

TEA-3

AMPO opened its 10th Annual Conference in Atlanta by addressing reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), AMPO's primary focus for the

next two years. Therese McMillan, MTC's Deputy Director for Policy, began the session by reflecting on the tragic events of September 2001. She speculated that inevitably the transportation industry overall would be greatly impacted and offered some thoughtful observations:

- Even with the growing transfer of decision making authority to state, regional and local levels, federal transportation policy will continue to be essential, especially that related to system connectivity—as was clearly demonstrated in the mobilization required to respond to the September 11th emergency. The benefits of local choice and decision making must be preserved as we enter reauthorization, including protection of the hard won “firewalls” established for the Highway Trust Fund. However, we may need to consider a new model of local control balanced with investment decisions that advance national transportation interests.
- The complexity of our metropolitan environment demands continued flexibility afforded to MPOs in ISTEA and TEA-21. Such flexibility supports a robust system that was able to respond admirably under circumstances where one key element—the airline sector—was severely compromised.
- Transportation will continue to face competing and often conflicting demands. National security will be added inevitably to a growing palate that attempts to balance environmental issues including

clean air mandates; social justice concerns of “fair” access to transportation benefits; and the ever-increasing tensions of maximizing mobility with a minimum of community disruption. The capacity to effectively balance these issues will be a major concern for MPOs approaching TEA-21 reauthorization.

Ms. McMillan concluded her remarks by urging that metropolitan areas maintain their focus and identity as representatives of the urban residents and job centers, while building on essential partnerships with American Public Transportation Association (APTA), American Association of State Highway and Transportation Organizations (AASHTO), advocacy interests and local, state and federal officials to define a national transportation agenda that serves the diversity of the nation's institutions and its people.

Amy Bilsky, representing Congressman Isakson (GA), reinforced the importance of transportation on the national agenda, and the need to forge a bi-partisan coalition during reauthorization.

Paul Mullins, Georgia DOT, spoke on behalf of AASHTO. Mr. Mullins said AASHTO is coordinating a response for state Departments of Transportation throughout the country. Additionally, AASHTO welcomes input from AMPO members to several emerging position papers. Fundamentally, AASHTO aims to build on the successes of TEA-21, especially the increased funding levels and firewalls that ensured a stable base of transportation investment. They see the need, however, for increased investment as highways and transit both appear not to be keeping pace with needs. A recent survey suggests that spending required to adequately maintain highways and bridges is lagging behind current spending levels by 16% for highways and 42% for transit. The US would need to spend 92% and 110% over existing levels for highways and transit, respectively, to adequately improve existing conditions.

AASHTO recognizes emerging issues of particular import to metro areas, including livable communities and addressing environmental justice concerns. The states are concerned that financial, inter-jurisdictional, program delivery and research issues are dealt with as well as the basic charges of providing and main-

taining a safe and reliable transportation system. Mr. Mullins outlined details under each of these categories, which will be the basis of AASHTO reauthorization policy papers targeted for release in April 2002. Ending his remarks, he encouraged fostering a partnership between AASHTO and AMPO in developing advocacy areas of common interest.

Mr. Rich Weaver spoke on behalf of APTA. APTA represents a broad constituency, from small rural providers to large urban transit systems. The association wants a “level playing field” for transit in multi-modal planning. The transit industry will share and support certain objectives with AASHTO, AMPO and other groups—such as environmental streamlining—as long as environmental protections are maintained. Mr. Weaver pointed out some distinct areas of concern, such as transit representation on MPO boards and reconsideration of the Major Investment Study (MIS) as a core transportation planning requirement. The transit/land use connection may well appear as a central APTA issue for reauthorization, as would a focus on the structure and provisions of “New Starts” funding.

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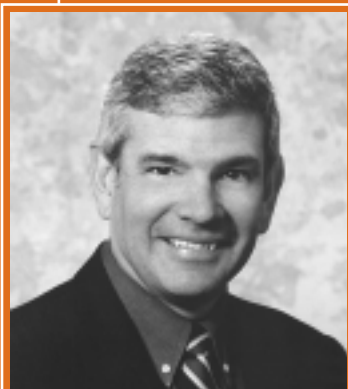
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Mayor Ronald Bates, Ph.D., Elected AMPO President

AMPO members elected Ronald R. Bates, Mayor of Los Alamitos, California, to be their new President. Mayor Bates has served on the Los Alamitos City Council since 1988. He has been President of the Southern

California Association of Governments, the MPO for the Southern California region. He also serves on the National League of Cities Finance, Administration, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee, and is a former President of the League of California Cities. He previously served as City Manager in Buena Park, Assistant City Manager in Anaheim, and Assistant Director of the Orange County General Services Agency. Mayor Bates holds a Ph.D. in Public Administration from the University of Southern California and manages his own financial consulting business.

Letter from the Director



Dear AMPO Members and Colleagues,

Welcome to the premiere issue of *Metros*, a newsletter of interest to metropolitan planning organizations and their partners interested in planning for vibrant, healthy metropolitan regions. In this first issue we report on AMPO's 10th Annual Conference, held in September 2001 in Atlanta Georgia.

Our conference exceeded previous conference attendance by 30%. Sessions highlighted key MPO issues critical to re-authorization of federal transportation legislation. In these pages you'll find an overview of these highlights.

The session inspired dialogue on AMPO's draft "TEA-3" positions and led to the AMPO Board's adoption of a draft policy position paper for re-authorization, a policy position paper on the role of MPOs in transportation management and operations, and a new AMPO budget and work program for the coming year.

At the General Membership meeting, AMPO members overwhelmingly endorsed maintaining AMPO as the principal advocacy group for MPOs and affirmed that AMPO is a vigorous, independent advocate for MPO interests, providing full technical services to members.

AMPO would like to once again thank our gracious conference host, the Atlanta Regional Commission, for their hard work in assisting with planning and staffing the conference, and for sharing the initiatives they have undertaken to meet the challenge of coordinated transportation, land use and air quality planning.

Once again, welcome to *Metros*. Please contact us at AMPO if we may help you with your ideas and concerns regarding metropolitan transportation planning activities.

Alex Taft
Executive Director

Legal Cases — Are We Still in Court on Air Quality Issues?

David A. Pampu, who recently retired from the Denver Regional Council of Governments, moderated this session that addressed the air quality challenges facing MPOs, particularly those in areas of rapid



growth. The passage of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 exposed metropolitan planning organizations in air quality "non-attainment" areas to the possibility of litigation. MPOs transportation conformity methodologies, assumptions and findings could be challenged in court. With over ten years of experience, where are we on conformity litigation? To address this issue, David M. Williamson of the Washington law firm of Beveridge and Diamond provided a national overview of current transportation conformity lawsuits.

Mr. Williamson noted that there appears to be a nationwide strategy by environmental groups to litigate the conformity process. The lawsuits fall into two general categories, suits against EPA challenging emissions budgets or approval deadlines, and suits against MPOs, state DOTs and FHWA/FTA challenging the transportation plan, TIP or individual project approvals. Shelley Whitworth of the Houston-Galveston Area Council and Ron Kirby of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments were respondents, summarizing the air quality issues and experiences in their respective regions.



Linking Transportation Planning and Operations

John Mason, Mayor of Fairfax City, Virginia and Chair

of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board in Washington, DC, moderated a panel discussion of MPO planning roles in management and operations (M&O). He began the discussion with an overview of M&O, emphasizing transportation planning aspects. M&O can be defined as maximizing performance of existing infrastructure through regional deployment of operational strategies and monitoring customers' responses to the services. Planning for M&O is done at a different stage, and by different agencies, than capital planning. It is often a collection of unconnected activities.

M&O is increasingly becoming an important strategy for solving the nation's transportation problems. Surveys often show that the public wants better operations before new capacity is introduced. In areas where

new capacity is not physically possible, M&O may be the only option for improvement. It may be less expensive than increasing capacity to alleviate congestion.

Mayor Mason stated that MPOs always have been involved in M&O, through planning for ITS, conducting transportation system management and travel demand management programs, and developing congestion management systems. AMPO adopted a policy to encourage MPO involvement in M&O.

AMPO has been actively involved in the National Operations Dialogue, sponsored by U.S. DOT and the Institute of Transportation Engineers. Over the course of 2001, AMPO held a series of focus groups with its members to consider the appropriate role of MPOs in M&O. This effort produced a draft report that presents a range of roles that MPOs can and do play in M&O planning, and recommends a preferred role for MPOs. Mayor Mason summarized the range of roles for MPOs in planning for operations: 1) Traditional MPO role; 2) Convener of meetings to plan M&O improvements; 3) Champion of Plans to improve M&O; 4) Developer of metropolitan-level M&O plans; and 5) M&O system operators. Later in the conference program, the AMPO Board of Directors accepted the report, which ultimately recommends that TEA-21 re-authorization legislation establish an ideal role for all MPOs to be the developer of metropolitan-level operations plans and projects. This role could only be fulfilled by all MPOs if adequate planning funds were available to undertake the role. MPOs would actively work with other agencies to develop specific metropolitan-level operations plans and projects, and would be responsible for developing an all-encompassing metropolitan level M&O plan.

Three panelists provided an overview of M&O activities at their MPOs. Michael Morris, Transportation Director of the North Central Texas Council of Governments in Dallas, presented operations activities underway in his region in terms of plans, programs, policies, projects, and performance measures, providing examples of each. NCTCOG spends \$30 million per year on operations activities and about \$8 million per year on planning and project development.

Steve Heminger, Director of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in the San Francisco Bay area, followed. Mr. Heminger said that advantages of MPO involvement in M&O are that the right partners are already at the table, the geographic fit allows a regional view, MPO procurement options are often unavailable to traditional operators, and no other agency may be prepared to lead the M&O planning function. MPOs don't own parts of the system — ownership is distributed among many different agencies and this is a disadvantage. A conflict can exist between the MPO's role as a planner/allocator of funding and a competitor for operations funding.

Alan Bridwell, Director of the Johnson City MPO in Tennessee, was the final presenter. Although Johnson City is a relatively small community, Mr. Bridwell reported that the region is developing a strong traffic management system. The program includes an automated parking management system, a citywide traffic signal system, a traffic management center, and incident management services. Future elements will include automatic vehicle location systems for transit and traveler information. The MPO staff and regional leadership recognize that a focus on management of the system will provide substantial improvements to transportation problems without adding additional traffic lanes.



Land-Use/Transportation — What are the MPO Success Stories?

In this session, Juanita Wieczorek, Executive Director of the Dover-Kent MPO, moderated a panel of five MPO representatives who discussed innovative activities underway to address the linkages between transportation planning and land use. Rich Denbow presented on behalf of AMPO an overview of a partnership between AMPO, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and six volunteer MPOs. This project, titled “Institutionalizing Smart Growth Principles into the Metropolitan Planning Process,” is designed to provide technical and policy assistance to the volunteer MPOs addressing smart growth activities in their planning programs. EPA and FHWA supply technical experts to work directly with the MPOs to provide tools, guidelines, national experiences, and policy advice.

Hannah Twadell, formerly the transportation director at the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO in Virginia, provided an update of the Eastern Planning Initiative (EPI) underway in her region. The EPI is a regional land-use/transportation study that involves an integrated CorPlan model and a regional 50-year vision.

Three questions guide the EPI: Where will we live? How will we live? And how will we get there?

Ms. Twadell said model results showed that clustered, pedestrian-oriented community types generated over 10 percent more pedestrian trips than dispersed development patterns, showed fewer vehicle person trips, a 20 percent reduction in total vehicle miles traveled and a 30 percent improvement in travel delay. The transportation infrastructure costs of the clustered development type are only half of the \$1 billion cost of dispersed growth.

Rob LeBeau of the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) talked about ARC’s Livable Centers Initiative (LCI), a program designed to encourage increased residential development, mixed-uses and connectivity in centers throughout the Atlanta area. Under LCI, ARC provides funding to member governments for investment studies and transportation projects located in activity and town centers. The ARC Board approved an

allocation of \$5 million over five years to fund LCI studies, which are awarded on a competitive basis. The ARC Board also approved an allocation of \$350 million for priority funding of transportation projects resulting from LCI studies. Mr. LeBeau reported that ARC funded twenty-two planning studies in the first two years of the LCI program, which resulted in thousands of hours dedicated to smart growth planning that involved hundreds of citizens and numerous elected officials. The press responded positively.

Paige Perkins of the City of Chamblee, Georgia spoke next. Chamblee was a recipient of a \$40,000 LCI study award to consider opportunities for transit-oriented development at a MARTA rail station in the city. The study produced a master plan that identified almost \$6 million in transportation improvements, including sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, street furniture, bike and pedestrian lanes, and intersection improvements. Using the design standards and development orientations outlined in the LCI study, the Chamblee City Council voted to create the MidCity District, which will have performance-based zoning, with no maximum density requirements, parking maximums, and zero-lot lines.

Andrew Cotugno of Metro in Portland, Oregon, closed the session with an overview of Metro’s land use program. Metro’s reputation of linking transportation and land use planning to maintain livability is known throughout the nation. Metro is responsible for maintenance and administration of the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) in the Portland area. The UGB marks the separation between rural and urban land. It is intended to encompass an adequate supply of buildable land that can be efficiently provided with urban services (such as roads, sewers, water lines and street lights) to accommodate the expected growth during a 20-year period. By providing land for urban uses within the boundary, rural lands are protected from urban sprawl. The Metro UGB, adopted in 1979, is approximately 369 square miles and includes 24 cities with about 1.3 million residents.

Oregon state law requires Metro add land to the UGB boundary if a need for more urban land is demon-

strated. Mr. Cotugno discussed the Metro 2040 Growth Concept, where and how much the UGB should be ultimately expanded, what ranges of density are estimated to accommodate projected growth within the boundary and which areas should be protected as open space. Fundamental to the Growth Concept is a multi-modal transportation system that assures mobility of people and goods throughout the region. By coordinating land-use and this transportation system, the region enjoys a relatively uncongested hub for trade.

RON KIRBY, WASHINGTON, DC MPO DIRECTOR, NAMED TO TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ronald Kirby, Director of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board in Washington, D.C., was named to the Executive Committee of the



Transportation Research Board (TRB), a unit of the National Academy of Sciences. The Executive Committee is composed of about 25 individuals from government, industry, and academia who are active in the areas of interest of TRB. The TRB conducts research and addresses a wide range of transportation policy and technical issues. The Executive Committee sets the policies and activities of the TRB.

LUNCHEON ADDRESS – THE REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Catherine Ross addressed the conference during lunch on Thursday. Dr. Ross is the Executive Director of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA). The Georgia General Assembly created this 15-member authority in 1999 and charged it with addressing air pollution, traffic congestion and development in the rapidly-growing metropolitan Atlanta area. The Assembly empowered GRTA to issue bonds and assist local governments in financing mass transit or other projects to alleviate air pollution. GRTA board approval is also required for transportation plans in the region, and for major developments such as large subdivisions or commercial buildings that affect the transportation system in metropolitan Atlanta. Dr. Ross gave a warm Atlanta welcome to the conference participants and provided an overview of the issues GRTA is currently addressing. She stated that contrary to what some may think, GRTA’s role is not to replace or overshadow the MPO in Atlanta, but rather to work together as partners to improve transportation planning in the region.

LUNCHEON SPEAKER – THE NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Linda Lawson, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy at the U.S. Department of Transportation, was the luncheon speaker on Friday. She extended greetings from Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, who was addressing the urgent needs created by the September 11 terrorist attacks. Ms. Lawson told the group that September 11th changed the world in many ways. One way, is the increased focus on transportation security. DOT is now dealing with security issues differently than before September 11, and increased resources will be necessary to maintain and enhance the safety of our transportation system. Ms. Lawson said that as DOT moves toward TEA-21 reauthorization, the Department recognizes the important role of MPOs in transportation.

Environmental Justice and Transportation Planning

Jim McKenzie, Executive Director of Metroplan in Little Rock, Arkansas, moderated a panel that addressed environmental justice from the perspective of transportation planning at MPOs. Mohamed Ismail, Director of Transportation at the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) in Columbus, Ohio, reviewed the detailed environmental justice analysis that MORPC undertook. FHWA cited MORPC’s efforts as a best practice for its quantitative analysis of the

impact of transportation investments on target populations in the mid-Ohio region. Mr. Ismail reviewed MORPC’s impressive results.

Dr. Howard Grant, formally a principal planner at the Atlanta Regional Council (ARC), in Atlanta, Georgia followed with a presentation how the Atlanta region involves the public in both their long-range and project-specific plans. He paid particular attention to techniques for outreach to all parts of the diverse Atlanta region.

Jim Bourey, Executive Director of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) in Phoenix, Arizona also emphasized his public involvement process. MAG incorporated environmental justice directly into the mission of the organization. The Phoenix area is rich in diversity and includes African American, Native American, and Hispanic populations as well as a sizable elderly/disabled population. Of particular note was MAG’s four-phase public involvement process. MAG staff paid close attention to formally reporting the public’s responses in each phase to elected officials in the region. The MPO hires part-time Outreach Associates from the various target populations to work on involvement in their constituencies.

As the moderator, Jim McKenzie interwove the evolution of environmental justice over the past decade with the Little Rock region’s experience with a “pre-environmental justice” issue involving transportation’s impact on school desegregation. He characterized FHWA’s successive responses as denial, awareness, over-reaction, and, finally, facilitation. Environmental justice is now defined on the front lines by MPO’s all around this nation with the assistance of FHWA and FTA.



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Aviation/Freight — Successful Roles of MPOs

Mayor Ron Bates, PhD, Los Alamitos, California, and AMPO President, moderated and presented on this panel that addressed MPO roles in aviation and freight planning. Mayor Bates, also a board member of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), said that the SCAG MPO conducts planning for the six-county area of Southern California, home to 16 million residents making it the largest MPO in the country. Over the next 25 years, the region projects population growth of 40%, which is the equivalent of adding two cities the size of Chicago to the area.

With such staggeringly huge growth figures, one must ask: Where will people live? Where will they work? And how does SCAG plan for these impacts? Projections show that much of the new job growth will occur primarily in the existing urbanized area, but housing growth is projected to occur east and north of those urbanized areas. What will the strain on the transportation system be like?

Given this strain, freight and aviation elements comprise an important component in the regional transportation plan. Some of the nation's most significant sea port facilities and six commercial airports make the LA region a vital commercial conduit for international commerce.

SCAG's MPO board approved the 1998 Regional Transportation Plan by only two votes, with part of the contention focused on aviation. To achieve consensus on the next plan update, the MPO initiated various task forces focused on goods movement, truck lanes, high-speed rail, and aviation, comprised of elected officials, industry professionals, and government officials. Aviation, for example, included representatives from airport management, airlines, air transportation associations, California DOT, the FAA and elected stakeholders from communities near airports. Recommendations were made to SCAG for possible inclusion into the Regional Transportation plan. After two years of effort by all these task forces, the MPO board adopted the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan in May of 2001.

SCAG used specialized models to forecast annual aircraft operations, air traveler automobile trips, and cargo trips from airports and seaports. Staff incorporated the results into transportation and environmental modeling for the regional plan. The resulting data was then used to determine where the region was going to address congestion, air quality, noise, economic, and environmental justice issues.

Rich Macias, Manager of Aviation and Environmental Planning at SCAG, discussed aviation planning in more detail. The MPO deals with aviation, he said, because aviation and other transportation modes impact each other. The significant forecasted growth in air cargo and passengers will impact congestion on highways and arterials, transit, air quality and environmental justice. He explained in more detail the three-year effort to reach consensus on the regional aviation plan that was part of the Regional Transportation Plan, how various aviation scenarios were developed and evaluated, and how SCAG is moving forward to implement the regional aviation plan. SCAG attempted to balance the economic and transportation needs of the urban core of the region with the growth and opportunity of the overall area. The adopted aviation plan provides the best balance of needs and provides a truly regional solution, which is why SCAG's MPO board adopted the new plan almost unanimously.

Closing out the panel, Mayor Bates talked about goods movement along the I-710 freeway, the major truck artery from the Port of Los Angeles and Port of Long Beach. Over 25% of all container traffic to and from the U.S. moves through the Gateway Cities sub-region of SCAG on rail, freeways, and major city streets. As a result, local communities are carrying a burden disproportionate to the local benefit. Gridlock along the I-710 corridor is estimated to occur by 2010, and would have significant national economic consequences. To address the issue, a major corridor study of I-710 is being conducted using a holistic approach that focuses on brownfields redevelopment, congestion relief, livability, air pollution, port access, goods movement, and economic recovery. A diverse group of stakeholders, including SCAG, the Port of Long Beach, 13 cities along the corridor, academics, the County, and the State, has come together to fund and guide the study. Solutions are expected to include infrastructure improvements, 24-hour port operations, and education of shippers and receivers to accept freight during off-peak hours.



MPO's and Transit Operators — Who Sits at the Table?

Les Sterman, Executive Director of the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council in St. Louis, moderated this panel of MPO representatives and transit operators from several cities including Atlanta, Chicago, Wilmington (Delaware), St. Louis and Washington, D.C. While experiences in each city were different, each was encouraging. The range of experiences in the post-ISTEA era indicates that transit operators are "at the table," particularly on technical committees, for more key decisions, and their role is usually meaningful. Working relationships between MPOs and transit agencies are typically quite cooperative, leading to funding and project decisions that would not have happened before ISTEA. However, transit agencies may not always have a seat at the table alongside elected officials on MPO boards where final transportation policy and funding allocation decisions are made. In some instances, transit agencies do not have "parity" with their counterpart highway agencies in their access to decision makers and to the planning process. Some general conclusions:

1. No two MPOs are alike and the structure of the relationship between MPOs and transit operators is similarly quite variable. Many good models exist for a productive relationship on both the technical and policy level.
2. The working relationship between MPOs and transit operators is generally productive at the staff level.
3. Transit operators are experiencing better outcomes from the MPO process as measured by funding allocation and project selection.
4. Transit operators generally desire more of a role on the MPO policy board.
5. MPOs would not favor a federally prescribed structure that would mandate a seat for transit operators, or any other implementing agency. Rather, the structure of MPO board should be largely a local decision to be made within broad federal guidelines.

Small MPO Caucus

Sixteen people representing eleven MPOs from nine states attended the Small MPO Caucus meeting during the conference. This caucus, chaired by Juanita Wiczoreck, Executive Director of the Dover-Kent MPO in Delaware, meets regularly to discuss issues relevant to the smaller urban areas across the country. They discussed the following items:

MPO PL FUNDING: Several members shared how their states split PL funds between the MPOs. For the majority, a base amount is allocated to each MPO with the remaining distributed using criteria such as population or air quality status. The group agreed that AMPO's TEA-3 position should continue to propose that each MPO receive a minimum of \$300,000.

NON-TMA BEST PRACTICES: A request was made to discover methods for making non-TMA MPOs more effective. We should seek assistance from citizens, policy board members, and the federal partners.

CENSUS DATA: The availability of census data from the internet was discussed at length. The CTPP internet address is www.fhwa.dot.gov/ctpp/about.htm. Dr. Lisa Beever of the Charlotte-Punta Gorda MPO offered her assistance via email at lbeever@cempo.com. She reported that TRB and federal resource centers provide training on using the data.

Nanda Srinivasan, from CTPP can also be contacted at nanda.srinivasan@fhwa.dot.gov.

URBANIZED AREA BOUNDARY PROPOSED RULES: The group raised concerns that the urban boundary rules recently released by the Census Bureau will reduce the amount of urbanized area in the country, resulting in some states losing PL funds. In addition, FHWA is proposing to not allow rounding for determining urban area based on the 2000 Census, but to use the area delineated by the Census Bureau. Since urbanized population figures will not be available until 2002, the Caucus asked AMPO leadership to look into the issue and develop a position.

MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS (M&O): The group discussed AMPO's draft recommendations regarding MPO involvement in M&O. Most agreed that M&O should be part of the long range transportation plan, but some concern was raised that requiring an M&O element in the TIP may be burdensome. A request was made that AMPO make best practices from MPOs of all sizes available to the membership.

SURVEY: The Caucus requested that AMPO survey, via the internet, small MPOs regarding functions and operations, and share the information.

LIST SERVE: The group requested that AMPO expand its list-serve to include one solely for small MPOs.