	Future Land Use Planning and Transit
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Traffic counts, data collection, public/community outreach	Transportation Improvement Plan, Long Range Transportation Plan
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes
	Traffic modeling and planning studies. Also plan updates	Corridor Studies, Major updates to Long Range Transportation Plan
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?		Long Range Transportation Model, regular meeting with DOT staff
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Intersection operation problems	Freight access/economic development
	Safety	
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Modestly successful	Successful. Direct mailings and Internet
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Greater involvement in advisory committees; more attendance at meetings; more distribution of project information; more media accessibility to key players	
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Greater transparency of the process and citizen involvement	

	Respondent Q	Respondent R
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Funding and availability of experts.	Regional Planning
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	25>35%	50>75%
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	25>35%	50>75%
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Program administration, plan updates and public outreach	Long Range and Future Land Use planning
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Federal circulars, bulletins	DOT and FHWA
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	1	2
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	Yes	Yes
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	Yes
	Outsource the activity	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	No	No
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?		Yes
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	TRANPLAN, CUBE	TransCAD and Synchro
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	Yes
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		

	Respondent S	Respondent T
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	Yes
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	50,000 to 75,000	50,000 to 75,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, energy crisis
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	Yes	No
	People in government are quite pleased with the MPO process.	Not everyone understands what an MPO is; the planning was done by the State DOT until this year. This is a newly opened MPO office.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Funding is erratic from the States - {}.	Two cities, one borough, DOT, Department of Environmental Conservation, Railroad
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
	Chambers of Commerce and EDC's.	We have tried to involve the military, university, tribal and freight representatives with limited success.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Meet with them directly to tell them about it.	Mostly presentations and also bus tours illustrating project needs and current projects
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	New growth areas that need roads and preserving ROW in advance in future growth areas.	PM 2.5 non-attainment is looming, lack of funding is critical - very little state funding and minimal federal funding as well
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Managing consultant studies, coordinating with adjacent MPOs.	Development of the TIP, UPWP, Obligation Plans, needs, project nominations, public participation plans, presentations
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes
	Regional transit study for example.	L RTP, Traffic Modeling and forecasting
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	Call meeting to decide and hammer it out.	
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Freight access/economic development	Intersection operation problems
		Safety
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Limited success.	
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Managed a high-visibility regional transit study. Got a new transit district up and operating. Intergovernmental cooperation efforts.	Went from a non-attainment area to a maintenance area for carbon monoxide
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Open communications to everyone who wanted to be involved and sharing all info and documents over the Internet.	Cooperative effort with state and federal assistance
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	The census bureau in their wisdom took one of the key communities away from us and gave it to another MPO.	

	Respondent S	Respondent T
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	25>35%	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	25>35%	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Intergovernmental cooperation.	
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	From the FHWA division office and the State DOTs.	Research, training
Do you have professional planners on your staff?		Yes
	0.5	1
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	Yes	No
	Raise salaries.	
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	No	No
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	No	Yes
		Mapping and modeling
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	No	Yes
		Lack of funding to produce the desired plans
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	Little.	
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	Yes
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	Just use a state provided inflation factor.	
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	We would like more available modeling provided by a consultant through the States.	

	Respondent U	Respondent V
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	4-6	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	50,000 to 75,000	125,001 to 150,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, struggling economy	Small urban, rapidly growing economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	Yes	No
	Our role is well understood by the {} Council of the {} city and the County Commissioner {}. Both preside on our Policy Board and Technical Advisory Board (TAC) which governs our MPO.	The MPO representation has evolved from city, to city-county, and now to more regional with the inclusion of a tribal government and the state DOT. It is still tied directly to the city (the fiscal agent) and as such is generally perceived (and operating by over-matching) as a city organization. Financial constraints have limited staff and planning capabilities to the minimum federal requirements.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Director and Planner {} MPO; {} City Engineer; {} County Highway Engineer; Representatives of {} State DOT; Director of Planning Commission; {} Police Dept.	State DOT, City, County, FHWA, local transit, other MPOs in the state, public advocates.
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
	Currently we are developing a "Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan" for {} and {} County {}. This will involve different organizations including but not limited to: Medical facilities, disability agencies, assisted living agencies, homeless shelters, battered women shelters etc. Our goal to coordinate transportation in a cost-effective, non-duplicative and safest manner possible for the residents of the City {} and {} County.	Community advocates have participated through task forces and study groups-notably with bicycle pedestrian issues, bikeways and trails mapping, and commuter train station location studies. Their input has directly impacted other committee recommendations and helped to develop map content.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	We use facts from the latest census, along with funding figures currently under federal grants for both the {} bus service and {}. We also submit reports for the National Transit Database.	Through PowerPoint presentations to committee and board meetings as well as one on one discussions with members.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Rising Fuel Costs; Service Area too small; Flexibility of Services; Coordination of under-utilized vehicles	
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Facilitation of all Grants; Coordinating Human Services Transportation; National Transit Database Reporting; Public Mass Transit Fund (PMTF) reporting.	
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	No	
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	We submit our Long Range Planning (LRP) Process along with our Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	

	Respondent U	Respondent V
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Intersection operation problems	
	Safety	
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Very Successful; Public Meetings, website and Media	
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Remove thru traffic along US{} which is a major arterial highway through {the city}.	
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Traffic Pattern Studies and Accident Studies	
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Funding Matches for transportation and highway projects. Too many federal and state regulations.	
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	50>75%	
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	50>75%	
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Administration; Preparation of Annual Documents; Collection of Traffic Data; Planning Studies and Support of our Transportation Services along with Traffic Modeling.	
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Networking with other MPOs; Seminars and Training; {State} DOT and Federal Highway Websites.	
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	
	1	
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	Yes	
	Raise the pay scale/benefits to be competitive with other MPOs.	
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	
	Same as Planner response.	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	No	
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	No	
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	TransCAD	



	Respondent U	Respondent V
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	
	Based upon State Department of Transportation Data.	
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	N/A	

	Respondent W	Respondent X
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	Yes	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	4-6
What size community (population) do you serve?	50,000 to 75,000	150,001 to 175,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, struggling economy	Small urban, rapidly growing economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
	There is little understanding by the general public of why our small community needs transportation planning including long range planning. Most of the professionals that participate with the MPO understand the importance of such planning.	Because of our relatively small size we are housed in the major city but the city only accounts for about 55% of the population. The other members view the MPO as city department.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	County, townships, municipalities, transit providers.	MPO members and DOT
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
	Asking for their participation during special studies. This has been somewhat successful, but not as involved as it should have been.	We have included representation from the schools on our technical committee. Success depends on the level of participation from school staff assigned.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Occasionally provide presentations and literature.	Continual outreach, web-based information
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Lack of infrastructure for the movement of general traffic and commercial traffic. There are a significantly low number of arterials throughout the MPO region.	Growth and development patterns
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Budgetary planning, Transportation Improvement Program, Transit planning, Long range planning	Corridor studies, transit planning, non-motorized planning
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	No
	Feasibility studies, access management reports, statistical forecasting.	
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	Specify the need for the project including post-project benefits to the community. Prioritize project submissions and develop a potential timeline for implementation.	TIP
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Freight access/economic development	Connectivity
	Lack of adequate, paved, road ways.	
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Little to no success. Very few residents participate during any of the outreach programs.	Successful. We utilize a charette process to allow greater public participation at the outset of a planning process.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Creating a SAFETEA-LU compliant long range plan in-house; educating the politicians about the importance of what the MPO does.	A couple of corridor studies where the public input was an integral part of the process and acceptance of the project was widespread.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Good staff and adequate funding. Quality products returned from consultants.	Maximizing public involvement

	Respondent W	Respondent X
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Lack of planning projects. As a struggling economy which is not growing, there may come a time that we've studied all there is to study for this region.	The ability to implement the public vision. Lack of dedicated funding to small MPOs.
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	75% or more	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	50>75%	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Consulting fees and personnel costs.	Long range planning
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Attending conferences and the state DOT.	AMPO, relationship with other MPOs in the state. Some guidance from DOT
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	No	Yes
		3
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	No
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	No	No
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	No	Yes
		Share clerical staff with city
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		Good cooperation
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	Yes
	It's difficult to develop transportation-related data with such a small staff and such a large area. There is also a lack of data available at the required scale.	Data collection is very time consuming. With a small staff other challenges easily divert attention away from data.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?		VISUM; VISSIM; GIS
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	No
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	No	No
		We have developed an inflation factor.
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	Public outreach training kit. A "how small MPOs achieve success" resource guide.	Better DOT partnering.

	Respondent Y	Respondent Z
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	4-6
What size community (population) do you serve?	125,001 to 150,000	75,001 to 100,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, growing economy, extensive rural surroundings	Small urban, struggling economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	Yes
	Many feel that the MPO is some sort of regulatory authority that imposes big capital projects on unwilling municipalities, rather programming what the communities tell us that they want. Additionally, we have a very similar acronym to the local public transit operator - that muddies the water a bit as well. Local media obsessed with anti-government posturing; MPO issues do not seem to get their attention.	The decision-makers may not understand or know all that we do but they understand that what we do is needed for funding.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Public, county highway superintendents, {State} DOT, local planners and DPW superintendents	Mayor, County Commissioners, Towns, utilities, University, Chamber, Transit Operator, City/County Engineering, the public
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
	Primarily used in specific area studies and in bicycle and pedestrian planning. It does seem to promote a greater appreciation for what the MPO can and cannot do.	Mainly a nonprofit that builds/manages greenways - very successful
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	I find the term "education" to be a condescending term. I personally sit down with newly elected officials to get a feel for their priorities as I am outlining the process for them.	Through our standing committees, our newsletter and website. Some one-on-one sessions.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Enhancing public transit and bicycle and pedestrian mobility, longer term NHS capacity, and Interstate interchange LOS/delays.	Local funding sources
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Development of all required MPO documentation, local planning assistance, travel demand modeling, and microsimulation, public outreach and assistance, GIS development, road safety audits, technical support for transit planning, access management outreach.	All the required activities - transportation plan, TIP, UPWP, etc. Traffic counting
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes
	Major corridor studies that involve engineering-based solutions.	We used a consultant to set up our transportation model using TransCAD and we used a consultant to do our first conformity analysis.
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	Locally administered project selection process.	We use our Technical Advisory Committee for project discussion and recommendations.

	Respondent Y	Respondent Z
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Intersection operation problems	Intersection operation problems
		Safety
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Moderately successful - always improving, mostly due to expanding technological capabilities. Moving meetings out of stuffy and stifling municipal centers into commercial buildings and the occasional weekend meeting have helped.	Success varies - if you measure it by number of people. The number of people attending public meetings varies from 0 to 300. We have received some e-mail input. We've used questionnaires and workshops with speakers for information/education/input.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Regional cooperation that I would hold up against any other, a regional access management guidebook.	Helped to build greenways; completed the Public Transit Human Services Coordinated Plan which allowed 2 projects to be awarded/funded (still working on local match)
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Trust, cooperation, and a recognition that transportation is severely under-programmed and big capacity jobs aren't an answer to every problem.	Community buy-in
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Exposure and interaction opportunities for a small staff are limited.	Conformity
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	75% or more	35>50%
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	75% or more	35>50%
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Long Range Planning, administration, TIP development	Updating the Transportation Plan (including conformity) and traffic counting
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Federal outreach, peer interaction	The MPO directors meet once a month with State DOT and FHWA and we have an annual conference
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	2	5
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	Yes	Yes
	In the past, yes. Presently, no. A tiered staff position was created that allows room to advance.	Salary issues are the main problem and our organization is also a Plan Commission/department of local government so I have no control over salary increases. Attendance at conferences is emphasized.
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	No	No
	Not a priority for us.	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	No	Yes

	Respondent Y	Respondent Z
		We share information, do special tasks with city and county engineering; also information and resources are shared statewide with other MPOs and the DOT
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		Cooperation is good - ups and downs, but overall very good
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	Yes
	Systems incompatibilities, paper data, data timeliness.	We are always collecting new data - now we always try to collect geo-referenced data so it can be incorporated into our GIS system
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	VISUM, VISSIM, ArcGIS extensions	TransCAD Mobile 6 GIS
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	Yes	Yes
	Too data intensive. Most of these types of programs require care and feeding well above and beyond simply rolling up the sleeves and figuring out whatever the issue is at hand.	Traffic models
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	Stay tuned - we're just getting in to the latest round of that.	For federal funding forecasts, we rely on the state DOT
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	More staff (and a place to put them!). Automating some data to facilitate requests from the public.	

	Respondent AA	Respondent AB
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	4-6
What size community (population) do you serve?	50,000 to 75,000	150,001 to 175,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, rapidly growing economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
	Most people do not know what an MPO is.	We struggle with educating the public and city officials as to who we are and what we do.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Planners and engineers from local government and state department of transportation	City of {} City of {}, {} County, {} University, {} State DOT, The (transit) district, and the public.
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	No	Yes
		During the update of our last MTP, we had the ISDs, utility companies, developers, healthcare agencies, and other non-traditional stakeholders involved in the {} process for determining areas of future growth.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Public announcement of transportation plans	Mainly through the TAC and PC meetings. Sometimes, we'll hold special events (what is modeling, SR {}, etc.) or make presentations at council meetings.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Reduce congestion and need for economic development	Providing access to an interstate, creating a safe, mobile system, offering multimodal options, and trying to address land use issues as the community grows.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Comprehensive planning travel demand modeling	Development of the TIP, MTP, other planning studies, GIS/modeling work, special assignments given by {} State DOT.
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	No	Yes
		Usually the Socioeconomic Demographic forecasting for the MTP.
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	One-on-one meetings and discussions	We recently reworked our technical prioritization process for selecting highway and multimodal projects. This seems to be an effective tool for selecting projects.
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Congestion bottlenecks	Safety
	Intersection operation problems	
	Freight access/economic development	
	Safety	

	Respondent AA	Respondent AB
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Fair.	Moderately successful. For example, during the update of the last MTP, we held over 16 meetings, to accommodate those that wanted to attend BEFORE work, DURING LUNCH, or AFTER work. That also addressed shift workers. We provided materials in Spanish and had a translator at meetings. We ensured that meetings were ADA accessible. We offered food at some of the meetings. We engaged the public by going to non-traditional meeting places (churches, libraries).
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Comprehensive bicycle plan adopted. Started work on pedestrian plan. Development of a multimodal transportation center (transit and Amtrak). {greenway}.	Providing a collaborative environment for two cities, a university and a county to come around a table and discuss transportation at a REGIONAL level.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Cooperation with state department of transportation	Mainly the current elected officials on the PC and the willingness and understanding of a competent TAC to discuss transportation issues that affect the region (more than just their entity).
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Obtaining funding for transportation improvements.	Lack of funding. Lack of funding. Lack of funding!
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	75% or more	50>75%
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	75% or more	50>75%
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Daily traffic counts	Update of the mandated federal planning documents (MTP, TIP, UPWP, PPP).
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Work closely with state department of transportation	By attending conference, workshops, seminars and teleconferences.
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	1	3
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	No
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	Yes
	The transportation planner is working closely with state department of transportation modelers to learn modeling on the job.	We had to convince the PC members (planning partners) to chip in money to hire a fulltime modeler.
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	No	No
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	Yes



	Respondent AA	Respondent AB
	Obtaining current and accurate socioeconomic data for the transportation analysis zones is difficult.	Finding current safety data is impossible. {State} DOT's system for data on total project costs is inaccurate and faulty. Data for special generators (# of employees on site) involves a lot of manual fact checking.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	TransCAD for travel demand modeling	ARCVIEW mainly. Our modeler is looking at experimenting with other land use/transportation models.
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	Yes
		Always! Being a small MPO allows for only the basics.
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	Anticipate future year funding to be similar to funding of recent past years	With {State} DOT's guidance mostly.
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	Census data employment figures future land use plans forecasts of driving plans for citizens	More money, better data at the local and state level.

	Respondent AC	Respondent AD
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	100,001 to 125,000	125,001 to 150,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, struggling economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	Yes
		Among all the local elected officials and executive management of the local government organizations, the role is very well understood and supported. Despite many public meetings and public outreach efforts, the citizen interest and participation remains very limited. According to some informal polling, the reason for the lack of citizen interest is the lack of project construction funds. "All you do is plan, plan, plan; but you do not build any major projects."
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?		The MPO staff, the City and County Planning Departments and Commissions, and the City and County Public Works Departments - the City PW Dept also administers the local transit system. We also have a Transportation Advisory Commission with standing Technical and Citizen Advisory committees which make recommendations to the Board. The State DOT has representation on the TAC, but basically defers to the MPO for all planning in the {} area.
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?		Yes
		The local Economic Development Corporation (partially tax-supported) and the citizen-organized {commission} (approximately 100 volunteers) each has a representative on the TAC. The two local school districts are members of {COG} and each has an elected official on the Board. Generally, these non-traditional participants provide their own planning processes, but have been very good at considering the transportation implications or taking transportation plans into account in their long-range plans.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?		Both the TAC and the Board meet monthly and, in addition to specific transportation agenda items (plan adoption, TIP amendments, etc.), are briefed on significant activities of the MPO.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?		Transportation finance at all levels of government dominates most meetings and discussions. This may become more formal if/when considering the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority with the ability to levy fees and taxes.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?		Since 2004, all MPO planning functions have been moved "in-house" with no reliance on consultants.

	Respondent AC	Respondent AD
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?		Yes
		Transportation Safety/Security and Maintenance/Operations planning generally remain with the local jurisdictions. Those organizations contribute their plans and expertise to the MPO planning efforts.
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?		Projects are usually selected by consensus and programmed through the fiscally constrained long range plan and TIP. The TIP also serves as the mid-term implementation plan for the L RTP.
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?		Congestion bottlenecks
		Freight access/economic development
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?		Since the adoption of the PIP in 2004, we have generally attained the goals specified. Unfortunately, those goals are fairly low and have not been increasing over time because of the finance issue (virtually no federal, state or local capital funds).
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?		Development of a 300+ layer GIS system based on a "ground up" Environmental database approach. Development and adoption of the 2035 L RTP and corresponding TIPs based on the environmental information. Development of excellent socioeconomic and demographic data and forecasts. Development of a Transportation, Economic, and Land Use Model (TELUM) and forecasts which indicate future development trends.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?		Excellent cooperation and collaboration among all the planning partners, including regular ongoing discussions of the many mutual problems which must be addressed in transportation planning. This has worked much better than bringing in "outside" consultants on an ad hoc basis every four years.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?		Updating an antiquated travel demand model to take advantage of our excellent socioeconomic, demographic, and land use forecasting tools.
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?		75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?		75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?		Extensive database maintenance and updating. Using available data to evaluate local (usually development-related) transportation planning.
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?		Through direct contact with FHWA, FTA, (State) DOT, and other MPOs in the {} region.
Do you have professional planners on your staff?		Yes
		2

	Respondent AC	Respondent AD
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?		Yes
		Provide excellent working conditions and contemporary technology. Salary ranges are set externally with little MPO control and may not reflect the current transportation planning labor market.
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?		Yes
		We attempted to use training and education to develop the necessary expertise in the MPO planning staff. Turnover has often negated this effort since modelers have many opportunities to move into other MPOs or consulting firms.
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?		Yes
		The City {} provides all administrative support - Finance, Human Resources, etc. During "peak" times, other Divisions and Departments assist the MPO staff with planning. The County also provides administrative support for managing Board agendas and external finance (i.e. banking, accounting, auditing...).
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		Excellent. Both organizations developed and periodically review the administrative procedures developed to ensure smooth operations. Few changes have been necessary in the past five years.
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?		Yes
		Occasionally, we are aware of commercially available data that would be helpful; but do not have a sufficient budget to purchase or subscribe.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?		GIS systems (ESRI), TELUM, TransCAD, and several internally developed systems for data management and forecasting.
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?		Yes
		Generally, they are too expensive and may offer a lot more features than we would require.
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?		Yes
		We use a common set of base (constant \$) forecasts and inflation scenarios.

	Respondent AC	Respondent AD
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		An updated, upgraded travel demand inventory to provide better input (trip tables, etc.) for the existing travel demand model. The TransCAD platform is great for our needs, but keeping parts of it updated has proven to be quite difficult.

	Respondent AE	Respondent AF
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	75,001 to 100,000	75,001 to 100,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	small urban, struggling economy with some rural areas
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?		No
		I would say the role of the MPO is well understood for those dealing with transportation issues and projects. However, most others in the general public and in government entities struggle with the concept.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?		Staff, Transportation Advisory Committee, MPO Policy Committee, Citizens Advisory Committee
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?		No
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?		We use different public outreach methods including meeting with stakeholders and other government bodies to educate them about the transportation planning process.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?		Finding enough funding to do projects. Finding local government match for projects. Involving freight stakeholders in the planning process.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?		Coordination of all MPO-related meetings. Update of Long Range Transportation Plan. Completion of Coordinated Transportation Plan. Completion of yearly work plan. Evaluation and scoring of projects. Crash/Safety Studies/Traffic Count Activities. All Transportation Improvement activities and updates. Coordination with all political entities in {} County relative to transportation projects and activities. All MPO reporting activities including the completion of quarterly and annual reports.
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?		No
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?		All perspective projects are submitted by application. The project selection committee does a field review of each project and scores them out according to an approved project scoring form. The projects are then taken through the committee process for review and comment and ultimately selected by the MPO Policy Committee.
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?		Congestion bottlenecks
		Intersection operation problems
		Freight access/economic development
		Safety
		Seasonal visitor population creates a number of safety and congestion issues in the area.

	Respondent AE	Respondent AF
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?		So far the range of public activities has included public outreach meetings, surveys on the World Wide Web, stakeholder interviews and seminars. All of our public activities have included visual PowerPoint presentations and a variety of handouts/maps etc. Recently, we purchased some hand-held devices and software to allow instant feedback during public meetings and we are looking forward to incorporating that particular method. As for our success, it depends on the issue or issues presented in a public forum. We have had very good success with stakeholder interviews and I suspect that is because we actually contact each individual and schedule an appointment for the interview.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?		We are somewhat of a new organization (200X) and there was a large learning curve to become successful as an MPO. We have done a great job learning all of the intricacies associated with the MPO and built a well-structured organization. Further, we have been able to schedule projects and keep them on track, work with (State) DOT to receive Safety Funding for some big projects, complete a Long Range Transportation and Coordinated Transportation Plan, and gain respect as a transportation funding entity in the community.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?		The factors contributing to the success of the MPO include a dedicated and hard working staff as well as the ability to work with all of the "key players" in the transportation process. Lastly, our relationship with (State) DOT Central Office and District {} has been a great partnership and aided all of our efforts along the way.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?		One of the biggest challenges is finding the needed funding to complete the different projects and to keep the projects moving through the process to be completed on time.
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?		75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?		50>75%
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?		Coordination of the committee meeting process Completion of transportation plans and transportation-related plans. Completion of the yearly work plan and Transportation Improvement Program activities. Traffic studies and all supporting documentation to complete the same.
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?		{State} DOT/FHWA seminars {State} DOT/FHWA e-mail notices and directives {state association of regional councils} meetings/{regional planning commission} meetings
Do you have professional planners on your staff?		Yes

	Respondent AE	Respondent AF
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?		No
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?		NA
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?		Yes
		We share engineering and traffic-related information with other political entities
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		We have very good cooperation with all of our partners in the transportation planning process. I think we are successful because we always try to assist or help an agency when they approach us with a need.
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?		Yes
		Our data challenges are mainly brought on by the size of our staff. Sometimes it is difficult to gather data/information when there is such a small staff. {State} DOT Central Office and District {} have both been very willing to provide us with data they have available in their offices.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?		All of our transportation modeling has been completed by {State} DOT Central Office.
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?		Yes
		{State} DOT Central Office did our modeling because it was too expensive to incorporate into our Long Range Transportation Plan. Further, the size of our staff inhibits how much time we could spend on data-intensive support activities.
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?		Yes
		We have a financial person who forecasts those revenues and funding streams based on {State} DOT information.
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		If we had the resources available for additional staff that help the process.



	Respondent AG	Respondent AH
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	Yes
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	175,001 to 200,000	50,000 to 75,000
How would you characterize your community?	Mostly urban, remaining rural disappearing	Small urban, growing economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	Yes
	Awareness of process is minimal. Public interest is minimal except NIMBY issues despite public outreach activities, including EJ, Title IV, and ESL initiatives.	Depends upon what you are asking. The local politicians and concerned citizens understand the MPO. I present to Kiwanis, Rotary, and anyone else who needs a speaker, hold open houses, have a website, attend public hearings of all kinds, etc. This does not change that a large majority of the population is not concerned about the details of their govt.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Businesses, Local officials, large private property owners, users of the systems	City and County Engineers, concerned citizens, planning dept, transit, and our local politicians.
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
	Outreach responses have been limited. Surveys, even with limited responses, are best means of information gathering.	We have not for profits involved and it has grown their understanding of many of the issues involved.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Through correspondence, monthly and quarterly meetings	Via one on one meetings, our open houses, attendance of City/County Council meetings, and via Policy Board Meetings.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Transit, and how to improve service w/out huge increases in capital funding toward infrastructure	Maintenance of our existing infrastructure, refining our transit system via key infrastructure additions, and diversifying our transportation infrastructure via the addition of bicycle infrastructure.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Program development, project solicitation, grant writing, data collection, data analysis, long range planning	Writing and maintaining the Transportation Plan and associated TIP, TD modeling, expanding the City/County GIS, key infrastructure project conceptualization.
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes
	Design and construction.	Traffic counts. I provide the hardware; city and county do the counts. Engineering studies of large projects to define scope and construction costs.
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	Typically project prioritization happens jointly with UZA area partners, stakeholders, and or appointed boards of officials. All include a formalized ranking process	In short, drive them a little crazy. The squeaky wheel gets the oil. We also just meet with them a lot. Talking about things over a sandwich is a good thing.
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Congestion bottlenecks	Diversification of the transportation infrastructure
	Intersection operation problems	
	Freight access/economic development	
	Lack of transit service	

	Respondent AG	Respondent AH
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	On a scale of 1-10, we probably have approx a 3 in success. ESL surveys, regular advertisements of meetings, and invitations.	We have followed the City/County Planning Dept lead and have held open houses and have citizens on planning teams.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	New train from {} to {} that gets people to {city} by 8:30 a.m. Big deal for this region.	All MPO funded projects include bike and ped facilities.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	The TSMO FHWA planning initiative and strong support from MPOs and users of the system	I live in a progressive yet conservative city that has always led and not followed. Lots of talk with people about the importance of bike facilities. Logical argumentation from one technical person to another.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?		Too much red tape from the federal/state side. Locally we can build a project in twelve months. With federal money five years is a home run.
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	50>75%	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	50>75%	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Planning and data collection and analysis	Our activities consist of the standard stuff, can't really pinpoint one hog of resources. We write our plans, manage our funds, work with the engineers on projects, attend meetings and workshops, etc.
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	FHWA, {State} DOT	We read the requirements. CFR 23 is the Bible, and I often quote chapter and verse.
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	
	2	
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	No
	The AICP is a false industry standard for professional planning	
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	No	No
	{State} DOT does the majority of our modeling.	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	Yes
	The MPOs coordinate within staff specialties	I borrow the secretaries of the other departments so that I do not have to hire one.
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	It depends on the program but in general we cooperate on larger regional issues or needs within the UZA, and stay local with smaller municipal projects	Good coordination is a question of having a good mix of open minded people. I have this for the most part with my partners at other agencies and departments.
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	Yes

	Respondent AG	Respondent AH
	If Census is our best "free" data, we will always have large margin of error issues.	The transportation-related layers of our GIS are still a work in progress, and a main effort currently.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	We use ADT statistics, wait times, connection numbers, and traffic accident counts in a GIS and or Synchro application or model	TransCAD and ESRI
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	Yes	No
	Training on new software gets expensive and requires significant time away from regular daily responsibilities.	I built our TDM and am the spearhead of growing our GIS as well as migrating it from AutoCAD to ESRI.
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	Financially constrained TIP/STIP	The State gives us forecasts for the life of the Transportation Bill. I use percentage-based growth numbers pretty close to theirs to project the future cash inflows and outflows as part of ensuring the Transportation Plan is "fiscally constrained."
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	Knowledge, analysis, and demographic trends	I have no problems putting the TIP together, maintaining my funding picture, and predicting my 25-year cash flow for the transportation plan. I just find it a sadly inefficient way to do business. An "SAP" type system that all partners in the federal process could use would make sense.

	Respondent AI	Respondent AJ
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	4-6	10 or more
What size community (population) do you serve?	125,001 to 150,000	125,001 to 150,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, stable economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	Yes	Yes
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Local government entities from the surrounding cities and towns as well as {State} Dept. of Transportation.	{Cities}, {State} DOTs, {State} DOR, {local} Transit {agency}, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
		We have established groups to become more involved in each process. Our Coordinated Transportation Issues Committee brings together health agencies, {} Regional Transit System, and any others that have stake in transit for individuals of low-income, disabled, etc. Our Bicycle and Pedestrian Roundtable brings stakeholders in those issues together to discuss them. Another example is our Safe Routes to School Taskforce that brings together school employees, the cities, and other interested persons to talk about the Safe Routes to School Program.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Monthly meetings.	Our MPO Tech Committee brings together the city engineers and administrators to be involved in our processes. Then our MPO Policy Board brings together elected City officials to vote and approve the documents and plans.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Growth and funding	Currently is to get Interstate {} completed. Another important issue is to finish connector projects such as completing {} Drive to {} Boulevard.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Modeling, project management, transit	Our plans that we constantly work on (Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Transportation Planning Work Program, etc.), any requests that come in for a map or help with an application, attending meetings for different organizations
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	No
	Access studies and design work	
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	2035 Regional Transportation Plan	Cities and organizations submit an application to {metropolitan planning council} and then each project is prioritized. Once this is done, the MPO Tech Committee makes a recommendation to the Policy Board of which projects should receive funding and the Policy Board makes the final deciding vote.
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Congestion bottlenecks	Freight access/economic development
	Intersection operation problems	Safety

	Respondent AI	Respondent AJ
	Safety	Incident Management
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Our public involvement efforts have been successful and we utilize open houses and meetings to involve the public.	
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Building of a transit transfer facility and transit operations/transfer facility.	
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Willingness of the other agencies to coordinate with us on these projects and for local government agencies to assist with land acquisition.	
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Funding	Getting people interested in Transportation Issues and attending meetings to discuss these issues.
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	50>75%	15>25%
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	50>75%	
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Modeling	Updating documents, helping cities and organizations with applications/requests
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Continuous training and statewide meetings	Through each State's DOT/DOR or from FHWA
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	3	2
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	No	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	No
	Our modeler creates maps for the other local government agencies.	
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	The level of cooperation is high with the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan as well as all the other local government agencies that are part of our {} Regional Transportation Committee.	
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	No	Yes
		Getting the same data from {} different states can be extremely difficult.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	TransCAD travel demand model	
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	Yes	No

	Respondent AI	Respondent AJ
	Too costly and lack of resources to gather data which includes adequate funding and staff time.	
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	
	Through the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan and Intergovernmental Agreements.	
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	Land use model such as Community Viz.	

	Respondent AK	Respondent AL
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	7-9
What size community (population) do you serve?	75,001 to 100,000	175,001 to 200,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Urban
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	Yes	Yes
	The local governmental officials understand the role of the MPO, but the public is much less informed.	We are a respected organization that works with our partners at the Department of Transportation to improve transportation and mobility throughout our urban area.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?		
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?		
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?		
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?		
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?		
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?		
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?		
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?		
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?		
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?		
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?		
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?		
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?		
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?		
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?		
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?		

	Respondent AK	Respondent AL
Do you have professional planners on your staff?		
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?		
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?		
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?		
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?		
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?		
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?		
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?		
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		



	Respondent AM	Respondent AN
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	Yes	Yes
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	50,000 to 75,000	100,001 to 125,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, struggling economy	Small urban, stable economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	Yes	Yes
	The community governments that are served by our MPO know about us and serve on our Board. As far as the general public, I do not think most people really understand the difference between the municipal engineers that serve each municipality, and the MPO that helps fund transportation projects for the whole region.	Of course, not all sectors of the community are familiar with the MPO. However, at the level of community leaders and decision-makers there is familiarity with the metropolitan planning process.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	The {Cities}, {} University, {} College, our local transit provider, {} County, and the Town {}. The major human service agencies also participate from time to time.	State DOT, City and County governments, transit agency.
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
	We try to do outreach to the various human service agencies, and the Chambers of Commerce in the region. While most of the County is outside the MPO, we try to work with their communities as much as possible. If there is an issue that affects them, they will contact the MPO to look for assistance.	There are several partnerships with non-profit community organizations, academic institutions, and civic groups such as the chamber of commerce.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	As the City {} is the funding agency for the MPO, the MPO must get approval from them on major purchases. When we are in front of the City Council, we try to explain to them the nature of the MPO and how it serves the entire region.	We seek to engage them by participation in committees, general outreach and by being actively involved in community transportation initiatives.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	The majority of the time is spent providing funds for our local transit agency and managing all the requirements that the FTA and {State} DOT put on the grants they provide. In addition we must address all the MPO demands also, and with only 1 full-time staff person, the requirements can get overwhelming at times.	Meeting the challenges of peak oil and climate change while enhancing the quality of life of residents in urban and rural areas. This requires changing many long-standing paradigms on transportation.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Management of all FHWA and FTA grants for the region. Management of all {State} DOT grants for the region. Working with contractors to implement studies and transportation projects. Working with all the municipal and county engineers to ensure their transportation projects are funded. Attending the numerous training workshops. Need to understand how to fund transit and transportation.	Data gathering and analysis. Outreach and plan development. General education on transportation topics.
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes

	Respondent AM	Respondent AN
	Staff works on the daily tasks, but things like the Long Range Transportation Plan, and other plans and studies the Policy Committee wishes to pursue are outsourced to consultants.	Analysis for private development proposals. Various planning studies are beyond the capability of our small staff - transit studies, corridor studies, etc.
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	Being a small area, only 1 or 2 projects are funded in any given year. Staff mainly works with the transit provider to identify transit projects. Due to severe lack of staff, highway projects are usually identified by municipal, county, and state engineers, and then they get approval from the state for the projects. If approved by the state, staff just puts the projects on the TIP. As there are so few projects, we have not had an issue of having to choose from one project over another.	Local Committee review. Regional committee review. C/B analysis by state DOT.
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Congestion bottlenecks	Congestion bottlenecks
		Expansion of multi modal options - bicycling, car share, van pool, rideshare
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Public comment periods and public hearings have not had much success. What we find most successful is attending the meetings of various organizations and requesting time to talk to those who are present at the meeting, and asking for their input at the end of the presentations. This is why we get most of our community input.	Efforts have been successful. Most important is to keep involved in the ongoing community conversation on transportation.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Studies of traffic throughout the region, specific truck and freight traffic study for the region. Getting a computerized scheduling system running for the local transit provider. Implementing an ITS plan for the region. Obtaining grants for Downtown {} redevelopment. Continued development of a Bike Trail System throughout {} County through our work with the County. Getting the MPO up and running from scratch.	We've been successful in competing for federal transportation funds. The {transportation council} has been successful in establishing itself as a "safe" place to engage in multi-jurisdictional planning initiatives. Agency was instrumental in bringing car sharing to the community and promoting development of multi-use trails.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Cooperation between all the member organizations and the City {}.	In all we do, we stress openness, equal dealings with all our partners, and a supportive team work environment.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Our funds only allow for one full-time staff member, and intern, and a part-time director. Not only is the staff expected to manage the MPO, but also manage all the Federal grants that are received. The feds and state officials keep requiring we do more to receive each grant and yet we don't receive any more money. Also, as we are a County that is both urban and rural, often we receive both urban and rural funds for the same project (such as providing transit), but grants usually makes us separate what is urban service and what is rural service, which makes even more work for staff. The feds and state need to make these grants more seamless.	Lack of leadership at the national level to deal common sensically with the transportation challenge we face.
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	75% or more	25>35%

	Respondent AM	Respondent AN
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	50>75%	15>25%
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Grant management, especially for transit.	Plan development.
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	The staff person tries to keep updated by signing up for the FTA and FHWA listserv updates, but given our lack of resources, we mainly depend on the {State} DOT, FHWA, and FTA representatives to let us know when there are changes.	Through official notices from Feds and state DOT and from professional organizations - AMPO, APA, ITE, etc.
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	1	1
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	Yes	No
	In the past 5 years of the existence of the MPO, the lead (and only) transportation staff planner position has had 4 people in that position. Due to significant financial constraints and the fact the MPO has only 1 staff person, the fact that it is a small MPO, and often just a stepping stone to other jobs, there is very little that can be done to improve retention.	
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	Yes
	Again, with only 1 staff person to do everything, developing a TDM is not a viable option at this time.	Found a local person who is a good fit - win-win situation.
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	No
	Yes, the staff person also acts as the transportation planner for the City {} and the local transit provider.	
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	As we are a small urban area, most of the municipal and county government officials talk with each other. The biggest challenge is often interacting with the local universities. With the very limited resources the MPO staff has, it is forced to rely on others to contact the MPO if there are issues.	
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	Yes
	We have a lot of data available; the problem is that there has never been any staff here long enough to organize the information into ways where it is easily accessed. The planner and intern are actively trying to organize this information as time permits.	We use existing data sources. We do not have resources to fund or gather our own primary data.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	No models; most analytical tools are created with Excel spreadsheets when needed.	Spreadsheet analysis, TransCAD travel demand model, GIS

	Respondent AM	Respondent AN
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	Yes	Yes
	You have already identified all the main reasons why we do not get analytical tools. Remember, 1 full time staff person and an intern do everything required of the MPO.	Usually cost is the problem. There are a few software packages such as "Scenario development tools" that are costly. We also have difficulty financing enhancements to our TransCAD travel demand model.
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	(State) DOT has developed a system for us to identify all the costs we have incurred each quarter, and we submit that form quarterly for reimbursement.	Usually trend analysis combined with some known needs analysis.
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	It would be very helpful if the State could develop TDMs for the smaller MPOs and let us know of other ways they can assist us when we have so few staff members.	Enhances scenario development tools. Having a multimodal 24-hour travel demand model.

	Respondent AO	Respondent AP
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	4-6	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	175,001 to 200,000	50,000 to 75,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, stable economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	Yes	No
	Not well known, but is any MPO well known by the public?	Those involved with the MPO (Advisory and Policy Committees), certain local public agency officials, and a few elected officials understand the role of the MPO, but the community as a whole probably does not know about the MPO or its function.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	(State) DOT, (State) Turnpike Authority Municipalities Transit Systems Regional Council	University, town, city, county, state, federal, transit, emergency officials; alternative transportation interests are well represented on the Citizens Advisory Committee and Low-Income and Disabled populations are represented on the Mobility Steering Committee
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
	We have two "interest groups" seats on each of our three standing advisory committees.	Federal mandates (such as ITS and Coordinated Human Services and Public Transportation Plans) have brought non-traditional players to the transportation planning process. Unfortunately, the relevance of these mandates to smaller urbanized areas is questionable. Therefore, initial input is sought but once the plan begins to collect dust, so too does the input from these non-traditional players.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	News releases. Attend meetings outside our offices. Hold public forums. Maintain a website. Participate in chamber of commerce.	Our MPO's Policy Board is composed of key decision-makers from each of the governing bodies. Additionally we produce an "MPO handbook" to provide an explanation of purpose and procedure to new members.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Adequacy of public transit. Traffic congestion. Traffic calming.	Interstate Highway construction through the community and the effects on the local economy and community character. The scope of State Road projects (i.e., how many lanes are warranted/appropriate in an urban corridor) is also important. Transit and other means of alternative transportation are also important within the MPO.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Organize studies. Rank capital project proposals from municipalities. Look out for money from state and feds, including legislators. Explain the MPO process to our members. Work with our regional travel model consultant.	Core functions revolve around the upkeep of MPO documents (TIP, UPWP, LRTP, Public Participation Plan, Crash Report, Coordination Plan, etc.). The rest of the MPOs efforts are directed to day-to-day operations (billings, project oversight, project change orders, etc.)
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes

	Respondent AO	Respondent AP
	We routinely hire consultants for 5 to 10 feasibility studies each year.	As outlined in the UPWP, the MPO contracts with local public agencies to conduct certain services (traffic counts, infrastructure management, transit development plans, etc.) The MPO will also use outside consultants in the development of certain feasibility studies or maintenance of the Travel Demand Model.
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	We set aside our \$1{X},000,000 allocation from {State} DOT in five categories: intersections, paving...etc. We have a sophisticated ranking system.	No process currently exists (outside of the State's Transportation Improvement Program development process).
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Intersection operation problems	Congestion bottlenecks
		Alternative transportation
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Very	Fairly successful. We have a documents clearinghouse webpage for all MPO documents. We've held meetings at public libraries for public input on specific projects. We did mobile workshops for the last update of the LRTP.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Setting priorities for the use of FHWA and FTA funds in our region.	SAFETEA-LU compliance in 2007.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Hard work and experience.	Assistance from FHWA on what needed to be done. Extra effort from local partners on the development of new plans and updates to existing plans.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	There are so many people and organizations involved, and lots of federal/state/MPO rules and guidelines to adhere to.	As a smaller organization, we are constantly chasing document deadlines. As a result we haven't been able to collect the level of data we would like (traffic counts) to more effectively plan for transportation problems.
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	35>50%	15>25%
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	25>35%	15>25%
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?		Document upkeep
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	From {State} DOT and AMPO.	State DOT, FHWA, MPO council
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	2	3
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	Yes
		Our City is a university town and therefore experiences high turnover in all sectors. It is mostly acknowledged as a way of life.
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	No

	Respondent AO	Respondent AP
	We use a consultant.	Modeling is typically handled by a consultant. There is an rudimentary understanding among the staff on the model (not significant for model manipulation).
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	Yes
	We share our admin and planning staff with the COG at which we are housed.	The MPO is staffed by the City's Planning Dept.
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	High.	At times, the City and its elected officials try to internally manage the functions of the MPO. This presents a conflict of interest for MPO staff which is supposed to be answering to a higher regional transportation interest and not that of the City alone.
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	No	Yes
		With a smaller staff we are unable to be proactive in data collection (traffic counts).
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	Travel demand model.	Our TDM is constructed using TransCAD. The City also uses GIS software to compile geo-spatial data.
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	Yes
		A TransCAD license is maintained by the MPO but is too data intensive/time consuming for the MPO to develop the TDM in-house.
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
		4% annual increase to current year dollars was agreed to by all local public agencies.
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		More staff

	Respondent AQ	Respondent AR
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	Yes	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	10 or more
What size community (population) do you serve?	50,000 to 75,000	125,001 to 150,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, rapidly growing economy	Small urban, rapidly growing economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	Yes	Yes
	For a small urban area, we are highly fragmented in terms of political jurisdictions. My policy board is composed of two counties, three cities, and two port districts. When we formed, the elected officials recognized the need to create a regional organization independent of any one jurisdiction that is "neutral turf." This would not have happened but for the federal metropolitan planning requirements.	The MPO is represented by elected officials from cities, townships, school districts. Public hearings are use to inform and gather input into transportation plans.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Cities, counties, port and economic development agencies, small towns, chamber of commerce, area legislators, state DOT, local transit agency.	Planners, engineers develop plans for elected officials and citizens to consider and implement.
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	No
	The best model has been to establish informal relationships with industry leaders, and representatives from the trucking/shipping sector. We occasionally host "stakeholder forums," but mostly it is informal communication between the Executive Director and/or board members and other non-traditional players.	
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Sufficiently, but it is an ongoing challenge as positions turn over. For a very small MPO this issue requires considerable time and energy.	In studies, reports and at public meetings.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Adequate funding, maintaining regional cooperation in the face of declining funding, and competing with larger urban areas for funds. Our transportation infrastructure deficiencies are very urban in scale, and outmatch our area population. This is a challenge both for the lack of formula or "fair share" funding as well as our limited ability to generate revenue through local/regional efforts.	Expanding and improving highways, intersections, bikeways and transit within community
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Managing and evaluating data, maintaining and running the travel demand model, GIS, external communications, plan writing, project programming, customer service to staff at member entities, etc.	Transportation planning, modeling and responding to development projects
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes
	We outsource more complex transportation modeling projects through an on-call contract with a consultant. We periodically use consultants to lead corridor studies.	Future highway preservation studies



	Respondent AQ	Respondent AR
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	The state knows that small MPOs do not have sub-allocation authority, and it is a continual challenge to influence project funding priorities of the state. The MPO acts as a larger political constituency to leverage cooperation from the state agencies. All of our regional priorities are based on conclusions of the MTP, and therefore on the federally mandated planning process.	TIPs are reviewed and prioritized.
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Congestion bottlenecks	Congestion bottlenecks
	Freight access/economic development	Intersection operation problems
	We focus on larger, more global issues. This is mostly due to our resource limitations being a three person staff.	Safety
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Reasonably successful. Broader awareness in the community has been difficult to achieve. We often use radio interviews because it's free, but that reaches a limited audience. Workshops and other public meetings are typically poorly attended. Large-scale printed advertising is very expensive relative to our small PL funding and budget, so we are limited. We are considering a blog, having witnessed a very positive response to some other MPO blogs in the state.	Public hearings, notices and providing information on the web has generated public involvement
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Building a framework for regional cooperation, both in terms of the process we use to develop a common understanding of our transportation challenges as well as the project priorities themselves. The forum and process is the success - the fact that this has led to funding for projects that otherwise would not have been selected by the state is secondary, but also very important.	Developing the 2030 Transportation Plan
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Hard work, willing elected officials.	
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	The biggest challenge is maintaining our role in the face of competition from the state DOT for defining regional needs. They are adept at undermining the conclusions of the metropolitan planning process, which often leads to priorities that differ from those desired by the DOT.	Funding resources
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	75% or more	15>25%
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	75% or more	15>25%
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Administration	Improving roadway/bike studies, responding development activity
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	We keep up with the information constantly provided by federal and state agencies and by AMPO, and we attend conferences/trainings as appropriate.	By working with state and federal officials and publications
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	1	

	Respondent AQ	Respondent AR
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	Yes	No
	We have had to pay salaries on-par with large urban areas even though our cost-of-living is much lower. The market for planners is very competitive at the moment, especially for smaller MPOs in far-flung locations like ours.	
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	No
	We really haven't tried. I have hired planners who have the interest and ability to learn basic modeling skills, but do not have adequate resources to hire a true modeling professional. My staff is required to be good at many different aspects of planning.	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	Yes
	We work closely with the local transit provider on planning issues and studies, in terms of staff time, not direct funding.	City Public Works
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	Good cooperation with all agencies. In terms of working at a staff level, this includes the state DOT. Our strategy has been to maintain continual dialogue and to encourage staff from all entities to shape our discussions and outcomes.	Our cooperation is good
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	Yes
	Highly limited due to lack of funding. As it is, my members provide almost four times the minimum local match just so I can maintain two employees and a bare-bones planning program. The federal PL funds are vastly inadequate for small MPOs, at least in {} state.	
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	We very often use basic spreadsheet analysis for things like interpreting data and trends, and for analyses like cost/benefit. Our model is VISUM.	ERSI GIS products, TransPlan and CUBE
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	Yes	No

	Respondent AQ	Respondent AR
	This is a prevailing problem that limits us at all levels. The real issue is that we are not addressing many transportation issues that need to be worked on.	
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	No	Yes
	We developed our own methodology for assessing local funding streams, and we defer to the state to provide us numbers for their part. They have not assisted us with YOE, although the state office of FHWA has been very helpful.	Annual Transportation Work Program
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	More federal funds. There needs to be an established minimum amount for all MPOs so that we can all at least achieve the basic federal requirements. Many states use a population-based distribution of PL funding, which leaves small areas with inadequate basic funds and in a persistent survival mode.	

	Respondent AS	Respondent AT
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	Yes	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	50,000 to 75,000	50,000 to 75,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, struggling economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	2 Towns and 1 County, {State} DOT, {State Rail and Public Transportation Agency}, FHWA, FTA, {} University, Transit, Airport Authority, PDC	
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	
	We have had success working with the bicycling community	
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Personal contact and website	
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Funding for Transportation improvements	
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Oversight of studies	
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	
	All planning studies	
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	Citizen and local government input	
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Intersection operation problems	
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Not very successful. Unless there are specific issues that the citizens are particularly interested in.	
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Creation of a Rideshare program, establishment of a regional mobility manager, establishment of a commuter bus from {} to {}	
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	successful promotion to local government	
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Funding for Improvements	
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	0-15%	
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	25>35%	
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Public outreach and transportation studies	
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	VDOT and FHWA	

	Respondent AS	Respondent AT
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	No	
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	
	N/A	
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	No	
	N/A	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	
	Clerical	
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	Excellent	
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	No	
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	N/A	
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	
	Information supplied by State	
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		

	Respondent AU	Respondent AV
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	4-6
What size community (population) do you serve?	125,001 to 150,000	100,001 to 125,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, struggling economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
	Although we were established in 197{X} we were a division of a planning and development district until 200{X}. The district was established in 196{X} and it is well known and utilized by the region's jurisdictions. We became a free-standing MPO in 200{X} in order to better brand ourselves and establish our own credentials. As a non-TMA with no state sub-allocations for projects we had been purely an administrative entity. We now function as a management service MPO operating in 7 transportation management areas	The MPO staff operates within/under a Regional Planning Commission. Multiple charges of staff affect public perception/understanding of what the MPO is and actually does. Elected officials, consultants, developers and other government/public stakeholders are aware of the MPO functions.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Local governments, chambers of commerce, private sector transportation providers and shippers, the local transit system, and the state DOT	Elected officials, transportation-related agencies/officials, law enforcement agencies, economic development agencies, utility providers, major manufacturers, major cartage/freight operators, transit providers, paratransit service providers
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	No
	We are currently developing a relationship with our local university that will establish an internship through the MPO for a mobility manager to assist in the implementation of our coordinated human service and public transit plan. We are also strengthening our position among the region's law enforcement agencies to craft our transportation safety program. Once this is established, it is hoped that it will be implemented through the university's "Life-long Learning Center."	
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	One-on-one visits and communication	Inclusion in committee representation, mailings, surveys, phone calls
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Freight movement, safety, completion of the I-XX segment through the urban area, and funding	At-grade rail crossings
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Site impact analysis, assistance to local planning commissions regarding subdivision activities, transit planning, intermodal planning, and mapping	Traffic counts, intersection LOS analyses, signal/signage warrants, rail crossing safety assessments, high hazard intersection analyses, corridor LOS studies, crash summary reports, employment and land use projections
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	No	Yes
		{Crash report form} and crash data/location

	Respondent AU	Respondent AV
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	Unfortunately, our state does not recognize the collaborative process and our past attempts have yielded very little in getting our MPO desired projects in the statewide improvements programs	Interactive process with {State} DOT District on TAC and Policy and advisory committees. Crash summary reports generated for each political subdivision help prioritize needs annually with the identification of crash locations ranked by frequency, severity and crash rate
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Freight access/economic development	Intersection operation problems
	Safety	Safety
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Not very successful. We engaged a consultant 2 years ago to assist us in our outreach efforts and we continue to focus on them and implement the recommendations.	Nominal - none
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Developing the concept and championing the regional intermodal port. Initiating the urban area's transit operation in light of a non-responsive administration in our central city	
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Luck, relationship building among affected individuals and corporations in the private sector, and continual marketing of the ideas and concepts	
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Effective public involvement and reliable local funding streams	
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	75% or more	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	75% or more	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Safety planning activities and transit planning	Data collection
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Membership in national organizations such as AMPO, NARC, NADO, TRB, ITE, and NSC	{State} DOT staff is very professional and provides insights and guidance on a regular basis. Monthly meetings of the MPOs in the state w/{State} DOT is very valuable. Website postings and e-mail fill in the gaps.
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	1	2
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	Yes
		Define professional planners... paid? AICP? FAICP? Planning degree? Related degree? Advanced degree?
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	No	Yes
		We have opted to allow {State} DOT to run our model. We provide the on-the-ground data and request technical assistance from {State} DOT to actually run the various scenarios needed for TIP, TIS, LRP alternatives and air quality issues. It saves the MPO from paying additional monies for a modeler as we do not use the model on a regular basis.

	Respondent AU	Respondent AV
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	Yes
	Although we became a free-standing MPO we are still engaged with the planning district. We provide other planning assistance to our rural members utilizing non-PL funding through the district	RPC - land use analysis, grants administrator, clerical
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	Symbiotic	Perfect as the Executive Director for the RPC is also the Tech Study Director for the MPO
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	Yes
	Timely traffic accident analysis data from the state	Of course. Timelines work against the collection of perfect data.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	NA	Synchro and HCS primarily. GIS and aerial photography are tools. The {State} DOT operated model is the only other tool used locally.
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	Yes
		We are a small, relatively rural, depressed community focused more on solving manageable problems using incremental change.
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	No	Yes
	Historical trend analysis for local revenues. All of our MPO jurisdictions have a 1 cent sales tax devoted to transportation and drainage.	We use {State} DOT guidelines.
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	Sub-allocation of STP and other appropriate funds from the state DOT	?



	Respondent AW	Respondent AX
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	Yes	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	1-3	4-6
What size community (population) do you serve?	50,000 to 75,000	100,001 to 125,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, rapidly growing economy	Small urban, struggling economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
	We are a new MPO and still working to establish a presence in the community.	The MPO was established in 197{X}, but there is still a great deal confusion about the organization's role despite many attempts to educate the public and community leaders.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Local Elected Officials Planning Commissions Transit Authority Local Airport Board Military Installation Trucking Industry City and County Engineering Departments County Road Departments	Local government officials (elected and appointed); transit operators, citizens, representatives of private organizations; State DOT, FHWA and FTA.
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
	Involvement on special committees for studies conducted by the MPO, involvement as Technical Advisory Committee members, and through open invitations to public meetings. We have been moderately successful with involving non-traditional players in our planning process	A special effort has to be made to involve the disabled and underserved through establishment of a Disabled Citizens Advisory Committee. The effort has been moderately successful since the committee provides valuable feedback regarding the transportation system.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Committee Meetings Public Meetings Press Releases Speaking to Civic and Community Groups	We developed an MPO Orientation Program for newly elected or appointed government officials. When requested, we also brief service clubs, private organizations, etc., on the role of the MPO. We also maintain an active website.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Military expansion due to the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Report, need for public transportation services, congestion and safety along major corridors, efficient movement of commercial vehicular traffic	Railroad relocation and better integration of the transportation planning into the overall community/economic development planning process.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Development and maintenance of Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program; conducting and updating (as necessary) transportation-related studies	Long and short range planning; intermodal planning and coordination; travel demand modeling; traffic studies; corridor studies; air quality conformity; CMAQ Program and TE Program.
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes
	Major planning studies	Assistance with plan development, studies and travel demand modeling.
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	{State} has a Statewide Transportation Planning Process that involves prioritizing projects and moving them forward in the planning process.	State DOT representatives serve on both our Transportation Policy Committee and Transportation Technical Committee so they are involved in the project development process from start to finish.
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Congestion bottlenecks	Congestion bottlenecks
	Intersection operation problems	Intersection operation problems
	Freight access/economic development	Freight access/economic development

	Respondent AW	Respondent AX
	Safety	Safety
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Moderately successful. We have utilized traditional methods such as public meetings, surveys, etc.	Public involvement efforts in the past 12 months have been fairly successful since we've seen a significant increase in the number of citizens and interested individuals who attend committee meetings.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Helping to secure funding to assist in completing projects to aid in the movement of traffic related to the growth at {Military Base} due to BRAC.	Improved communication between the MPO, local government officials, State DOT and FHWA.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	A strong working relationship with local governments and the Governor's office.	A real effort on the part of the MPO to establish effective lines of communication and dialogue with our planning partners.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Funding Political Support	Communication and funding.
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	75% or more	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	50>75%	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Varies throughout the year.	Overall program administration and management.
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	Through partnerships with Federal and State organizations.	Close liaison with planning partners (State DOT, FHWA, FTA, etc.) and active participation in the State MPO Council.
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	No
	1	
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	Yes
		Increased opportunities for professional development and the compensation program.
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	Yes
	The MPO staff is one person. We do not have a TD modeler.	We really haven't figure out an effective way to address this problem since we only recently brought on a full-time modeler.
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	No	No
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	No	Yes
		Lack of technical expertise in some areas of the planning process.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	We have a travel demand model that is maintained by our State DOT.	TransCAD, MOBILE6, McTRANS HCS+, Maptitude, VIAS, EMIT and Microsoft Office Applications.

	Respondent AW	Respondent AX
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	Yes
		We could use a multi-user version of TransCAD, but it is too expensive.
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	Trend analysis	The State DOT works with the State MPO Council and individual MPOs to develop forecasts.
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	N/A	Additional staffing and new analytical software applications.

	Respondent AY	Respondent AZ
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	4-6	4-6
What size community (population) do you serve?	175,001 to 200,000	125,001 to 150,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, struggling economy	Exurban
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
	Even though we are more than just an MPO, most citizens and many local elected officials do not know our organization either exists or what we do.	MPO is not understood by most because we work for so many different governments and have funding from so many different sources. Also, planning 20+ years into the future does not relate closely to many people.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	Public Works engineers and transit	Cities, Counties, Townships, (State) DOT, FHWA, Transit, Citizens, State and federal elected officials.
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	Yes
	Hit and miss ... usually tied to a specific grant or project	We have attempted with little success.
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Newsletter, forums, presentations at general meetings	PowerPoint presentations at civic group meetings, or other more formal meetings. Website. Memos, letters, etc.
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Preservation, economic vitality, access between rural communities	Funding, corridor preservation and land use.
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	TIP, modeling, air quality conformity, STP and CMAQ funding distributions	Long Range Plan development, TIP development, overseeing EA and EIS work for corridor preservation.
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	Yes
	Long range plan updates	EA and EIS work is typically outsourced.
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?		Long Range transportation plan, working through our TAC and Board.
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Congestion bottlenecks	Congestion bottlenecks
	Safety	Intersection operation problems
	Transportation for special needs populations	Safety
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?		Somewhat successful. We use our website a lot. Also, direct mailings for project studies. Plan and TIP public involvement is more challenging.
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Collaborative selection/prioritization process for selecting regional transportation projects for federal STP funds	Completion of a buildout circa 2100 land use and travel modeling exercise. Switching to a 5 year TIP cycle, programming every other year. Advocating for federal funding with one agreed upon priority list for all communities to support.
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Participation and buy-in from county engineer	Communication and buying into the theory that we can accomplish more through cooperation than through individual efforts.
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Meaningful projects; funding uncertainty	Funding and environmental red tape that makes it difficult to preserve right of way from development.

What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	35>50%	75% or more
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	50>75%	75% or more
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	TIP; plan update; competitive grants for STP and CMAQ	Plan Development Corridor Studies TIP
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	State MPO coordinating committee; participation in national organizations	Through our (State) DOT and FHWA liaisons
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	Yes
	2	4
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	Yes	No
	Try to make work interesting and provide training opportunities and "fun" projects to work on besides the routine stuff	
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	No
	Provide training	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	No
	GIS/Modeling - shared resources with County GIS/modeling and state DOT region office	
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?	Improves/maintains relationships with our partners and we know what each other is working on because we are all involved in each other's projects	
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	Yes	Yes
	No good freight data for our region	Accurate employment data is very difficult to attain.
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	VISSUM and VISSIM	TranPlan Cube
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	No
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	Yes
	We use conservative estimates based on projections from state	Look at historic funding trends for all funding sources and also current information that might modify those trends.
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.	Information on local/regional freight values, modes of transport, volumes	

	Respondent BA	Respondent BB
Are you a newly established MPO (within last five years)?	No	No
How many FTE staff do you have?	4-6	1-3
What size community (population) do you serve?	50,000 to 75,000	100,001 to 125,000
How would you characterize your community?	Small urban, stable economy	Small urban, stable economy
Is the role of the MPO well understood in your community?	No	No
	Do not understand that transportation planning and capital improvements come through the MPO to the DOT.	In some areas of this community, they are well acquainted with the MPO. But the average citizen has no idea what we do.
Who are the major participants in your transportation planning process?	City Managers, Public Works Directors	
Have you involved non-traditional players in the planning process?	Yes	
	Outreach efforts to invite them to be part of an advisory committee. Sometimes successful.	
How do you educate key decision makers or opinion makers in your community about the transportation planning process?	Personal interaction, briefings	
What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?	Funding	
What transportation planning tasks are typically undertaken by your own staff?	Traffic counting, travel demand modeling, technical assistance on Comp plans, and traffic movement permits.	
Are there transportation planning tasks/activities that are typically outsourced to other departments or to outside consultants?	Yes	
	Consultants to perform corridor studies, TSM and TDM analysis	
What process does your organization use to identify or recommend projects to the state as part of the collaborative project selection process?	We evaluate and prioritize projects for the MPO TIP and part of the State TIP	
What types of transportation problems does your organization address most often?	Congestion bottlenecks	
	Intersection operation problems	
How successful have your public involvement efforts been and what innovative activities have you utilized?	Public involvement success depends on the study and how controversial the issue.	
What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?	Developing a traffic signal management system	
What factors contributed to the success described in Question 15?	Benefits to the cities and the traveling public	
What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process?	Funding for projects	
What share of the staff works on transportation planning tasks?	75% or more	
How much of your budget is spent on transportation planning?	75% or more	

	Respondent BA	Respondent BB
What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?	Program administration, technical assistance	
How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them?	AMPO, NADO, FHWA, DOT	
Do you have professional planners on your staff?	Yes	
	2	
Has your organization experienced difficulties with retaining experienced planners?	No	
Has your organization experienced difficulties hiring and retaining experienced travel demand modelers?	Yes	
	Use a consultant on retainer to maintain the travel demand model	
Do you share resources or staff with other organizations?	Yes	
	Transportation planner with community planning	
If yes to question 25 above, how would you describe the level of cooperation with your partner agencies in advancing the transportation planning process? Are there specific strategies or actions that you have taken to enhance coordination?		
Do you ever face data challenges/limitations in your planning activities?	No	
What models and analytical tools do you use in your planning activities?	TransCAD, SimTraffic, Syncro, Traffic Counts	
Do you ever learn of models or analytical tools that would help your work, but not use them because they are too costly, would require too much staff time to support, they are too data intensive, or another reason?	No	
Does the state DOT partner with you to develop fiscal forecasts and procedures for addressing the "year of expenditure" requirements?	Yes	
	We receive an allocation of the STP and NHS funds on a formula basis. We forecast based on the Transportation funding bills	
What resources or tools would assist your planning efforts? Please explain.		

## APPENDIX C: PEER EXCHANGE AGENDA AND RELATED MATERIALS



## Attendees

- David Baltz, City of Salem
- Thera Black, Thurston County Planning Commission
- Marsha Fiol, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Suzette Mallette, North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Amanda Martin, Iowa Department of Transportation
- Jeff Moore, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet
- Libby Rushley, Ohio Department of Transportation
- Page Scott, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments
- Paul Thompson, Lane Council of Governments
- Phil Wheeler, Rochester Olmsted Council of Governments
- Toni Horst, AECOM consultant
- Maggie Walsh, AECOM facilitator

## Agenda

### Goal

Today's peer exchange seeks to identify processes, tools and data that will enhance the ability of MPOs serving small communities to fulfill their mission to effectively and efficiently meet the transportation planning needs of the public.

- ∅ Note: For this exercise, a small community is understood to have a population of 200,000 or less.

### Today's Objectives

- Share the "Charge" with the participants; why we are working through this exercise
- Review of what has been done thus far (survey results, etc)
- Identify attributes and characteristics unique to a small community MPO
- Assess the existing challenges and impediments to transportation planning in small communities
- Prioritize the challenges and identify possible next steps
- Respond to questionnaire about your organization

**Welcome/ Introductions ..... 1:00 pm**

**Define ways that small MPOs differ from larger MPOs ..... 1:15 pm**

**Describe how these differences translate into challenges/ obstacles for planners serving small communities ..... 2:15 pm**

**Consensus building and next steps ..... 3:15 pm**

**Conclude ..... 4:00 pm**

## Background

Today's peer exchange is part of a larger NCHRP project entitled "Small Community Research and Peer Exchange." The project has three main activities: 1) a review of the literature for case studies and related materials specifically related to smaller communities; 2) a survey of transportation planning professionals serving smaller communities (population range 50,000 to 200,000); and 3) a peer exchange to discuss initial findings, identify and discuss other potential topics for future study, and discuss mechanisms that can be used to share information with other small MPOs.

A viewpoint repeated in several documents reviewed for this project is that "research and products should be sensitive to variations in the sizes of the MPO audience. For example, while Transportation Management Area and small urban MPOs may face similar issues in their decision making and other processes, the mechanism for addressing those issues may be very different and occur in very different environments."<sup>1</sup> Acknowledging this view, today's exchange seeks to identify processes, tools and data that will enhance the ability of MPOs serving small communities to fulfill their mission to effectively and efficiently meet the transportation planning needs of the public.

## Objectives of Today's Peer Exchange

Using the results of the survey and summary of case study recommendations as a starting point for discussions, the objectives of this afternoon's peer exchange are:

- to articulate how planning in smaller communities differs from planning in larger communities;
- to identify knowledge gaps or the need for technical tools appropriate for planning at a small community scale,
- to suggest projects or topics for future research,
- to identify mechanisms for sharing information with and among MPOs serving small communities, and
- to suggest next steps.

The agenda for today's exchange outlines our approach to addressing these points in the discussion.

## Participant Questionnaire

Please take a few minutes to answer a few questions specific to your own organization. Please return to Maggie Walsh or Toni Horst during a break or at the end of the day.

**Name:**

**Organization:**

**What are the most important transportation planning issues facing your community?**

**What transportation activities utilize the largest share of your organization's resources?**

**What are the most important successes that your organization has achieved to date?  
What factors contributed to the success?**

**What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces as part of the transportation planning process? Of those, are there some that are related to the size of your community, that is, these impediments would not be an issue if you were a larger organization serving a larger community?**

**How does your staff learn about new or existing planning requirements and how to address them? About new tools or data resources?**

**Other thoughts/comments/suggestions?**

## Case Study Lessons Learned/Gaps Identified

As part of the broader project effort, the consultant team has been reviewing case studies and related literature for “lessons learned” and recommendations that directly address the challenges of transportation planners who serve small communities. The following is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather to be illustrative of themes that are repeated in the literature. These are selected as a starting point in thinking about today’s exchange and are not intended to influence the discussion.

- **There is evidence of threshold issues for planners** such as rural areas crossing the threshold to an urbanized area and smaller MPOs crossing the threshold of 200,000 population and successfully evolving to address different requirements. For example, one study concluded there was a gap in the planning process for rural communities near rapidly growing urbanized areas and new urban centers as local officials are sometimes unaware of the requirements for metropolitan planning to qualify for urban area funding after designation as an urbanized area.
- **Collaboration with other agencies/organizations is a repeated theme.** Often partnerships are raised in the context of securing technical support such as GIS or travel demand modeling services. A different perspective on partnerships argued that MPO planners may find it difficult to adequately guide the planning process, particularly when the MPO is not the lead agency for a project. A potential solution suggested for this issue is for the MPO to co-host planning events with other agencies. Such an approach leverages resources, builds partnerships, and increases both the MPO’s involvement in the planning process and its visibility to the public.
- **For many small communities there is also a desire to supplement the more traditional analytical techniques** with a more community centered planning approach. Some research suggests that population alone is not the best predictor of the appropriate analysis tool, local issues and goals should also be considered. Another finding is that planning tools such as travel demand models can be scaled to the size of the community. Less complex models require less time to develop, are less cost intensive, and can be developed by staff members whose workload will not allow for full time model development.
- **The TIP / LRP process creates challenges across a number of dimensions.** For example, a challenge faced by smaller MPOs is dealing with changes to the TIP / LRP and keeping it current, often in response to a State adding or removing projects. A related concern is validity of cost information for projects in the TIP or LRP that carry forward across planning cycles without an adjustment to the project cost.
- **Data and related issues are raised in a number of contexts.** One study recommended separating TMA from non-TMA data to make it easier for new and smaller MPOs to find the information relevant to them on FHWA and similar sites. A related suggestion was for State DOT’s to compile a comprehensive list of studies and plans and make them available through its website so that MPOs could determine what data is available. The availability and sufficiency of third party freight and land use data is a concern for many communities. Many studies find that a logical role for an MPO is to serve as a central repository for data collected from various sources.