



What Is a Regional Transportation Planning Organization?

A Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) is an organization that identifies local transportation needs, conducts planning, assists local governments, and supports the statewide transportation planning process in non-metropolitan regions of a State. States are provided the opportunity to designate RTPOs as a method for formalizing the engagement of officials from areas with a population size less than 50,000 as they incorporate rural transportation needs in the statewide transportation planning process. This Fact Sheet will explain the essential elements of RTPOs and their functions.

The Development of RTPOs

1 The transportation planning discipline has progressed over the last fifty years since Congress created the requirement for a Continuing, Cooperative, and Comprehensive (3C) transportation planning process in urbanized areas.

2 In the past decade, Congress has increased the level of coordination of how States will address the transportation needs of non-metropolitan areas. In Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), States are required to **cooperate** with non-metropolitan local officials, a higher level of engagement than the previous requirement of **consultation**.

In carrying out planning...with respect to non-metropolitan areas, each State shall cooperate with affected local officials with responsibility for transportation or, if applicable, through regional transportation planning organizations.
49 U.S. Code § 5304(e)(1)

MAP-21 and Non-Metropolitan Areas

States are provided the opportunity to designate RTPOs as a method of formalizing engagement from non-metropolitan area officials as they incorporate rural transportation needs in the Statewide transportation planning process. Non-metropolitan areas constitute a significant amount of the United States' geographic area. Representation of these areas is critical in the statewide planning process to ensure that regions have an established process.



For more information go to:

- www.planning.dot.gov/focus_rural.asp
- www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/processes/rural

RTPOs will carry out the following planning tasks:



L RTP

Preparation of a Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).



T IP

Preparation of a Regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

- Coordination of local planning, land use, and economic development.

- Provision of technical assistance to local officials.

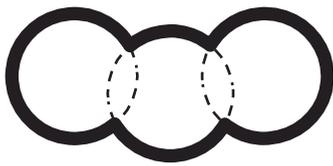
- Participation in national, multi-State, and State policy and planning development processes.

- Facilitation of a forum for public participation in regional and Statewide planning.

- Coordination of plans and programs with neighboring RTPOs and Metropolitan Planning Organizations and tribal organizations.

Designating an RTPO

Once a State chooses to designate RTPOs, those organizations must meet certain requirements. The extent to which these organizations perform transportation planning varies, depending on their history and charter. However, if each can be modified to meet the requirements shown below, then States can designate them as RTPOs.



- Be established as a multi-jurisdictional organization of non-metropolitan local officials and representatives of local transportation systems.



- Have a policy committee, with a majority of members being non-metropolitan local officials, and as appropriate, representatives from the State, private business, transportation service providers, economic development practitioners, and the public in the region.



- Have a fiscal and administrative agent to provide professional planning, management, and administrative support.

Funding for RTPOs

At States' discretion, FHWA Statewide Planning and Research (SP&R) and FTA Section 5304 program funds and/or FHWA Surface Transportation Program funding may be used to support RTPOs.

Federal funds require a match; it may be variable but in most cases 20%.

In many cases, there are already organizations conducting or assisting with regional planning. These may

be known as Regional Planning Commissions, Regional Planning and Development Commissions, Regional Planning Agencies, Councils of Governments or Regional Planning Organizations.

Benefits that can be Achieved by RTPOs

- Conducting duties that support and enhance the Statewide planning process;
- Providing a forum for public participation in non-metropolitan areas;
- Insuring the regional and local input of non-metropolitan areas;
- Fostering coordination of local planning, land use, and economic development plans with transportation plans and programs at the State, regional, and local levels;
- Cooperating on the development of the Statewide Transportation Plan, and
- Consulting on the development of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program in the non-metropolitan areas of the State.