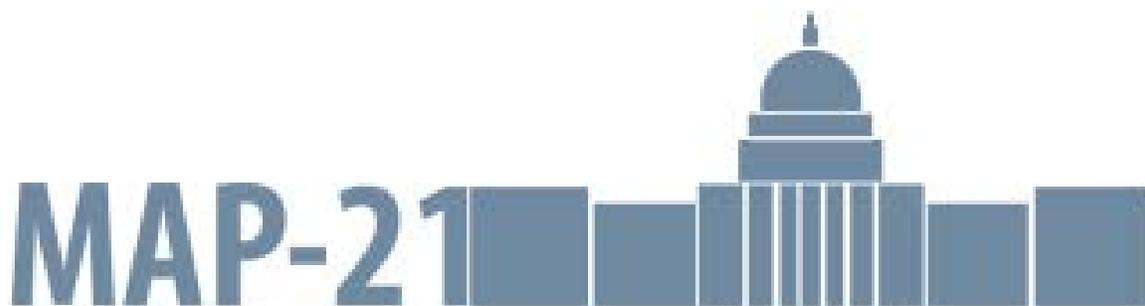




How Do RTPOs Benefit States and Rural Regions?

The Federal transportation authorization, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), created an opportunity for States to formally designate Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) as a means of formalizing their process for including non-metropolitan areas in statewide transportation planning processes. If you are an official of a State Department of Transportation (DOT), an existing Regional Planning Commission (RPC), or a local government official or professional staff, one may ask how the benefits of formalizing RTPOs will outweigh the efforts of designation.



In California, Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs) were created by State statute in 1972. A representative of California DOT (Caltrans) says, "RTPAs play an important role in Caltrans' overall planning efforts. We realize that even at our District level, a local agency will be better informed about the region's transportation needs and priorities. We rely on the planning work of the RTPAs in developing our Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)".

RTPOs develop the same transportation planning products as Metropolitan Planning Organizations. State DOTs are accustomed to accepting Long-Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs) and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) from MPOs to sustain the Statewide planning process. When regional planning organizations become RTPOs, they will produce the same documents to be incorporated in the Statewide planning and programming process.

The designation of RTPOs can assist strengthening rural and urban project proposals. For instance, instead of the State Department of Transportation (DOT) not understanding the significance of a bridge project that was proposed by the county highway superintendent, the State response to an RTPO with an established process may

Benefits of RTPOs to Rural Regions

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Instill a systematic transportation planning process.

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Involve local officials in Policy Committee decisionmaking.

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Provide a means to establish transportation goals, objectives, and regionally unique priorities.

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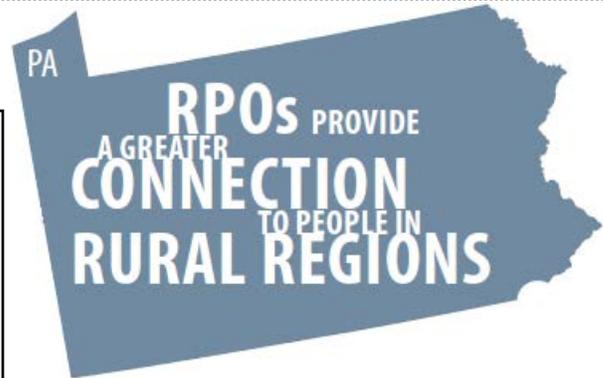
Improve the ability of prioritized projects to compete for funding.

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Facilitate conversation and public involvement between local communities and the State DOT.



In Pennsylvania, there is a longstanding practice of Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs) covering the geography not covered by MPOs. A Pennsylvania DOT (PennDOT) representative states, "The RPOs provide a greater connection to people in rural regions and allow us to maintain a focus on needs-based planning with connections to municipal and county comprehensive plans."



Benefits of RTPOs to State DOTs

Facilitates quality conversation between agencies and with members of local communities across regions, which increases transparency and aids in coordinating transit planning.

Provides uniformity for planning and project inputs from rural and metropolitan regions of the State and promoting fairness in regional representation.

Creates a basis for fully integrating rural transportation needs into the State Transportation Plan and STIP, including a means for selecting regional priorities.

Provides an established source of information on rural economic development needs and opportunities, resource development, and transportation system resiliency, as they regions are often critical areas for valuable agriculture, mining, and natural resource production.

Can streamline outreach to local governments by bringing them together in a regional forum.

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