

FHWA Federal Land Management Agency Coordination: Michigan Training and Forum



Summary Report

March 23, 2023

Michigan



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

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Executive Summary

About the Training and Forum

Overview

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Federal Land Management Agency (FLMA) Coordination – Michigan Training and Forum draws on the FHWA’s State of the Practice study that examined how transportation planning coordination takes place between Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), State Departments of Transportation (DOTs), and FLMAs. This study revealed a need for additional capacity-building to support agencies in fulfilling the requirements of law and reaping the benefits of coordination including increased efficiency of project delivery, shared resources, and innovative solutions for transportation systems. The Michigan Training and Forum is a pilot program, designed to support the state of Michigan in FLMA coordination. The intended outcome of this pilot is to increase the effectiveness of transportation planning coordination in Michigan which will then serve as an example for other states across the country.

Attendees

Attendees of the training and forum were public transportation and planning professionals from the Federal, State, MPO, and local governments of Michigan. State and MPO agencies included the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT); Battlecreek, Bay County; Genesee County, Grand Valley Metro Council; Kalamazoo Area; Macatawa; Midland Area; Southeast MI Council of Governments; Washtenaw; Southwest MI Planning Commission; Twin Cities Area; Tri-County Region; the new Traverse City MPO, Western Michigan Shoreline Development Commission. Transportation professionals from Federal Lands agencies in Michigan included the US Forest Service (FS); the US National Park Service (NPS); and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The Federal Highway Administration facilitated the training and forum.

Format

The training, held virtually, included sections on requirements for FLMA coordination. Also discussed were agency identification, engagement methodologies, agency participation, roles in transportation planning coordination, and the use of and availability of resources to support coordination. The training included multiple interactive sections where attendees were able to ask questions, share best practices, and brainstorm next steps for improving future FLMA coordination within the state of Michigan.

Outcomes

In this training, attendees learned FLMA coordination perspectives and best practices from Federal and State agencies, and MPOs. Attendees provided feedback on needs, ideas, and challenges encountered in the coordination process, and discussed the tools, methods, and opportunities that work best for them.

Feedback from attendees on the FLMA coordination in Michigan focused on needs, ideas, and challenges intergovernmental groups face in improving processes. In terms of needs, attendees highlighted desire to coordinate on the agency consultation process with MDOT more often, ensuring complete representation from agencies in the planning process, and incorporating stakeholder agency involvement from the beginning.

Ideas centered on possible ways to coordinate with agencies more comprehensively as opposed to just project-specific interactions, so that the relationship feels less transactional. Currently, Michigan

agencies have the opportunity to coordinate annually. However, a meeting occurring only once per year may not be enough, so each agency needs to decide what is right for them and their partners. Additional challenges included coordination for MPOs with small staff, as well as obstacles to public engagement persisting, despite an improvement in digital communication since the pandemic.

FHWA engaged attendees on tools, methods, and opportunities for building connections between agencies. Responses indicated preference for the development of a guidebook, followed by a checklist, then an engagement tracker. Attendees felt that guidebooks help people understand the goals, while checklists help agencies stay on track, and function to complement the guidebook. Engagement trackers were proposed to help agencies stay on track with their communications to other entities and to the public.

Opening Discussion

Presenters: Chandra Inglis-Smith, Transportation Specialist, FHWA Office of Planning; Lewis Grimm, Planning Team Lead, FHWA Eastern Federal Lands; Andy Pickard, Team Leader – Planning, Environmental, and Realty, FHWA Michigan Division; Don Mayle, Section Manager for the Statewide Planning, MDOT

The training began with opening remarks from the FHWA. Chandra Inglis-Smith from the FHWA Office of Planning welcomed attendees, explained the goals for the training and forum, and reviewed the agenda. She noted that this was the very first training on FLMA coordination premised off a 2022 FHWA FLMA Coordination initiative seeking to inspire FHWA Divisions to work with the State DOTs, MPO’s and FLMA’s to improve transportation planning coordination per federal regulations. The U.S. DOT Volpe Center provided an overview of virtual training logistics.

Chandra introduced Lewis Grimm from the FHWA Eastern Federal Lands, Andy Pickard from the FHWA Michigan Division, and Don Mayle from MDOT. Andy noted that while the focus of the training is not novel, it is intended to reveal new insights about Federal land coordination. He explained that he was excited that Michigan is piloting this training and that it coincides nicely with Michigan’s FHWA Division Office initiative to have more projects between Federal Lands, State, and local planning agencies. Don Mayle shared his optimism and willingness to participate in hopes of increasing the effectiveness of transportation in Michigan, and that he was looking forward to working with Federal agencies.

Requirements and Benefits of Coordination

Presenters: Andy Edwards, Senior Community Planner, FHWA Office of Planning, Lewis Grimm, Planning Team Lead, FHWA Eastern Federal Lands; Andy Pickard, Team Leader – Planning, Environmental, and Realty, FHWA Michigan Division; Don Mayle, Section Manager for the Statewide Planning, MDOT

The FHWA team kicked off the presentation by stating that transportation planning is fundamental to a state, region, or community’s vision for its future: it is the process of looking at the current state of transportation and defining future policies, goals, and investments to prepare for future needs to move people and goods to destinations. Transportation planning needs to encompass a comprehensive consideration of possible strategies and an evaluation process that considers and incorporates diverse viewpoints. It should include collaborative participation of relevant transportation-related agencies and organizations, as well as open, timely, and meaningful public involvement. FHWA team members concluded that ultimately, it should be a cooperative process designed to foster involvement by all users of the system.

FHWA team members went over the laws and regulations by which FLMAs and the State DOTs and MPOs are required to coordinate throughout their transportation planning processes, including:

23 U.S.C.	23 U.S.C. 134 (g)(3)(B)
	23 U.S.C.135 (e)
	23 U.S.C. 201
23 CFR	450.208 (a)(3)
	450.218 (e)
	450.316 (b)
	450.328 (c)

Table 1: Relevant 23 U.S.C. laws and 23 CFR regulations

As per the definition in 23 USC 170.100, “Coordination” requires that each party 1) Shares and compares in a timely manner its transportation plans, programs, projects, and schedules with the related plans, programs, projects, and schedules of the other parties; and 2) Adjusts its plans, programs, projects, and schedules to optimize the efficient and consistent delivery of transportation projects and services. Comprehensive transportation planning can provide tremendous benefits by helping to create systems that best meet user needs. A robust coordination process improves participant satisfaction and engenders better transportation planning outcomes. Early and continuous coordination can reduce transportation program costs by providing economies of scale.

Agency Identification

FHWA team members explained that knowing who to coordinate with is critical for successful transportation planning and programming processes. There are four main considerations when identifying State DOT, MPO or FLMA stakeholders, including the identification of the agencies located within a planning area, as well as any differences in these agencies’ structures and decision-making processes; the appropriate times and ways in which to coordinate with the agencies; why you are contacting the agencies; and who to contact within each agency.

Identifying the State DOT should be easy, but in some cases, there may be jurisdictional overlap between the DOT and MPOs, or shared authority between multiple organizational units within the one agency, which may pose a challenge to reaching the appropriate points of contact. An MPO is a federally mandated and federally funded transportation policy-making organization in the United States that is made up of representatives from local government and governmental transportation authorities; created to ensure regional cooperation in transportation planning; and located in an urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000. In Michigan, there is a new MPO in Traverse City, MI.

FHWA team members went over both the [FHWA-HEPGIS](#) and [FHWA – State DOT and MPO](#) tools. The FHWA HEPGIS maps are available for download or printing, whereas the FHWA – State and DOT MPO tool is a database enabled with geolocation to identify State agencies and MPOs in a specific area. These tools are key in ensuring agencies know who to reach out to and coordinate with during the transportation planning processes.

About Federal Land Management Agencies

FHWA team members defined FLMAs as any Federal agency that owns or manages land or water resources for the United States. The term “Federal land management agency” (FLMA) has been expanded to include traditional federal agencies responsible managing federal lands including the National Park Service, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management , the Bureau of Reclamation, the United States Forest Service and others; now the definition includes military and federally recognized tribes¹. Approximately 30% of the land in the United States is under jurisdiction of the Federal government. They noted that it’s important to understand where FLMAs might fit within Federal agency departments.

¹ Consultation with Indian tribes represents a distinct method of consultation and coordination that is not included in this training.

Some FLMAs exist in all states while others are concentrated regionally: for example, the Bureau of Reclamation has more jurisdiction in western states, while land managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs varies on a per-state basis. The U.S. FLMAs include:

Department of Interior	
	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
	National Park Service (NPS)
	Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
	Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
Department of Agriculture	
	U.S. Forest Service (FS)
Department of Defense (DOD)	
	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) recreational properties
	Any of the 200+ Installations operated by any part of the military
Others	
	Military Cemeteries
	Tennessee Valley Authority
	National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
	Federally recognized Indian Tribes

Table 2: Federal Land Management Agencies (FLMAs) within the United States

FHWA team members explained how to identify FLMAs in each jurisdiction through both the [HEPGIS](#) and Federal Lands Highways (FLH) tools (<https://highways.dot.gov/federal-lands> and <https://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/index.htm>). The HEPGIS tool allows you to see State-, MPO-, and Federally managed lands in geographical layers as delineated by the 2020 Census. It is recommended that participants familiarize themselves with this tool, because it has a wealth of information. A demonstration of the HEPGIS tool identified a variety of FLMA offices and showed attendees the Federal land map layers. Each layer shows where Federal agencies own land, where different agency offices are located, as well as each agency point of contact. The data available varies depending on which data team creates the content. The FLH tool is maintained by Federal Land Highways and can be used to further identify where FLMAs are. FLH is currently developing an additional resource which is expected later in 2023.

Each agency’s structure emphasizes that agency’s unique characteristics making for more effective coordination. The first step in engaging partner agencies is to recognize the value of coordinating transportation planning for improved overall effectiveness of the transportation system to meet common goals. This includes:

- Understanding the differences in agency priorities, processes, roles, and available resources to engage in effective coordination;
- Identifying that each Federal agency, DOT and MPO is structured differently; and
- Understanding how the agency is structured so you can reach out for coordination more effectively.

The point of contact may differ between organizations, but partner agencies should maintain transparent and accessible information identifying who is responsible for transportation planning coordination at their agency. FHWA team members mentioned that invitations addressed to a specific person (or position such as "Director" or "Superintendent") tend to receive higher priority by recipients than those invitations that are addressed broadly to an agency. However, they acknowledged that it can be a difficult and long-term process to manage an appropriate contact list subject to frequent changes.

Engagement Methodologies

In this section, representatives from several transportation planning agencies and FLMAs in the State of Michigan provided their perspectives on planning coordination, best practices, and opportunities for the future. FHWA team members kicked off the presentation by discussing engagement methodologies, which are outlined in State and MPO public involvement plans. Engagement methodologies vary among agencies and states. Understanding each agency's engagement methodology for specific planning points of interest helps partners to understand when and how to coordinate effectively when an invitation is extended. Proactive coordination increases engagement in the transportation planning process. FHWA team members provided several examples of FLMA engagement in the states of Oregon, Texas, Florida, New Mexico, Colorado, and Alaska, which are summarized below:

Oregon

To better assist FLMAs, the Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization in Oregon (CLMPO) highlights specific sections and pages of plans to identify areas that would benefit from coordination. Additionally, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) uses an engagement tracker to keep records of coordinated activities. This includes notes and recommendations on appropriate engagement methods, captured feedback, and how that feedback is addressed in the plans and policies. This results in proactive coordination and an increase in engagement in the planning process. An engagement tracker can help an agency monitor partnering agency's progress and identify future opportunities.

Texas

Due to the unique urban nature of the Alamo National Historic Landmark, the Texas DOT (TxDOT) coordinates not only with the National Parks Service (NPS) at the multi-state regional office in Denver, but with the San Antonio MPO and State DOT planners. It took time to figure out who the best agency to work with was, but this strong relationship has led to successful coordination efforts.

Additionally, TxDOT received an invitation from the Department of Defense (DOD) to participate in the planning process for a group of power projection platform route study projects to connect army bases on the Gulf Coast. As a result, TxDOT and the DOD have strengthened their relationship and coordinate on a range of transportation planning activities. This has highlighted the importance of coordination with FLMAs throughout the State.

Florida

The Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process provides stakeholders—including FLMAs—with an opportunity for early input, involvement, and formal comment on transportation projects in the planning process. Additionally, the ETDM process makes it easier to share projects managed by Florida MPOs. The State has found that alerting stakeholders early initiated opportunities for broader communication.

New Mexico

The Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) in Albuquerque, New Mexico worked with FLMAs to incorporate climate change mitigation strategies into its Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). This effort involved coordination with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Forest Service (FS), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This effort expanded existing FLMA coordination within the metro region and beyond to other partner agencies.

Colorado

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) worked with the Colorado FHWA Federal-aid Division Office to engage external stakeholders and align the timing of a coordinated FLMA transportation plan with the Colorado long-range transportation plan (LRTP) update. CDOT worked with FLMAs and MPOs within Colorado to identify transportation planning needs and coordinate planning and programming processes. The result has been a broader engagement among the partners to communicate and coordinate transportation planning activities.

Alaska

Turnagain Pass Master Plan – Chugah National Forest, AK

Western Federal Lands coordinated with the National Park Service (NPS) and Alaska DOT (AKDOT) to develop a master plan for developments to the Turnagain Pass section of the Chugah National Forest (near Anchorage) to increase safety and mitigate congested access to the park through capital improvements. The Turnagain Pass section of the Chugah National Forest is used for skiing, hiking, and other outdoor recreation. The agencies worked together to draft a public engagement plan, which became a guide on how to engage with Federal agencies on similar projects.

Copper River Access Study – Gulkana, AK

Western Federal Lands worked with the NPS to develop trail route easement alternatives across Ahtna lands along the Copper River. The project involved a conceptual design, cost estimates for a one-acre parking area, and a boat launch and fishing area with special significance to the Tribal nations. Both agencies engaged in public involvement and Tribal consultation with the communities, focusing on Village Council engagement in the areas of Glenallen, Gakona, and Tazlina. The NPS consultation process guided engagement with Tribal governments, with Ahtna leading the initial discussion with the Councils. The public engagement and Tribal Consultation process enabled them to commit conditions to writing and honor diverse perspectives.

Agency Participation and Roles in Transportation Planning Coordination

The FHWA Office of Planning and FHWA Federal Lands Highway, Eastern Division facilitated this section of the training by stating that building lasting institutional relationships among FLMAs, State DOTs and MPOs beyond basic requirements is the best approach to successful coordination in transportation planning and programming processes. There are four key considerations to keep in mind for agency participation:

- Limitation of staff available to participate in coordination opportunities
- Level of priority for transportation planning at the local level
- Perceived value of participating in coordination opportunities
- How agency structure determines transportation decision-making and coordination

Presenters discussed agency roles in the coordination process, from that of MPOs, to those at the State and Federal levels. The agencies included a State DOT, an MPO, and FLMAs (e.g., FHWA, the FLH). Each agency implements many different programs, but benefits vary. States are often at the heart of planning, design and maintenance projects across all travel modes. They allocate resources from various Federal-aid programs. The planning documents that States produce include the Long-Range State-Wide Transportation Plan (LRSTP); the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP); the State Planning and Research (SPR); the State Freight Plan (SFP); the Strategic Highway Safety Program (SHSP); and the Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP).

MPOs, established by Congress in 1962, act as regional body of government agency representatives and other transportation stakeholders and conduct transportation planning which reflects the region's shared vision for its future; comprehensively examining the region's future travel demands and investment alternatives; and allocates Federal and other transportation funding resources. MPOs develop their own long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), a short-range program of projects, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). They are responsible for engaging a variety of affected stakeholders in the planning process.

The Office of Federal Lands Highway (FLH) was established in 1970 to promote effective, efficient, and reliable administration for a coordinated program of Federal public roads and bridges; to protect and enhance our nation's natural resources; and to provide needed transportation access for Tribal nations. The FLH provides services in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories through their Headquarters, Central, Western, and Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division offices, with Michigan being covered by the latter.

Most of the traditional FLMAs (e.g., NPS, FWS, and FS) are focused on resource management and preservation. Transportation planning is primarily limited to visitor access and maintenance of existing travel systems integrated with FLMA-owned facilities. FLMA planning projects are generally undertaken at the national, multi-state/regional, statewide, or unit-specific geographic scales. The level of detail included in planning projects varies by each agency. FLMAs are increasingly seeking expanded levels of coordination and cooperation in their dealings with state DOTs, MPOs, and local government agencies.

FHWA provides a wide range of resources and expertise to help improve agency coordination in the transportation planning, project, and program management processes. The staff at FHWA Headquarters are responsible for national level policy and guidance development, while the staff of the Federal-aid Divisions located in each state are tasked with assisting State DOTs and MPOs throughout the entire project development lifecycle. Additionally, Federal Lands Highway Divisions (FLHD) provide direct assistance to FLMAs at the national, regional, and unit-specific levels. The topic of coordination is an agency priority with new and expanding tools and resources to ensure agencies have what they need to successfully engage one another in planning and programming coordination activities.

Michigan

Andy Pickard, Team Leader for Planning, Environment, and Realty in the FHWA Michigan Division, introduced this section by noting that there are more Federal lands in the State of Michigan than attendees may realize. FLMAs in Michigan include the Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as Military Facilities and two National Cemeteries. Below is the list of FLMAs in Michigan with their respective locations:

- Forest Service (FS)
 - Ottawa National Forest; Huron-Manistee National Forest; Hiawatha National Forest
- National Park Service (NPS)
 - Keweenaw National Historical Park; Grand Portage National Monument; Isle Royale National Park; Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore; Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore; River Raisin National Battlefield Park
- Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS)
 - Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge; Kirtland's Warbler Wildlife Management Area; Michigan Wetland Management District; Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Seney NWR; Jordan River National Fish Hatchery (NFH), Pendills Creek NFH; Sullivan Creek NFH plus offshore island refuges including Green Bay NWR (St. Martin Island); Harbor Island NWR; Huron Island NWR; and Michigan Islands NWR.
- Military Facilities
- National Cemeteries

Mr. Pickard explained that MPOs share some of the metropolitan planning with Federal Lands partners and share Federal Lands information with State DOT partners. MPOs in Michigan include:

- [Battle Creek Area Transportation Study \(BCATS\)](#)
- [Bay City Area Transportation Study \(BCATS\)](#)
- [Genesee County Metropolitan Planning Commission \(GCMPC\)](#)
- [Grand Valley Metro Council \(GVMC\)](#)
- [Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study \(KATS\)](#)
- [Macatawa Area Coordination Council \(MACC\)](#)
- [Midland Area Transportation Study \(MATS\)](#)
- [Region 2 Planning Commission \(JACTS\)](#)
- [Saginaw Area Transportation Agency \(SATA\)](#)
- Southeast Michigan:
 - [Southeast Michigan Council of Governments \(SEMCOG\)](#)
 - [St. Clair County Transportation Study \(SCCOTS\)](#)
 - [Washtenaw Area Transportation Study \(WATS\)](#)
- [Southwest Michigan Planning Commission \(SWMPC\)](#)
 - Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS)
 - Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS)
- [Tri-County Regional Planning Commission \(TCRPC\)](#)
- [West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission \(WMRDC\)](#)
- New MPO for Traverse City region is being established.

Andy discussed the value of using [HEPGIS](#) to view specific Federal lands for both rural and State-wide planning processes. As a local example, he demonstrated how to find the one Million-acre Huron-Manistee National Forest in HEPGIS. As the largest national forest in Michigan, the Huron-Manistee National Forest touches multiple MPOs (e.g., Muskegon MPO, rural MPOs), illustrating a variety of local partners to work with.

Agency Presentations

Michigan Department of Transportation

Presenter: Don Mayle, Section Manager for the Statewide Planning, Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)

Don Mayle began this presentation with an explanation that a few years ago, the FHWA Divisions were challenged to come up with an initiative to better connect FLMAs in planning, making this training concerning FLMA coordination an important and exciting development. He reasoned that if the training could be distilled down to two key points, they would be coordination and communication. He explained that it is evident that State and Federal land partners both create great products but wish to improve their connection.

As an example of FLMA coordination in Michigan, nine Federal Lands agencies were identified as stakeholders in the development of MDOT's Long-Range Transportation Plan, titled [Michigan Mobility 2045 \(MM2045\)](#). MDOT ensured that stakeholders with a specific interest in MM2045 were engaged early and often. MDOT sent letters to Federal Agencies in January 2019 to ensure that they were aware of the MM2045 visioning process, including the ways in which they could participate. MDOT offered to accommodate stakeholders for meetings and presentations and followed up with email reminders to keep stakeholders informed and engaged.

In another example of FLMA coordination in Michigan, Eastern FLH Division TIP was included in the Michigan STIP. The STIP represented one of the biggest outreach efforts for the State as a whole due to the inclusion and participation of public stakeholders. Eastern FLH worked with MDOT local agency programs to ensure that the projects were represented in their STIP. The FY 2023-2026 Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division Transportation Improvement Program has been posted on the MDOT STIP page.

Lastly, Don briefly discussed the process of Tribal consultation in Michigan. Tribal consultation is a very formal process that recognizes the sovereignty of each Tribal government, with partnership occurring government-to-government between the State (MDOT) and the Tribe(s). Don shared that more information about MDOT's intergovernmental communication on transportation matters is available at [Tribal Affairs \(michigan.gov\)](#).

Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study

Presenter: Steve Stepek, Executive Director, Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS)

Steve Stepek from the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) discussed coordination from an MPO perspective. MPOs coordinate across multiple agencies as a key aspect of their continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive processes. When they get local agencies to participate, it helps to move projects forward. KATS tries to demonstrate the benefits of cooperation, but challenges arise, such as obstacles to the documentation and improvement of the consultation process in certification reviews. Additionally, KATS has an opportunity to improve through FLMA coordination with the State. The consultation process is continuous, but significant effort is required every 3-4 years for the TIP and every 4-5 years for the MTP.

While the DOT and other Federal agencies might be more familiar with regulatory side, Steve helps with the endangered species coordination and FLTP funds which may be less familiar to attendees. Steve Stepek of KATS took a moment to introduce two of his co-workers with related roles, Shaughn Galloway and Michelle Kane, both Transportation Liaisons in the Ecological Services Program completing MDOT-

funded work and serving as points of contact for Environmental Service (ES) Compliance, the Trunk Line Program, and the Local Agency Program. They work with the County Road Association and would like to be involved early in both State and local planning processes.

Steve mentioned that incorporating Federal Lands agencies can be difficult, especially when they can't show immediate value to the process; KATS strives to approach this challenge as an opportunity, rather than just checking a box. Steve posed several questions to attendees to consider when or at what stage FLMA coordination should be approached to improve the process, as well as how should we approach agency relationships to make FLMA coordination worthwhile. Should it be handled differently? How does the group see this process moving forward?

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)

Presenter: Brandon Jutz, Regional Transportation Coordinator (Region 3), National Wildlife Refuge System – Infrastructure Management Division

Brandon Jutz shared a perspective from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Brandon manages the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) for the Midwest Region plus any additional transportation grant funds for his agency. Additionally, he is the Regional FLAP and Emergency Relief for Federally-Owned Roads (ERFO) Coordinator.

The U.S. FWS Midwest Region is comprised of eight midwestern states and includes hatcheries, refuges, wetland management districts, among other resources. Its facilities in Michigan are [mapped on their website](#). The FWS Midwest Region transportation planning includes a 10-year LRTP, which was last published in 2012. The Midwest Region was one of the first regions to initiate a transportation plan. The Agency's transportation planning was also included in the FWS "Plan 35" LRTP, with six strategic goals:

- Coordinated Opportunities
- Asset Management
- Safety
- Environmental
- Access, Mobility, and Connectivity
- Visitor Experience

The FWS Midwest Region also incorporates a "roadway design guidelines" document and identifies project selection processes. The next national LRTP will most likely include all regions in one document.

Brandon advised that the FWS Midwest Region would like to work on several coordination issues and priorities with the State of Michigan, including the sharing of contacts (for both emergencies and general information sharing), signage, Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP), railroads, and potential maintenance coordination for special projects. Signage is one of the biggest issues for FWS coordination, because tourism is an important component of their work. FWS would appreciate working more closely with the State on signage, including funding discussions: FWS would like clarity on who replaces, pays, and/or maintains brown signs on the DOT right of way (ROW).

FWS also expressed the desire to communicate earlier on in the planning process. In terms of FLAP coordination, FWS Midwest Region wants to work with states more directly, offering funds and project management help as a partner. For railroads, FWS finds state DOT expertise and contacts very useful. In terms of potential project and/or maintenance coordination, FWS is looking for adjacent projects

managed as one, to tap into local equipment operators and local training opportunities, since they have a lot of equipment but not as many staff to work with. However, there is potential to combine maintenance processes—e.g., gravel roads and dust suppression—with a stakeholder.

FWS Urban Transportation Connections Study

Working with the Volpe Center from 2016-2017, FWS conducted a study of seven FWS Urban Wildlife Refuges around the country, including the Detroit International Wildlife Refuge. This study was part of a national examination of how to improve connections between defined urban wildlife refuges and neighboring communities. This involved two-day, on-site collaborative discussions including FWS national, regional, and unit level staff, including the FHWA and FLH, an architectural or engineering (A/E) contractor, MDOT, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), staff from the NPS River Basin National Battlefield Park, Wayne County Community College, and other local stakeholders. The site visit report was then used as documentation for pedestrian, bike, and transit linkage improvements to the Refuge Visitor Center. The Refuge is now one of the first in the country to have a public bus route.

Brandon concluded his presentation by providing the contact information for the National Wildlife Refuge System and the Michigan Ecological Services Field Office and letting attendees know that he was excited to work with them.

National Wildlife Refuge System
5600 American Blvd. West, Suite 990
Bloomington, MN
612-713-5407
brandon_jutz@fws.gov

Michigan Ecological Services Field Office
2651 Coolidge Road, Suite 101
East Lansing, MI 48823
(517) 351-8474
shaughn_galloway@fws.gov and
michelle_kane@fws.gov

Open Forum Discussion

This discussion section was an opportunity for participants to reflect and discuss key takeaways, how to address current challenges, and opportunities to consider for future coordination activities within and between their agencies. Facilitators shared the questions and comments that attendees had posted in the Padlet collaboration tool throughout the presentations. Questions included:

- Will MDOT continue to do the outreach/consultation on the STIP, or will they be looking for RPAs/MPOs to help with that process regarding FLMAs?
 - MDOT: It's possible in the future. Right now it is part of public participation plan in the STIP for MDOT to reach out to MPOs and we will also work with contacting FLMAs. Other agencies may have Federal lands in their areas, and we will invite them to meetings for STIP development
- Can FHWA provide the appropriate contacts for each of the agencies?
 - MDOT: The FHWA is working on this. We are hoping to make it live and accessible, like the MPO database soon.

At this point attendees were also able to unmute themselves and ask questions via the chat function. Some individuals did not identify themselves and are referred to as unknown attendee:

- Unknown attendee: For MPOs that intersect with FWS – any ideas on what they’d like to coordinate on?
 - Unknown attendee: The agency consultation process in Michigan with MDOT.
 - Christina Nicholaides, MI FHWA: Making sure that there’s complete representation from all agencies, including Federal lands (consultation).
 - Don Mayle, MDOT: Staff changeover led to a lack of updating the consultation contact list. We could use this for the State LRTP and TIP. Improvement will be made in working with Federal lands to make sure we have the right people. In the past, when a LRTP was created, MDOT would create the current contact list, but we’re looking for improvements to make it a smoother, more engaged process.

- FHWA MI: You demonstrated in HEPGIS how a national forest crosses over into Muskegon MPO. Has there been any coordination there?
 - Joel Fitzpatrick, Western Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission: It really depends on the year, sometimes we get good responses from consultation and sometimes not.

- Unknown attendee: How do you engage with your Agency counterparts on coordination during the transportation planning processes?
 - Unknown attendee: The plan is to get people involved in the beginning of conversations, not the end, to get a sense of discussion of needs, like what are FLMA’s concerns for things like TIPs and 5-year plans? This is what we’re trying to get to.

- Kalamazoo MPO: We used to have a state-Tribal meeting. Would it be helpful to send out a list of projects and ask for feedback from, say, the FWS? Is there a better opportunity to coordinate in a more holistic way than the project-specific level, like the Tribal meeting?
 - FHWA Office of Planning: Meetings make it easier to make connections and get work done. They can really help move a program forward. If there’s something that already exists within the State of MI to see where these opportunities are, that would be great.
 - Christina Nicholaides, MI FHWA: The 2022 Michigan Transportation Planning Association (MTPA) Conference in Flint had a fantastic Tribal Coordination presentation that was well-attended. Do others remember that session?
 - FWS: Coordination meetings would be tough for a FLMA with a high state workload. I would recommend going to the transit folks first, and then pull the stations in later.
 - MI transit liaisons: We would be happy to attend coordination meetings.
 - FHWA Office of Planning: The way you engage with one community might be different than another. How can we improve coordination, so we don’t get into major roadblock at the project level?
 - Ryan Buck: Just a thought - I know we focus almost exclusively on ‘what do you think of our plan and/or projects,’ but I think if we’re trying and foster meaningful engagement, we should be asking them to explain what they do and share their core goals and values, so we can consider those as we assemble a shared vision for the future. Instead of asking partners if they like the plan or not, ask them what their goals are, what they do, etc.

- Kalamazoo MPO: Yes, are there ways we can coordinate the goals and objectives as part of the planning process vs. the project level.
 - FHWA MI Division: that makes me think about the idea of seeing how 'we' can be of assistance and/or a resource to them as well, in addition to the "ask". In that way, it becomes more of a partnership than a transactional relationship.
- Unknown attendee: Can you describe any tangible results from effective coordination among FLMAs and the State DOT and/or MPOs?
 - FHWA Federal Lands Highway, Eastern Division: There are examples in PA. Most of the state is covered by MPOs and the rest is covered by rural agencies. Adams county MPO shares the borough with Gettysburg National Park. When MPO was created, it had an NPS representative on their committee. They are involved in the MPO process all the way through. Additionally, Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, NC has a strong relationship with its local MPO.
 - FWS: FWS tapped into the state bidding process where seasonal crew got to stay on for a project that was taking longer.
- Unknown attendee: How do you engage with your agency counterpart on coordination during the transportation planning processes?
 - Kalamazoo MPO: For agencies with 1-2 staff, this can become a burden and the majority of MPOs are 2-3 people organizations.
 - FHWA Office of Planning: Do you think the state should take the lead on coordination?
 - Kalamazoo MPO: Yes, but is a coordination meeting enough for us? We need to explain our goals.
 - Jason, Macatawa Area Coordinating Council: thinking about meaningful dialogue and relationship. How do you get it? Maybe we need to work more closely with our FHWA partner. We tried to work with our EPA partner recently, but we were not able to reach them. Dialogue with Federal agencies also might result in grant money.
 - Chandra Inglis-Smith, FHWA: Meeting once a year may not be enough. We need to decide how often coordination needs to happen between groups.
 - FWS: Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge would love to host a coordination event at its new learning center, which is going through a complete rebuild and will be ready in a couple years.
- Unknown attendee: What are more ways that groups can coordinate?
 - FWS EV charging, where people can charge then go to a refuge and signage (we pay \$20,000 per highway sign). Working with local sign shops may help us with the cost. Are there roads we can get rid of (that aren't resilient to climate change)?
- Kalamazoo MPO: Do other agencies within MDOT go to Don for coordination logistics?
 - Bryan Armstrong, MDOT: Yes, they go to Don. For the Transit Alternative grant program, we emphasize the need for consultation with customers. Public engagement is extremely difficult and almost doesn't work for us, although digital outreach and communications has come into its own, especially since the pandemic. In our Safe Streets and Roads for All grants, we make them document feedback and what they did to address that feedback.
 - Don Mayle, MDOT: We are often the conduit for other sections to get involved.

- David Fairchild, MDOT: We have MTPA and work with several statewide planning sections. If you have something to announce at the local level, work with the Statewide Planning Association. MPOs can also funnel info down to member agencies, and then down even more.
- Bryan Armstrong: MDOT does a great job of coordinating with other agencies. Can we think of this beyond MDOT? Can our state agencies coordinate more in general?

Poll Questions

Facilitators posed a series of poll and follow-up questions to attendees to gauge their understanding of how agencies prefer to collaborate.

- Which engagement opportunities seem reasonable to pursue in MI?
 - Most attendees answered that they would prefer the development of a guidebook, followed by a checklist, then an engagement tracker
 - Why would a guidebook be beneficial?
 - Bryan Armstrong, MDOT: Because it helps us understand what an agency wants, their goals, etc.
 - Steve Stepek, KATS: I echo Bryan.
 - Why would a checklist be beneficial?
 - Don Mayle, MDOT: A checklist gives you a to do list, making sure everything is covered
 - Jason, MACC: I agree with Don. It makes it a bit easier to navigate than a very long guide document.
 - Ryan Buck: As long as we include the checklist in the guidebook, we should be good!
 - Grants coordinator with MDOT: A guidebook and checklist together would be helpful. Local agencies may not have the staff for a whole guide and sometimes checking a box is helpful for small agencies.
 - Why would an engagement tracker be beneficial?
 - James Sturdvent, MDOT: An engagement tracker helps so you're not stuck in purgatory waiting for a reply.
 - Lindsey Dowswell, MDOT: There are efforts at MDOT to create a tracker for our public and partner engagement overall, so including FLMAs in it as well would make sense. The Environmental Team is interested in having a tracker to see how it would work for their public engagement. For example, 'how are comments received and followed up on?' This makes a lot of sense for us.
- What resources have you already used or were aware of?
 - Attendee: FHWA's State Long Range Transportation Plans and Statewide Transportation Improvement Programs link. Otherwise, it's pretty evenly spread.
- Chandra Inglis-Smith, FHWA: what have you learned today?
 - Kalamazoo MPO: About the FLMA compendium.

Coordination in Michigan – What’s Next?

This section drew on the previous discussion to look forward to next steps and commitments from transportation planning partners in Michigan. Facilitators posed attendees with a series of questions to discuss how to proceed with FLMA coordination after this training.

- Who will lead coordination efforts?
 - Don Mayle, MDOT: MDOT.
 - Kalamazoo MPO: We are happy to continue on.
 - Brandon: No Fed lands volunteered, but there aren’t a lot of other FLMAs on the call.
- How will you communicate?
 - Attendee: Via email for now until we can possibly meet in person
- At what frequency will you be meeting to address this effort (quarterly, annually, etc.)?
 - Attendee: We will get folks to reach out to from Fed lands.
 - MDOT: FHWA can provide us with some contacts to start. We will check back in a month. We can always reach out to you for your help moving forward.
 - FHWA Michigan Division: division staff will be involved. Keep us in mind for your needs and brainstorming next steps.
 - Volpe: Brandon’s agency can help as well with his contacts.
- Chandra Inglis-Smith, FHWA: We will organize an initiative to spearhead coordination in Michigan by potentially developing a guidebook, meeting frequently, and more developments as we move forward.

This training concluded with a short summary of the discussions and follow-up items. Presenters included Michigan FLMA contact information (Figure 2 of Appendix A) and the following field resources:

- [FHWA’s GIS in Transportation Program: Interactive GIS Mapping Tool](#)
- [Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program: MPO Database](#)
- [State Long Range Transportation Plans and Statewide Transportation Improvement Programs](#)
- [Federal Lands Management Agency Coordination in Transportation Planning and Programming Compendium](#)
- [Federal Lands Planning Program](#)
- [Federal Lands Access Program](#)
- [FHWA/FTA PEAs](#)

The results of this training forum, initiated by the FHWA’s State of the Practice study, supported and further refined the needs of Federal, State, MPO, and local agencies for improved coordination.

Feedback

The organizers of the FLMA Coordination Michigan Training and Forum sent out a brief follow-up feedback form to attendees after the forum. Most survey respondents indicated that they worked with MDOT and found learning about FLMAs, agency identification, as well as the agency presentations to be the most informative parts of the forum. Respondents noted that this presentation will impact their planning process in several ways, including how to engage with FLMAs, how to improve their agency’s

consultation process, how to track engagement efforts, and how to make existing connections between agencies more robust and meaningful.

Survey respondents requested additional resources, including contact information for FLMAs in Michigan, a guidebook on best practices for interacting with FLMAs, a list of communication methods, funding sources, engagement tracking methodologies, the PowerPoint slides and notes from this forum, as well as additional support over the next year. Respondents requested additional FLMA trainings with more Federal land agencies present, as well as clear outcomes and expectations.

Summary

In this training, attendees were able to learn FLMA coordination perspectives and best practices from Federal and State agencies, as well as MPOs. Attendees were able to give facilitators feedback on needs, ideas, and challenges encountered in the coordination process, and to discuss the tools, methods, and opportunities that work best for them. The Federal and State entities along with the MPOs shared their experiences with building FLMA connections through presentations and discussions, and shared examples that demonstrated the needs of different types of agencies. Federal and State agencies shared success stories using tools like engagement trackers, and relationship building—especially around NPS and military sites—and the need for early input and involvement in the planning process for stakeholders.

MDOT shared that they were able to successfully engage nine FLMAs early and often in their Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) process. MDOT's successful tactics included accommodating stakeholders at meetings and presentations and following up to keep them informed and engaged. MPOs—like the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS)—highlighted the need for improved working relationships with other agencies, including FLMAs. However, demonstrating the benefits of cooperation to FLMA stakeholders can be difficult if the value of working together isn't immediately evident. KATS also noted that they would like to better document and improve the consultation process through certification reviews. Representatives of the FLMAs, like the FWS Midwest Region, shared that they would like to work on several coordination issues and priorities with the State of Michigan, including sharing contacts, signage, Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP), railroads, special projects, EV charging, and climate adaptation.

Feedback from attendees on the FLMA coordination in Michigan focused on needs, ideas, and challenges intergovernmental groups face in improving processes. In terms of needs, attendees highlighted that they would like to coordinate on the agency consultation process with MDOT more often, make sure that there is complete representation from agencies in the planning process, and get stakeholder agencies involved from the beginning.

Ideas centered on whether there was a way to coordinate with agencies more holistically than just at the project-specific level, so that the relationship feels less transactional. Some attendees suggested that agencies should ask one another to explain what they do and share their core goals and values, so each can consider those as they assemble a shared vision for the future. Some proposed the MI Transportation Planning Association (MTPA) annual meeting as a forum for this conversation to take place, though others noted that not all FLMAs are able to attend that meeting so stakeholders must continue to reach out to the transportation staff within FLMAs as well. Furthermore, a meeting occurring only once per year may not be enough, so each agency needs to decide what is right for them.

Additional challenges included coordination for MPOs with small staff, as well as obstacles to public engagement persisting despite an improvement in digital communication since the pandemic.

The FHWA engaged attendees on tools, methods, and opportunities for building connections between agencies. Most attendees indicated that they would prefer the development of a guidebook, followed by a checklist, then an engagement tracker. Attendees felt that guidebooks help people understand what an agency wants and what their goals are, while checklists help agencies stay on track, and function to complement the guidebook. Additionally, checklists were praised as a great tool for small agencies without the staff to write a full guidebook. Engagement trackers were proposed to help agencies stay on track with their communications to other entities and to the public.

Next Steps

As next steps, FHWA will analyze notes, comments, and questions from Padlet, the meeting chat, as well as polls and surveys from this session to develop its plan. Training organizers will follow up with FHWA FLMA resources that are currently under development, explore the possibility of developing a guidebook, provide support to Michigan to develop their coordination efforts and engagement methodologies identified in this meeting, and coordinate a six-month progress meeting. Don Mayle from MDOT, Steven Stepek from the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS), and Brandon Jutz from the FWS Midwest Region volunteered to help lead coordination efforts and will communicate by email for now. The FHWA noted they can provide some FLMA contacts and Don noted that he will check back with them in a month. Michigan DOT, MPOs, and FLMAs will formalize coordination efforts identified as part of this session.

Appendix A: Michigan FLMA Contact Information

INSTALLATION NAME AND LOCATION (City or Township, County)	INSTALLATION MAILING ADDRESS	INSTALLATION MANAGER (Manager Name and Title)	INSTALLATION MANAGER CONTACT INFORMATION (Email and Telephone)	OTHER GENERAL INFORMATION ON UNIT (land area, number of assigned staff, daily or annual visitation, etc.)
Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Trenton, MI	5437 W Jefferson Ave, Trenton, MI 48183	Dan Kennedy, Refuge Manager	313-269-5370 daniel_kennedy@fws.gov	Manages over 6,200 acres of lands along 48 miles of the Detroit River including partnerships in Ontario, Canada. https://www.fws.gov/refuge/detroit-river/about-us
Seney National Wildlife Refuge (also manages the Harbor Island NWR, Huron NWR, Kirtland’s Warbler WMA and the Whitefish Point Unit) Seney, MI	1674 Refuge Entrance Rd. Seney, MI 49883	Sara Siekierski, Refuge Manager	906-586-9851 sara_siekierski@fws.gov	Seney NWR is 95,238 acres including a 15,150-acre wilderness area. The Whitefish Point Unit is 80 miles in Paradise, MI. Harbor Island and Huron NWR’s are comprised of islands in Lake Superior and Lake Huron, respectively. Kirtland’s Warbler WMA contains 125 separate tracts totaling 6,684 acres in eight acres of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula. https://www.fws.gov/refuge/seney/about-us
Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge (also manages the Michigan Islands NWR and the Michigan Wetland Management District)	6975 Mower Rd, Saginaw, MI 48601	Scott Simmons, Project Leader	989-385-5800 scott_simmons@fws.gov	Shiawassee NWR is a 10,000-acre migratory bird refuge in Saginaw County, MI. https://www.fws.gov/refuge/shiawassee/about-us The complex also manages the Michigan Islands National Wildlife Refuge consisting of the Lake Huron islands: Scarecrow, Big and Little Charity and Sugar Islands and Crooked. Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge staff also manage the Michigan Wetland Management District consisting of: Schlee, Malan, Kinney and Edger Waterfowl Production Areas units totaling 629 acres in 5 counties. https://www.fws.gov/refuge/michigan-wetland-management-district/about-us

Appendix B: List of Speakers

- Andy Edwards, Senior Community Planner, FHWA Office of Planning
- Andy Pickard, Team Leader – Planning, Environmental, and Realty, FHWA Michigan Division
- Brandon Jutz, Regional Transportation Coordinator (Region 3), National Wildlife Refuge System – Infrastructure Management Division
- Chandra Inglis-Smith, Transportation Specialist, FHWA Office of Planning
- Don Mayle, Section Manager for the Statewide Planning, MDOT
- Lewis Grimm, Planning Team Lead, FHWA Eastern Federal Lands
- Steve Stepek, Executive Director, Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS)