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AMPO Technical Projects Are Addressing Critical Planning Issues

By Rich Denbow, Denbow Associates



management and operations, ITS, transit planning, transportation safety and security, and land use.

AMPO formed a **Travel Modeling Subcommittee** in early 2002 to promote understanding among technical MPO staff regarding the travel forecasting methods presently being implemented at MPOs and to identify high priority research and development needs. The Subcommittee provides a forum in which modeling improvements under development by research agencies or individual MPOs can be shared with MPOs around the country, with the goal of incorporating improvements into standard MPO practice. Ron Milone of the Washington, DC MPO chairs the Subcommittee.

The Subcommittee met in March 2003 at the offices of the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council in St. Louis, Missouri. Participants discussed methodologies for estimating highway speeds and VMT by time period, modeling truck travel, microsimulation, applying HPMS data, the MOBILE6 emission factor model, and travel modeling for conformity.

The next Travel Modeling Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for September 29-30th, 2003 at the North Central Texas Council of Government's offices in Dallas. The group will focus on integrating travel modeling and land use.

AMPO's **Air Quality Subcommittee** builds capacity for MPOs to meet the modeling challenges involved in integrating transportation and air quality planning. This Subcommittee, which is chaired by Harold Brazil of MTC in Oakland, CA, first met in March 2003 on the heels of the Travel Modeling Subcommittee meeting. The group picked up on the topics discussed at the Travel Modeling meeting and expanded upon the discussion of vehicle speeds and HPMS data and their importance to the conformity process, as well as MOBILE6 implementation. The Subcommittee convened in July 2003 to review EPA's proposed implementation plan for the 8-hour ozone standard and possible effects the rule would have on transportation planning.

The next Air Quality Subcommittee will take

place on October 15-16th, 2003 at the office of CATS in Chicago. The group will discuss EPA's conformity rule that is expected to be proposed soon, planning for the new fine particulate emission standard, TCM substitution, and additional MOBILE6 issues.

AMPO's new **Transit Development Subcommittee** was formed in partnership with FTA to focus on best practices for integrating transit in MPO planning. The Subcommittee is comprised of transit planning staff from seven MPOs and their counterparts from transit agencies in their metro areas. Bruce Turner from the Las Vegas Regional Transportation Commission chairs this Subcommittee. One of the Subcommittee's products will be a series of best practice reports on how MPOs and transit agencies are working to incorporate transit into the metropolitan planning process and vice versa. The MPOs are expected to present findings at future AMPO conferences.

AMPO recently kicked off a project with FTA titled **Developing Safety & Security in Planning**. Its goal is to improve the process of bringing safety and security into the metropolitan planning process, as well as bring planning into the safety process. Under this project, AMPO will develop an inventory of current MPO safety and security planning practices and convene a group of innovative practitioners to help FTA, FHWA, and AMPO identify needs in this area and focus resources. A key component of this project is development of an **Incentive Grant Program**. AMPO will select up to five MPOs to receive grants in the range of \$25,000 to \$60,000 to bolster security and safety planning efforts and develop case studies of the processes they follow. MPOs will be required to provide a 100% match. AMPO will compile all good practices identified under this project and present findings to the transportation community.

AMPO has two **management and operations** (M&O) projects focused on the metropolitan transportation system. In conjunction with the Institute of Transportation Engineers, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), and the American Public Works Association (APWA), AMPO is working on an **Operations Outreach Plan**. It focuses on how MPOs, transit systems, and city/county public works departments can better coordinate to ensure that the management and operations dialogue occurs early in the planning and implementation of transportation systems. A series of best practices workshops are being held to bring together a multi-disciplinary approach to M&O planning. The workshops place emphasis on the interface between "Infostructure" and the design stages - for example, curbing, signal prioritization, bus stop placement and traveler information - for more effective M&O. The first workshop took place at APTA's Bus Conference in May.

The second will take place at APTA's annual conference. AMPO will host the third at its annual conference in October. APWA is planning a web seminar for their members. AMPO will produce a final report to capture the findings of these workshops.

The second M&O project is AMPO's Newsletter, titled **Metropolitan Transportation Management & Operations: ITS**. This quarterly newsletter focuses on MPO practices in ITS planning and M&O. Recent issues have reported on traffic signal coordination at the Mid-America Regional Council in Kansas City, MO, aerial surveys and use of satellite navigation systems at the Washington, DC MPO, transportation system performance measures at MTC in Oakland, CA, speed collection at the Baltimore MPO, and many more exciting ITS-related activities. Past editions can be seen at AMPO's website (www.ampo.org).

AMPO, with the **Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) and FTA**, has developed a survey of MPOs concerning their involvement in coordinated human services transportation. The results (which will be available soon at http://www.ampo.org/survey_results.html) should shed light on how MPOs are dealing with transportation disadvantaged populations, such as seniors and persons with disabilities. In addition, AMPO, CTAA and FTA hope to use the results to identify a set of notable, innovative practices.

Through these projects, AMPO and MPOs across the country are building their technical skills and knowledge in these areas to improve their planning processes.



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SURVEY SAYS: MPOs AGAINST PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF TIP

By Michael Montag, Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

A July AMPO survey of all MPOs received 115 responses and clearly shows that the majority is against the treatment of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and plan in the Administration's TEA-21 reauthorization proposal, SAFETEA.

The proposal changes the "long-range plan" to the "plan," eliminates the TIP as a stand-alone document and extends the maximum update cycle from three to five years. The USDOT SAFETEA fact sheet on transportation planning states that the "Governor need only approve the first 5 years of the plan; and the first five years of the plan become the focal point for project programming."

According to the US Department of Transportation, a benefit of the proposal is to reduce the administrative and technical effort involved with the current two-year TIP cycle, three-year plan cycle (five-year in attainment areas), and the associated air quality conformity determinations in non-attainment areas. While 85 percent of responding MPOs in non-

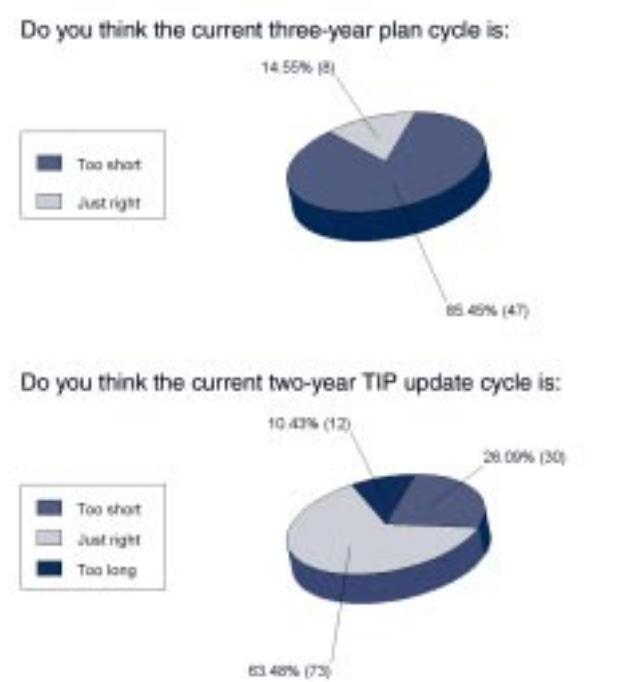
attainment and maintenance areas agree that the three-year plan update cycle is too short, 63 percent of all respondents like the current length of the TIP cycle and 77 percent want to see the TIP remain as a stand-alone document. 69 percent believe that the new version of the plan – with a maximum update cycle of five years – would not adequately serve the current purposes of the TIP.

The results are robust across all types of MPOs, though MPOs representing populations under 200,000 are slightly more likely to be in favor of the proposal. Because they currently have insufficient staff and other resources to undertake meaningful updates, many smaller MPOs would like to see the update cycles lengthened.

A major concern MPOs are voicing about the SAFETEA proposal is that it can be interpreted as not requiring fiscal constraint for the first five years of the plan. AMPO has addressed this issue with USDOT, which maintains that because it would become the first five years of the transportation plan and because the STIP, which has explicit language on fiscal constraint, includes projects from the first five years of the metropolitan plan, the TIP would continue to be fiscally constrained. USDOT staff, however, does support adding additional language to clarify that the first five years of the plan must be fiscally constrained.

Another potentially problematic aspect of the proposal is that it remains unclear whether amending the projects in the first five years of the plan would open for criticism the remaining fifteen years. This would leave MPOs vulnerable to frivolous challenges and unnecessarily disrupt the planning process.

While the fate of SAFETEA and its proposed changes to current law remains uncertain, rest assured there will be a detailed airing of our concerns when Congress undertakes a final reauthorization bill.



MPOs Win Funding Awards for Peer Reviews

Four MPOs and a State DOT recently won Travel Model Improvement Program (TMIP) funding to support peer reviews.

The winning agencies are:

Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI), (Cincinnati Area MPO), Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), (Atlanta, GA Area MPO), Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)(Los Angeles, CA Area MPO), Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), (Denver Area MPO), and North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Peer reviews are conducted by planning agencies to ensure that technical products, procedures and/or processes being used or developed meet an agency's needs, the standards of professional practice, and/or Federal, state or local planning requirements. Peer reviews of forecasting and data collection procedures are crucial to planning agency model development and improvement efforts. As part of its program, TMIP is committed to assisting agencies in meeting these planning challenges by supporting peer reviews.

Applying agencies requested peer reviews for a wide variety of data collection and travel modeling issues including transportation and land use interaction, time-of-day modeling, and model validation. Some agencies also requested assistance in documenting their peer review or selecting potential peer review panel members.

Other possible topics that could qualify for peer review awards include: designing and implementing a travel survey; other data collection, integration and/or analysis; specific travel demand forecasting improvements; land use forecasting methods; conformity and air quality analyses; and meeting transit new starts criteria.

The solicitation for the first year of the Peer Review Program was released on April 10, with first round proposals due on May 30. Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis, and TMIP is looking forward to receiving them; however, selection and funding will be based on satisfaction of the selection criteria and the availability of funds.

The peer review selection criteria gives preference to planning agencies with a commitment to model improvement; innovative proposed procedures coupled with agency commitment to implement them; and peer reviews that are sought at the model specification/design phase (as opposed to a finished product).

For more info, read the application package on the TMIP Website: <http://tmip.fhwa.dot.gov> or contact Michael Culp by email at michael.culp@fhwa.dot.gov.

Metro Vision and the Mile High Compact

By Guillermo V. Vidal, Denver Regional Council of Governments



Metro Vision 2020 is a new way of doing business for the Denver region.

The long-range growth plan focuses on smart growth and on providing a variety of living and transportation choices for residents. Work to develop the plan in the early and mid-'90s spurred the Denver Regional Council of Governments to integrate its land use and transportation planning efforts well before the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century required it.

Metro Vision's six core elements were defined through an alternatives analysis and visioning effort to avoid basing the plan on trends.

- The plan's multimodal transportation element includes rapid transit, a bus network, regional beltways, bike and pedestrian facilities, and improvements to the existing system. The primary goal is to provide mobility and accessibility that complements the region's physical, social and economic development. The extensive fixed-guideway transit and bus transit system included in Metro Vision is critical to achieving the compact form expected by 2020.
- The urban growth area element defines where growth will be supported. The Metro Vision goal is to increase density by 10 percent over the next 20 years to reduce sprawl, prevent the unnecessary extension of infrastructure, reduce regional vehicle travel, maintain air quality standards, help preserve open space and continue to offer a variety of living opportunities.
- The urban centers element encourages people to live, work and play within the same area. These urban centers include a range of activity centers that serve as transit destinations; support retail, employment and housing; contain higher densities than the regional average; and encourage pedestrian-oriented travel. Examples include the region's Lower Downtown, Lowry Air Force Base redevelopment project, Englewood City Center and Denver central business district. They are pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use locations of high activity, providing a range of retail, business, civic, cultural and residential opportunities for their surrounding trade areas. The Denver Central Business District is recognized in Metro Vision as the region's most dense, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented center. Expected to remain so through 2020, the region has supported this goal by locating all the major sports venues, state and federal offices, cultural facilities and convention center in the downtown core.
- The regional open space element helps to shape the region's form, protect environmental resources and provide recreational opportunities. The supporting Regional Open Space Plan defines a variety of open space functions, including parks, public spaces and urban edges. The region's natural greenways are identified and policies for protection adopted. As the region continues to develop, it's increasingly important to identify and protect this valuable asset and to maintain the area's well-known quality of life.
- Environmental quality. The location and type of growth and land development significantly affect the region's air and water. Water quality is addressed through the region's Clean Water Plan, an integrated watershed approach to protecting water quality. Air quality is linked with population growth, travel behavior and technology improvements. Metro Vision reflects desired development and transportation pat-

terns coordinated with the State Implementation Plan prepared by the Regional Air Quality Council to help curb air pollution increases.

- Freestanding communities are physically separate from the core urban area. In the Denver region, these communities are Boulder, Brighton, Castle Rock and Longmont. The goal is to keep them as separate communities with their own housing and employment opportunities, and internal transportation systems. These communities want to retain their visual and physical separation and strive to meet the employment, service and facility needs of new residents.

Almost unique among regional plans, Metro Vision also includes a regional aesthetics principle, which encourages communities to recognize the region's natural characteristics and reinforce its unique setting and lifestyle through design standards.

Since Metro Vision's adoption, all of the region's communities are using the urban growth boundary in their planning. Many have adopted it as part of their comprehensive plans; others have recognized its special role through resolutions of support or by signing the Mile High Compact, a landmark intergovernmental agreement that legally binds communities together to responsibly develop their communities and the region. Some developers are checking on the boundary before initiating new projects.

The multimodal aspects of the transportation element are being implemented. Two light-rail lines are now open and a third is under construction. A public vote to accelerate construction of all other lines is being targeted for November 2004. Metro Vision principles and criteria are used to help prioritize funding for transportation facilities.

Between 1995 and 2000, the Denver region preserved an additional 100 square miles of open space. Through the actions of many jurisdictions, more wildlife habitat, prime agricultural lands, new recreation areas and improved community buffers were protected. While this met the minimum goal of the Metro Vision Regional Open Space Element, the region continues to identify open space opportunities for protection. In addition, 30 percent of the region's 1990-2000 growth was infill, a good first step toward reaching Metro Vision density goals.

A complaint about Metro Vision 2020 is the fact that it needs teeth. The council of governments is a voluntary association of 50 local governments in the greater Denver area. There has been concern that a voluntary and flexible plan will not respond to growth. That's where the Mile High Compact comes in.

In signing the Mile High Compact, local governments commit to making their comprehensive plans consistent with Metro Vision, making their zoning and other development regulations consistent with their comprehensive plans, and working with their neighbors to achieve a common future. Jurisdictions representing nearly 80 percent of the metro Denver region's population have signed the Mile High Compact, committing themselves to work with their neighbors to plan and develop their communities together. The compact is the first of its kind in the region and in the nation. It is also an example of how local governments can come together on regional solutions without being required to do so through legislation or citizen initiatives.

Metro Vision recognizes that planning is a process and a mindset, and not just a document. An update of Metro Vision is under way that includes refining the core elements and adding incentives. The region's local governments are committed to making Metro Vision a reality, and not just a vision.

National Public Education Campaign Launches Fall Theme Program

By Kathy Daniel, It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air Program

A national public education campaign to improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion has added new resources focused on fall themes.

The It All Adds Up To Cleaner Air initiative – cosponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – now has available fall-specific public education materials.

The fall themes encourage people to keep three simple steps in mind when they're considering environmentally-friendly modes of transportation: take mass transit, ride your bike or walk instead of driving, and ride-share or carpool. The goal of the initiative is to raise public awareness that by making a few small changes in our travel choices we can have less traffic congestion and cleaner air this fall.

New promotional materials include:

- Flash animation that combines music, pictures and text to highlight the fall-program messages, plus instructions on how to link to it from your Web site
- Six print ads that link alternate modes of transportation with the fall theme
- Twelve outdoor and transit ads focusing on the fall messages
- Three radio scripts that link alternate modes of transportation with the fall theme
- A flyer with the fall tips
- An online quiz focused on the fall tips, plus instructions on how to add it to your Web site
- A sample press release that a community could use to announce its participation in the fall theme program
- Event/activity suggestions for promoting the fall tips

- "DJ Dialogue" suggestions designed to stimulate fun conversation about carpooling between radio DJ's and their listeners

As a member of the Alliance for Clean Air and Transportation, AMPO is participating in the initiative; so keep an eye out for the messages in our outreach materials this fall. For more information on AMPO's public education efforts, contact Delania Hardy at dhardy@ampo.org. The new seasonal information is available for download at www.italladdsup.gov/community_partners/seasonal.html.

Sample Outdoor & Transit Ad for the It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air Program



MEMBERSHIP SECTION

Here is a listing of our newest Members for 2003. Thank you for your support, and thank you to our existing members for their continuing support. For information about membership or questions regarding your current membership, contact Nicole Waldheim by phone at 202-296-7051 or by email, nwaldheim@ampo.org

MPO MEMBERS

Cascades West Council of Governments
Clarksville-Montgomery County RPC
Danville Area Transportation Study (DATS)
DeKalb-Sycamore Area Transportation Study
Georgia Regional Transportation Authority
Hot Springs AR MPO
Kokomo/Howard County Governmental Coordinating Council
Lee-Russell COG
Leesburg-Eustis FL MPO
Longview MPO
Martin County MPO
Rocky Mount Urban Area MPO
Skagit Council of Governments
Wasatch Front Regional Council
Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council
Wichita Falls MPO
Wood-Washington-Wirt Interstate PC

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development
DBR & Associates
Denbow Associates
Street Smarts

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Econolite Control Products, Inc.
HDR Engineering, Inc.
MasTec North America, Inc. ITS/Telecom Group

MPO Member Highlights

Compiled by Rich Denbow, Denbow Associates

METROPLAN ORLANDO's "first of its kind" Freight, Goods and Services Mobility Strategy Plan for the Orlando, Florida metropolitan area has received a 2002 Engineering Excellence Award from the Consulting Engineers of South Carolina (CESC). Engineering Excellence is an annual design competition sponsored by the American Council of Engineering Companies that recognizes outstanding engineering achievements. The study developed short-term solutions and a long-term strategy plan for freight, goods and services movement in Central Florida. The award is testament to the hard work of METROPLAN ORLANDO staff, the Freight Mobility

Continued below



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Upcoming Events

JANUARY 22-24, 2004

3rd Annual New Partners for Smart Growth: Building Safe, Healthy and Livable Communities,
Hilton Portland & Executive Tower Hotel,
Portland, Oregon

The 2004 national, multi-disciplinary event will build on the tremendous success of both the first and second annual New Partners for Smart Growth conferences, held January 2002 in San Diego and 2003 in New Orleans. A lot of progress has been made in the last year and this conference will provide the venue to showcase it! The program will feature cutting-edge smart growth issues, the latest research, implementation tools and strategies, successful case studies, new partners, new projects and new policies. Join us to catch up with what's new in Smart Growth!

www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/SmartGrowth/

MARCH 28-31, 2004

17th Annual Geographic Information Systems for Transportation Symposium (GIS-T 2004)
Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center. Rapid City,
South Dakota

Organized annually by the AASHTO GIS-T Task Force, the symposium provides a forum for transportation professionals from state, federal, municipal, provincial, and private sectors to foster relationships with other GIS-T managers and professionals. In addition to concurrent technical sessions, the Symposium features keynote presentations, map displays, a poster session, 8 pre-conference workshops, and an exhibit hall that has been sold out for the past several years.

Contact: Diane Pierzinski, Steering Committee Chair,
Phone: (916) 654-3379, E-mail diane.pierzinski@dot.ca.gov,

Website: <http://www.gis-t.org>

Working Group of industry officials, and the engineering expertise provided by the consultant, Wilbur Smith Associates.

Under a legislative mandate to improve regional transit services and decision-making, the San Diego Association of Governments and its board have assumed project planning, budgeting, policy making, and long-term planning for transit in the metro area. The first phase, which went into effect in July, shifts authority for development of projects and services and funding to SANDAG. The second phase includes project design engineering and construction, which will take place later in 2003. The goal of this move is to create a stronger connection between transit planning and decision making regarding highways, land use, development and infrastructure.

The Puget Sound Regional Council in Seattle, WA was awarded the 2003 Outstanding Planning Award for Destination 2030, the metro area's long-range transportation plan. This is the American Planning Association's (APA) top planning award. The APA called Destination 2030 "an innovative plan for the future of Puget Sound transportation, and a model for other regions."

The Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO in Virginia is one of only a handful of MPOs across the country to win a Walkable Community Workshops grant. The grant is helping the MPO create more walkable communities, thus turning Charlottesville and surrounding communities into more pedestrian-friendly places that encourage physical activity. The Walkable Community Workshops grants are based on a pilot program organized by the USDOT, issued by the National Center for Bicycling and Walking (NCBW), and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The MPO held several workshops in the spring that involved nationally acclaimed experts and local agency staff. The exercises were "feet-on" and participants walked through a variety of neighborhoods and developments.