**2013 Transportation Management Area Certification Review**

**Advanced Materials Questionnaire**

**Hidalgo County MPO**

Study Area Organization

1. Who are the member agencies of the HCMPO Policy Committee? Who are the member agencies of the HCMPO Technical Committee? Are any implementing agencies or transportation modes not members of the MPO? Discuss any anticipated impacts resulting from Census 2010.
2. Discuss the organizational structure of the HCMPO staff. To what degree is the MPO process supported by staff activities? To what degree is the MPO process supported by consultant activities?

Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA)/Urban Boundary Area (UAB)

1. Describe the current status and development of the MPA and UAB. When was the MPA/UAB last adjusted? Discuss any anticipated impacts resulting from Census 2010.

Agreements, Contracts, and Coordination

1. What cooperative agreements or memoranda of understanding identifying planning responsibilities have been established among HCMPO, TxDOT, public transit providers or other agencies involved in the planning process? When was the Planning Contract signed? To what extent do existing agreements conform to regulatory requirements and how accurately do they represent the planning process as actually practiced? Please attach supporting documentation.
2. What processes are specified for coordination on project prioritization and selection for the TIP? Does the MPO have a process/agreement for moving or selecting projects for advancement from any of the 4-years of the TIP?
3. What opportunities are provided for public participation and agency involvement at key decision points in the planning, programming, and project development phases of transportation decision-making? How is the process managed and updated to meet the changing needs of communicating with the public and agencies and their expectations for active involvement? When did the MPO adopt their Public Participation Plan and when was it last updated? How does the consultation process demonstrate explicit consideration and responsiveness to input received? What kind of feedback did the public and agencies receive on the proposals and questions they put forward?

UPWP Development

1. How are UPWP activities developed, selected and prioritized?
2. In the current UPWP, how are all available Federal fiscal planning resources budgeted? For the past two years, have all the fiscal resources been spent? Is there a running balance of Federal planning funds? If so, what is the average balance? What ongoing issues are there concerning over- or under-budgeting of Federal planning funds?
3. Briefly describe the process in place for amendments to the UPWP. What affect has TxDOT’s implementation of Regional Offices had on the amendment process?
4. Briefly describe some of the significant corridor studies in the Hidalgo County metropolitan area since the last federal certification review.
5. Are the corridor studies conducted in a manner so that planning decisions and analyses may be carried through to the project development and environmental review processes? If so, provide examples and discuss benefits and costs of such activities.
6. Is there a process in place to evaluate past performance (efficient and effective use of funds) of UPWP projects/work elements? If so, please provide documentation of this process and its results.

Transportation Planning Process

1. Discuss organizational challenges and opportunities that are anticipated during the planning horizon.
2. How does HCMPO evaluate the overall effectiveness of its planning processes and procedures?
3. How does HCMPO define “administrative modification”? How does it differentiate between “administrative modification” and “amendment” (for the TIP and MTP)? Does the MPO have written/documented procedures for determining and processing administrative and non-administrative revisions of the TIP and MTP? Please attach supporting documentation.
4. What performance measures has HCMPO established to monitor the transportation system in the region? What are the existing and future data needs for these performance measures?
5. Does HCMPO, in coordination with the State and transit operators, annually publish a list of projects (including investments in pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities) for which federal funds were obligated in the preceding program year? When, where, and in what format is this information published? Please provide a copy of the most recent edition of this document.
6. How has HCMPO engaged in the development of statewide plans (e.g., STIP, UTP, etc)?
7. Discuss the content of the HCMPO self-certification. How do you track these requirements and your agency’s ability to meet them?

MTP Development

1. What long- and short-range strategies and actions does the MTP identify leading to the development of a multimodal transportation system? Discuss the MTP’s strategies, investments, procedures, and other measures to ensure the preservation of the transportation system.
2. How is projected demand determined in the MTP? What are the roles and methods of demographic, land use, and travel demand forecasting? Were different population and/or employment growth rate scenarios considered in addition to the forecast documented in the MTP? Discuss how regional economic development/land use influenced the development of the MTP.
3. What is the strategy to implement provisions of the MTP? Have implementation priorities been established?

Financial Planning

1. How are cost estimates developed for the MTP? How are revenue estimates derived? Do these revenue and cost estimates include operating and maintenance costs for existing, plus planned facilities? How are contingency amounts developed and incorporated into the estimate? Were inflation rate factors used in developing the MTP? If so, what inflation rate factors were used?
2. How is financial information in the financial plan coordinated with all of the affected agencies (MPOs, TxDOT, transit operators, and local jurisdictions)? How is local revenue determined or secured for local matches or local project sponsorship?
3. What procedures are followed to ensure the TIP financial plans within the State are consistent with the STIP?

TIP Development and Project Selection

1. Are specific criteria used to determine which projects will be included in the TIP? If so, what process was used in developing these criteria? How are projects prioritized? Are any STP or Section 5307 funds sub-allocated among jurisdictions or modes? If so, how much funding is sub-allocated and through what process?
2. Discuss HCMPO’s strategy for meeting the revenue and cost estimate requirements for the TIP (YOE and TPC).
3. How does the MPO ensure that the TIP includes all proposed federally and non-federally funded regionally significant transportation projects, including intermodal facilities?

Public Participation

1. What is considered effective public participation? What review and evaluation processes do you use for the public participation process? What is its cycle or period of review? Who internally and externally, including the public, is involved with this review and evaluation?
2. How does the public involvement process demonstrate explicit consideration and responsiveness to public and interested parties’ input received during the planning and program development process? What kind of feedback do the public/interested parties receive on the proposals and questions they put forward? Specifically, in what instances have comments raised through public participation resulted in changes to policy, plans, programs or projects?
3. What visualization techniques have been used to aid the public in understanding the MTP, TIP, and supporting studies? Are there other techniques being considered to implement or enhance the planning process?

Title VI/LEP

1. What Title VI protected populations are found in the metropolitan area? Where are they located? Please discuss in detail how disparate impact or unintended consequences of transportation projects are determined.
2. How are persons traditionally underserved by transportation systems, such as low-income, minority or limited English proficiency persons, actively sought out for involvement in the planning process?
3. Does HCMPO have an Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan? Does HCMPO have a Limited English Proficiency Involvement Plan?

Congestion Management Process (CMP)

1. Discuss HCMPO’s congestion management process (CMP) and how it has been fully integrated into the overall metropolitan planning process. Has the CMP been effective? How is this process and its effectiveness documented? What monitoring systems are being used to provide a framework for additional effectiveness evaluation? Are performance measures periodically reviewed for usefulness and applicability, and if so, how often does this review take place? Does the CMP follow the 8-step approach? If not, why not, and are there any steps being taken to align the CMP with the recommended 8-step approach?
2. Does the CMP consider all modes of transportation (SOV, shared ride, transit, intermodal connections, non-motorized means such as bicycling and walking, etc.) in developing congestion management strategies? Describe the process for addressing proposals for adding SOV capacity. How have other travel demand reduction and operational management strategies been analyzed? When SOV capacity is warranted, how does the CMP demonstrate the analysis of travel demand reduction and operational management strategies?
3. How was the congestion management system developed as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process? What are the linkages between the CMP and the MTP and TIP? Explain how the CMP leads to the development of programs and projects contained in the plan and TIP. How are these activities supported in the UPWP?
4. What efforts have been made to identify and include CMP stakeholders, such as other transportation agencies, and system operators in the region who stand to gain from addressing congestion problems? Describe the interaction that has taken place with local transit, freight and traffic control operators, and other stakeholders in the CMP. Explain how stakeholders coordinate data in the development and performance measures in the CMP. How are the stakeholders involved in the development and analysis of potential congestion mitigation strategies? Are local operating agencies (such as the RMA) coordinating and implementing strategies through their own planning and programming processes that support the operational objectives of the CMP?

Travel Demand Forecasting

1. Who is responsible for travel forecasting in the region? Does the MPO staff directly provide travel forecasting or oversee consultant staff providing travel forecasting services? If so, how does MPO evaluate the technical work of consultants? Does the MPO include a technical committee to review planning assumptions and forecasting methods?
2. What formal training has the MPO technical staff received in travel demand forecasting? Does staff require training in specific technical areas?
3. Describe the key assumptions used in developing forecasts and the process for creating baseline conditions for the model. Discuss issues or items that contributed to the delay of the model validation. What actions are being conducted or considered to reduce potential delays to future model validation efforts (i.e., lessons learned)? When will work on the next model validation begin and has a schedule for completion of the model validation been developed?

Planning and Environmental Linkages

1. Does the MTP address potential environmental mitigation activities and potential areas in which to carry out these activities, including activities that may have the greatest potential to restore and maintain the environmental functions affected by the plan? What plans, maps, inventories or data systems from other agencies have been considered relative to the MTP? How does the MPO make use of GIS-ST or NEPAssist in developing the MTP?
2. Has there been any coordination with other federal, state or local resource agencies or Native American tribes in the development of the MTP or TIP? What is the plan for coordinating with resource agencies or tribes in the future? Is this included in the PPP? Are you seeking public input specifically on the environmental issues and desired mitigation? How is this information being carried forward into project development?

Land Use and Livability

1. How is HCMPO involved in discussions concerning regional land use planning? How does HCMPO envision its future role in regional planning efforts?
2. How are issues related to smart growth, context-sensitive solutions, green infrastructure, complete streets, transit-oriented development, and so forth, considered, advanced, or supported through the MPO, TxDOT, transit operator(s), local jurisdictions, or other organizations in your planning region?
3. How does the MTP demonstrate comparison of the consistency of proposed transportation improvements with State and local planned growth and economic development? To what extent are non-motorized modes of travel analyzed and addressed in the MTP and throughout the transportation planning process?
4. Overall, what is the level of consciousness and concern about environmental sustainability/“going green” in your region and among local member jurisdictions or the general public? Does it affect the transportation planning process? Does the transportation planning process consider affordable housing plans or involve agencies/organizations responsible for identifying or addressing housing needs and options? Have jurisdictions within the TMA adopted climate change mitigation or greenhouse gas emission reduction goals or plans? What, if any, action is the MPO taking to address greenhouse gas emissions as part of the planning process?

Transit

1. What is the role of the transit operator and how is it involved in the MPO’s overall planning and project development process? What improvements could be made to this process and what barriers exist towards implementing these improvements? How is the Transit Authority’s planning process coordinated with the MPO’s planning process, including in the development of the UPWP?
2. How often is the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan updated and what is the process for same? Please describe how this effort is being coordinated with the representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers, and members of the public including individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes who can provide insights into local transportation needs. Describe how the Coordinated Plan process results in a program of projects and its integration into the metropolitan planning and programming processes.
3. Please discuss Hidalgo County transit use levels over the last several years? What activities are being conducted as part of the planning process to assist in an increase in transit use in the region?

Safety

1. How is safety addressed as an explicit goal in your planning process and MTP? How does HCMPO identify and analyze safety issues on the regional transportation system? Describe the collaborative process for developing safety goals, objectives, performance measures, and strategies for the MPA?
2. How does HCMPO use information on identified safety issues on the regional transportation system to guide or prioritize transportation investments in the MTP and TIP? What specific safety studies or activities have been conducted in the region? How are safety performance measures incorporated in the planning process?
3. Discuss any relevant coordination between HCMPO and TxDOT in regards to the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP)? What other stake holders are involved in the SHSP? Describe any regionalized implementation of the SHSP that is occurring. Does HCMPO coordinate any efforts concerning local agency applications to the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)?  What is the mechanism for including HSIP funded projects, which are within the MPA, in the TIP?

Security

1. What is the appropriate role for HCMPO in regional infrastructure security planning? Is HCMPO engaged in emergency relief and disaster preparedness planning? Are security roles and responsibilities defined in the MTP, the TIP, the UPWP, or the CMP?
2. Do the regional planning entities have their own Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)? If so, what are the principal components of the plan?

Freight

1. How has the MPO identified the transportation planning link between freight and economic development opportunities for the area? How have these planning factors been documented within the MPO planning products?
2. How is the freight community engaged in the planning process, particularly in the development of the MTP and TIP? Does the TAC include input from freight representatives?
3. Does HCMPO collect and analyze regional and international goods movement flow data? How does the MPO consider and evaluate land use and freight-oriented developments within their MPA?
4. Has HCMPO identified key goods movement facilities in the region and sought to identify the transportation infrastructure, investment, and policy needs of the goods movement community?

Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning

1. Discuss the development of the HCMPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. How is the plan being implemented? How were bicycle and pedestrian user groups involved in the development of the plan? What strategies or policies are in place to promote improved bicycle and pedestrian access and mobility in roadway, transit and other modal projects planned and programmed through HCMPO?

Status from Previous FCR

1. What has been implemented from the recommendations made in the previous FHWA-FTA Certification Review Report?