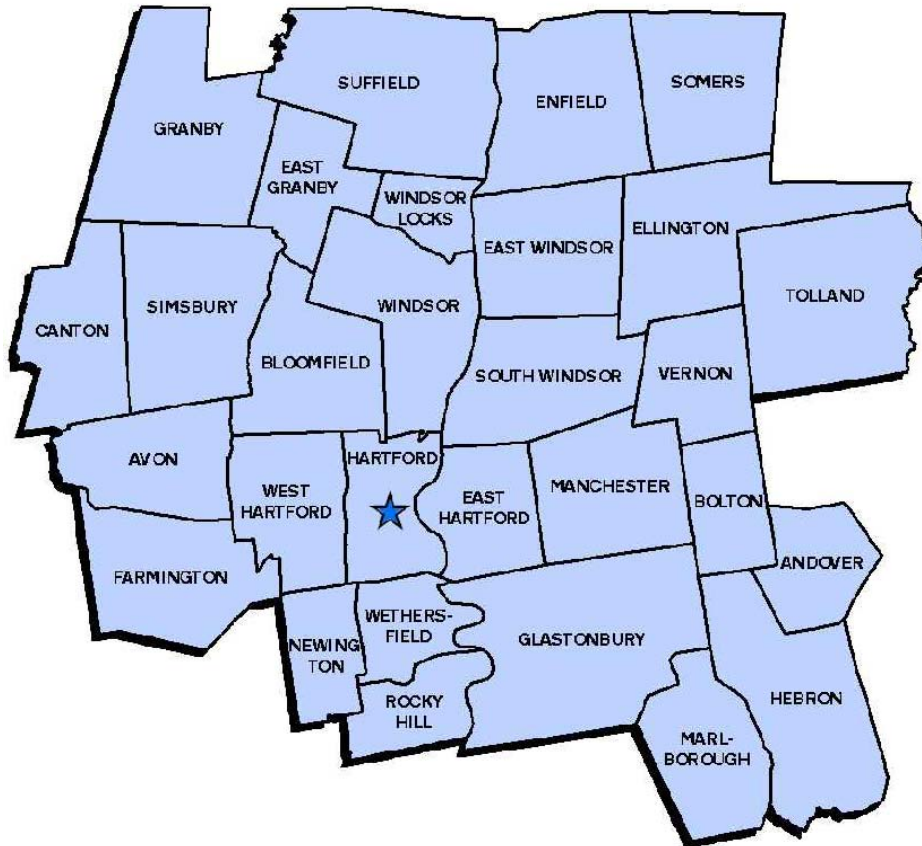




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Administration

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*Map courtesy of CRCOG Brochure, www.CRCOG.org

Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG)

Transportation Planning Certification Review Of The
Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process For
Hartford Transportation Management Area

Final Report
January 30, 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE 3

CERTIFICATION ACTION..... 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 4

SPECIFIC ITEMS OF DISCUSSION AT THE ON-SITE REVIEW 4

 Review of Findings from 2004 Federal Transportation Management Area Certification Review 4

 Transit Planning..... 5

 Planning for Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Livable Communities 6

 Freight Planning 7

 Discussion with Transportation Committee and Others Regarding CRCOG’s Performance 7

 Building Technical Capacity..... 8

 American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA): Programming Efforts 8

 MPO Coordination: CRCOG, CCRPA, MRPA, PVPC..... 9

PLANNING REQUIREMENTS COVERED BY THIS REVIEW..... 9

 Organization..... 10

 Boundary..... 10

 Agreements/Contracts..... 11

 UPWP Development 12

 Transportation Planning Process 13

 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Development 14

 TIP Development/Approval/Amendments 15

 Financial Planning 17

 Air Quality 18

 Project Selection Procedures 19

 Outreach/Public Participation..... 20

 Self-Certification 23

 Title VI Update 23

 Management Systems..... 24

 ITS..... 26

Preface

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005 set forth requirements for Statewide and Metropolitan transportation planning processes, following upon the predecessor Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The United States Department of Transportation (US DOT) issued planning regulations on November 14, 2007 implementing SAFETEA-LU requirements governing the transportation planning process. These requirements are presented in 23 CFR Part 450 and 49 CFR Part 613, Statewide and Metropolitan Planning Final Rule. The Metropolitan Planning Regulations are closely tied with the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA) through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Air Quality Conformity Regulations.

The metropolitan planning regulations require that the FHWA and FTA jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process conducted in each urbanized area or Transportation Management Area (TMA) with a population over 200,000 no less than every four years. This review includes meeting the requirements of the Metropolitan Planning Regulations and, in air quality non-attainment or maintenance areas, evaluation of the process to ensure conformity of plans and programs to the EPA Air Quality Conformity regulations. Upon completion of this review, FHWA and FTA will jointly Certify, Certify with Corrective Action or Decertify the Metropolitan Planning Process.

This is the fifth certification review of the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process for the Hartford Urbanized Area and the Connecticut Portion of the Springfield MA-CT Transportation Management Area. The first review was conducted on March 7, 8 and 9, 1995, the second on May 5 and 27, 1998, the third on July 11 and 12, 2001 and the fourth on October 20 and 21, 2004. This review was conducted on July 14, 2009 for the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), July 15, 2009 for the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA), representing the Greater New Britain and Bristol portion of the Hartford TMA and July 16, 2009 for the Midstate Regional Planning Agency (Midstate RPA), representing the Greater Middletown portion of the Hartford TMA.

The federal review team conducted a desk review of the major components of the transportation planning process and explored selected components of the planning process and major DOT initiatives in depth during the on-site review. This report identifies recommendations for consideration by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for improvement and also highlights some of the positive practices of the MPO that can serve as examples to other states and planning organizations.

Certification Action

The FTA and the FHWA have determined that the transportation planning process conducted by the Capitol Region Council of Governments, representing the Hartford portion of the Hartford TMA and the Connecticut portion of the Springfield MA-CT Transportation Management Area, meets the requirements of the Metropolitan Planning Rule, 23 CFR Part 450 Subpart C and 49 CFR Part 613. The FHWA and the FTA are therefore jointly certifying the transportation planning process.

Executive Summary

As a result of this Certification review, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration find that the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and its staff, in cooperation with the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT), are conducting a transportation planning process that produces valuable products and results using the planning tools currently available.

The CRCOG has developed a high degree of proficiency in travel forecasting, traffic analysis, and other technical areas of planning, integrating technical methods effectively with broad public participation to address the region's transportation challenges. Of special note is CRCOG's critical role in providing travel forecasting services and other technical support for planning major regional transit infrastructure projects, as well as the use of technical tools such as GIS and computer-aided design and simulations to communicate concepts to the public. The Capitol Region's metropolitan transportation plan successfully synthesizes considerations of mobility and transportation safety with needs related to economic growth, environmental protection, land development, and other quality of life factors, demonstrating clear consistency with the eight SAFETY-LU planning factors. The TIP reflects the strategic direction of the metropolitan transportation plan, which has as its objective improved performance of the transportation system across all modes. CRCOG has taken significant initiatives since the last Certification in planning for improved pedestrian and bicycle options, as well as upgrading and expansion of public transportation services to meet the needs of area residents and businesses.

The CRCOG's planning process is hereby certified in accordance with 23 CFR Part 450 Subpart C [450.443(b)] and 49 CFR Part 613. Noted below are several recommendations relative to the Capitol Region's planning process.

Summary of Recommendations

- CRCOG is encouraged to participate in a recent FHWA freight advisory group initiative in Connecticut and to pursue opportunities to work with providers, FHWA and other relevant Federal agencies, the State, and other MPOs to develop effective approaches to freight planning.
- CRCOG and partner agencies in the metropolitan planning process should continue to seek opportunities to strengthen coordination and resource sharing in the Hartford Urbanized Area.
- CRCOG is encouraged in its efforts to identify applications of ITS technologies to improve the performance of area public transit systems.

Specific Items of Discussion at the On-site Review

In meeting the requirements of the Metropolitan Planning Regulations set forth in 23 CFR Part 450 and 49 CFR Part 613, Statewide and Metropolitan Planning Final Rule, MPOs have the flexibility to focus their particular planning expertise on the needs that they define for their planning region through their planning process. The purpose of the on-site review meeting was to assess the technical capability of the MPO staff in meeting these planning needs, and their ability to involve the public who may be affected by transportation investments in the transportation decision making process. In addition, the review team used these sessions to help assess the multi-modal nature of the MPO planning activities as well as their ability to respond to various DOT initiatives. As this TMA comprises three Metropolitan Planning Organizations, interregional cooperation and activities were a major focus of the certification review effort. The extent to which the public is involved in the transportation planning process and the decision making process were overarching themes during this review.

Review of findings from 2004 Federal Transportation Management Area Certification Review

At the desk review CRCOG provided the federal review team with a handout outlining CRCOG's response and action to the 2004 Certification recommendations. This document is provided in the appendix. A brief summary of CRCOG's response to the 2004 certification recommendations is included below.

- The Capitol Region COG, the Central Connecticut RPA and the Midstate RPA should continue to work together to explore ways of sharing resources to utilize the technical strength of CRCOG and any individual strengths that each region may bring to the planning process for the TMA rather than seeking to duplicate capabilities.

CRCOG reported that the three MPOs have continued to work together to share resources and technical capacity.

- The concept of cooperation among the planning regions within the Hartford TMA should continue to be explored and refined both in the area of sharing technical capability, as discussed earlier, and in the area of consistency of plans and programs for the entire TMA region. The CRCOG should continue to participate with the planning agencies within the Hartford TMA to explore and further develop the precedent already set by the Congestion Management System (CMS), Incident Management and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) coordination activities. Other areas might include contracting or sharing of resources between the agencies for the completion of specific studies, development of a coordinated, TMA wide, transportation model and coordinated GIS system or the sharing of expertise relative to Environmental Justice (EJ), public participation, or other DOT planning requirements.

CRCOG continues to work with CCRPA, MRPA and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission on transportation planning projects. These projects include a Jobs Access program, a commonly developed Locally Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (LOCHSTP) and other planning studies.

- The next time the Public Participation Policy is updated discussion of the Administrative Adjustment process should be included and the STP-Urban Program process should be made a part of the Public Participation Policy and referenced in the TIP and Transportation Plan.

Discussion of the Administrative Adjustment process was included in the 2007 update of the Public Involvement Plan.

- The CRCOG should continue to implement the activities already underway in the area of Environmental Justice and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) including the development and use of equity assessment methods, analysis to determine the spatial location of persons with LEP, and distribution of informational material in alternative languages.

CRCOG continues to implement activities related to Environmental Justice and Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Actions related to both are described in greater detail throughout the report.

Transit Planning

The region has taken a collaborative approach to transit planning. As such, CRCOG has worked with the ConnDOT, CT Transit (the regional fixed route operator), Transit District, Rideshare Corp, Transportation Management Organization, and the local Chamber of Commerce on transit planning issues. Recent coordination has occurred through the Jobs Access Taskforce, the CRCOG Transportation Committee, the Locally Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (LOCHSTP) Task Force, other Specific Project Committees, the CT Transit Service Review, the Bus Service Subcommittee, which brings together towns with transit service, and the Metro Hartford Alliance.

CRCOG has taken the lead on three major planning studies in the region, including the Jobs Access Study, the North West Corridor, Study and LOCHSTP. For the Jobs Access Study, CRCOG helped the local business community and

transit operators expand bus service to meet local employment needs. CRCOG took the lead in the Northwest Corridor Study, which includes the Griffin Busway. The study included three main elements: to build ridership in the Northwest corridor, to evaluate Union Station as a potential multimodal center, and to develop a downtown circulation system to accommodate busway service. CRCOG took the lead for the North central Connecticut Plan Development for the LOCHSTP Plan, which was completed in June 2007 and updated last spring.

CRCOG has also participated in transit-related studies lead by other agencies or departments in the region. CRCOG provided technical expertise for the Hartford Star Shuttle study in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Hartford, ConnDOT, CT TRANSIT and the Downtown Development Agency. CRCOG also partnered with ConnDOT to complete travel forecasting and planning for the New Britain BRT and the New Haven/Hartford/Springfield Commuter Rail studies. This work also gave CRCOG the opportunity to coordinate with other MPOs in the area like CCRPA, PVPC and the South Central Region Council of Governments (SCRCOG).

CRCOG has been active in local transit initiatives and planning including clean vehicle projects, retrofit diesel filters and Connecticut's Fuel Cell Demonstration Project (Hydrogen fueled star shuttle). In partnership with CTRANSIT, CRCOG recently initiated a Regional Bus Shelter Program to bring towns with bus shelters together to exchange bus shelter advertising for bus shelter installation, maintenance, and operation.

Conclusion:

CRCOG has worked effectively with agency partners on transit planning. CRCOG plays a crucial role in providing travel forecasting services and other technical support for planning major regional transit infrastructure projects.

Planning for Pedestrian, Bicycles, and Livable Communities

CRCOG has been actively engaged in pedestrian and bicycle planning since the 2004 certification review. CRCOG adopted a new Pedestrian Plan in 2005 and a combined Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in 2008. CRCOG also offered design Seminars to Towns to educate them on integrating bike and pedestrian design into transportation planning. Because there was a lack of bicycle advocacy in the region, CRCOG helped launch the Regional Bicycle Advocacy Group. CRCOG continues to work closely with the group to implement bicycle education programs.

CRCOG explained in the desk review that the agency took a new approach in the 2008 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, helping to organize a specialized committee called the *Active Transportation Initiative Working Group* and attempted to expand the scope of non-motorized transportation planning beyond work trips. The main goal for bike and pedestrian planning is to create conditions that will allow people to *choose* and to *be able* to walk or bike to work. CRCOG's goals that concern bicycle and pedestrian modes relate to both mobility and the environment. Improving transportation by alternative modes is particularly pertinent in Hartford because 35 percent of households do not own a car. Likewise, the State of CT is committed to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. CRCOG also is involved in planning the East Coast Greenway, which will connect all the major urban centers along the eastern seaboard with a bike and pedestrian path. CRCOG's future plans include evaluation of the bicycle network regionwide to identify opportunities for improvement and to undertake the necessary advanced planning to take advantage of new funding sources.

Conclusion:

CRCOG has made a significant effort to improve options for non-motorized transportation and is working with the community and partner agencies to develop new facilities and better conditions for traveling on foot and by bicycle.

Freight Planning

Although CRCOG has undertaken some joint efforts with other MPOs and private businesses in Freight Planning, they are largely limited activities, due to the nature and scale of the issue in the state. In a 2005 report, CRCOG found that freight in the region is 98 percent hauled via truck, with 40 percent of those vehicles representing through-traffic. CRCOG concluded that the scale of freight planning is multi-state and should be the responsibility of larger regional planning efforts. As such, CRCOG is calling for multi-state action through New England Association of Regional Councils (NEARC). Freight studies also show that the CSX rail in Springfield is not used currently to full capacity. CRCOG is supporting PVPC's efforts to improve air cargo functions through the Bradley Area Transportation Study.

Conclusion:

CRCOG should continue to look for opportunities to address freight planning needs in the region, including participating in a recent FHWA freight advisory group initiative in Connecticut and working with FHWA, providers, the State, and other MPOs to develop effective approaches to freight planning.

Recommendation

The region should do more to accommodate truck freight, which is crucial to a strong economy. CRCOG should view the FHWA informational presentation on freight planning and continue to pursue opportunities to work with providers, FHWA and other relevant Federal agencies, the State, and other MPOs to develop effective approaches to freight planning.

Discussion with Transportation Committee & Others Regarding CRCOG's Performance

As part of the assessment of Public Participation in the Capitol Region, the review team included an agenda item to provide an opportunity for discussion with the CRCOG Transportation Committee and other interested individuals regarding their involvement with the CRCOG transportation planning process. The Transportation Committee is the primary means for public involvement and members are appointed by the CRCOG member communities. The Committee also includes representatives of other regional interests, such as transit providers and the Environmental Justice Committee.

Those who spoke were supportive of CRCOG efforts to involve the public in the planning process and there was a consensus that the opportunity for public involvement added significant value to the planning process. It was also noted that Council members are able to think regionally in assigning priorities for applying limited resources to the transportation needs of the region. CRCOG was praised for extensive knowledge and expertise. It was noted that CRCOG serves as an effective liaison among Federal agencies, ConnDOT, local municipalities, and the public. Frustration was also expressed relative to difficulties in integrating recent American Recovery and ARRA allocations within the metropolitan planning process, due to requirements specific to that program. It should be noted, however, that CRCOG fully programmed and obligated all of the funds available within the necessary timeframe.

Conclusion:

Transportation Committee members, which represent relevant interests and communities with a stake in the planning process, have high regard for CRCOG and expressed satisfaction with opportunities for public involvement.

Building Technical Capabilities

CRCOG has invested recently in building technical capacity by purchasing software, additional hardware, and hiring additional technical staff, including a full-time modeler.

Travel Forecasting Model: CRCOG uses a four step travel forecasting model, using TransCAD software, which has proved to be effective for small area, regional, transit, and highway forecasting. They have recently implemented the model for the New Britain Busway design process, corridor studies, and technical assistance to smaller towns. For smaller towns, CRCOG has implemented the forecasting model to test small traffic alternatives, particularly in relation to turning movements at intersections. Using the travel forecasting model, CRCOG worked with ConnDOT to develop and test alternatives for the New Britain Busway New Starts Application. CRCOG has been able to link GIS into the travel forecasting model. Although CRCOG does not yet include freight planning in the forecasting model because of regional data constraints, the model does include truck planning.

CRCOG has adapted the travel forecasting model to be able to integrate new FTA user benefit analysis software. The tool has proved to be effective as an equity assessment tool, has improved service planning, and has optimized project benefit and cost-effectiveness ratios. CRCOG recently was invited to present the integration of the forecasting model with the FTA user benefit analysis at an FTA roundtable. CRCOG also has mapped User Benefits through GIS. Through this analysis, CRCOG was able to identify a gap in service near the Hartford Hospital, proving the model's effectiveness in shuttle route planning.

Traffic Analysis & Engineering: CRCOG purchased AutoCAD Lite to read and revise concept plans from consultants and prepare graphics for meetings. CRCOG also uses HCM and Synchro for traffic simulation and level of service analysis. Both tools are effective community involvement tools.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS): CRCOG is able to maintain its road network and land use inventory in a GIS database. The database is then linked to a socioeconomic data set. CRCOG uses GIS as a public involvement tool, supporting visualization, environmental justice analysis, modeling and forecasting, and congestion management. The CRCOG GIS professional has taken parcel data from all 29 town assessors' databases to build a robust system for the TMA. New color digital orthographic photos were also flown this year.

Conclusion:

CRCOG has developed a high level of sophistication in applying a range of technical methods critical to transportation planning, including travel forecasting, computer graphics, use of online services, and GIS. CRCOG makes effective use of its technical capabilities both in data analysis and communication of crucial information to the public and partners in the transportation process. CRCOG plays a critical role as a resource for travel forecasting on regional projects and to local municipalities and the other two MPOs in the Hartford TMA. CRCOG's technical capabilities have advanced substantially since 2004 as result of hiring additional staff and purchasing new equipment.

American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA): Programming Efforts

In anticipation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), CRCOG researched the potential legislation to ensure that the region would be prepared to spend the funding. The Council worked closely with towns and ConnDOT to prioritize shovel-ready projects to meet Federal standards, facilitating meetings among municipalities and with ConnDOT. CRCOG also monitored project and ARRA funding progress through its website.

These efforts were instrumental in enabling town engineers to develop plans before the money was even assured. ConnDOT assumed the cost of design review, which was necessary because otherwise would have been a significant financial burden to the towns.

Conclusion:

The partnership among CRCOG, ConnDOT, and local municipalities in the region has proved to be adaptable to meeting new challenges and has worked well in integrating the short-term demands of ARRA into the metropolitan planning process. This success was based on the strong capabilities and experience developed by all entities through the cooperative programming of STP projects.

MPO Coordination: CRCOG, CCRPA, MRPA, PVPC

Hartford Urbanized Area MPO coordination

Official MOUs among the CRCOG, the CCRPA and the Midstate Region MPOs establish roles and responsibilities for their coordination on transportation planning for the Hartford Urbanized Area. The MOUs define joint coordination tasks, distribution procedures for PL funds and STP-Urban funds, annual coordination meetings, and planning program meetings for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and State Transportation Plan. The three MPOs hold annual staff coordination meetings to discuss coordination on STP-Urban program and Transit Enhancement funds. For individual projects like New Britain-Hartford Bus Busway, the MPOs convene more frequently or as needed. On projects of mutual interest, including the Busway (ConnDOT lead), New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Rail (ConnDOT Lead), CCSU Traffic Study (CRCOG Lead), and Farmington Trail, CRCOG participates with the other MPOs in an advisory capacity. The three regional MPOs also manage programs jointly, such as the jobs access program, LOCHSTP, Congestion Management Process, and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and Incident Management.

Overview of Hartford-Springfield Coordination: (CRCOG-PVPC- Pioneer Valley)

CROG coordinates with the Pioneer Valley MPO (PVPC) on areas of mutual interest in the region, although there is no MOU between PVPC and any of the three Hartford MPOs. CRCOG, PVPC and the CCRPA have formed the Hartford-Springfield Economic Partnership to promote economic growth in the region. Areas of mutual interest include I-91, Bradley Airport (Hartford-Springfield Airport), CSX Railyard, New Haven-North Hampton Trail (also Framingham trail). The groups hold annual coordination meetings and exchange data on travel model and socioeconomic data as needed. The staff of the PVPC attended the desk review and commented positively about the joint efforts with CRCOG in the region.

Conclusion:

Coordination among the three MPOs in the Hartford TMA and PVPC, as well as with individual communities and partner transportation agencies, is crucial to produce an integrated transportation system that functions effectively. The previous Certification, in 2004, emphasized the importance of resource sharing among the agencies and jurisdictions in the Hartford Urbanized Area. CROCOG has demonstrated continued progress in implementing an effective 3C process.

Recommendation:

CROCOG and partner agencies in the metropolitan planning process should continue to look for opportunities to strengthen coordination and resource sharing in the Hartford Urbanized Area.

Planning Requirements Covered by this Review

Organization, Boundaries, Agreements/Contracts

Organization

Regulatory Basis

Federal legislation (23 USC 134(b); 49 USC 5303)) requires the designation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for each urbanized area with a population of more than 50,000 population. The policy board of the MPO shall consist of (A) local elected officials, (B) officials of local agencies that administer or operate major modes of transportation within the area, and (C) appropriate State officials.

This designation remains in effect until the MPO is re-designated. The addition of jurisdictional or political bodies into the MPO or members to the policy board generally does not constitute a re-designation of the MPO.

The organizational requirements for Metropolitan Planning Organizations are spelled out in Federal Regulation CFR 23 Section 450.310. To the extent possible there will be one Metropolitan Planning Organization for each urbanized area in the State, designated by the Governor through enabling State legislation. The MPO should have a defined organizational structure.

Observations:

The Federal team reviewed a prepared statement by the CROCOG staff and the CROCOG website as part of the desk review. According to the prepared statement, "The Capitol Region Council of Governments is an association of 29 municipalities, including the capital City of Hartford and 28 surrounding towns. CROCOG is enabled by State statutes that define planning region boundaries and allow the formation of councils of government. The governor designated CROCOG as an MPO in 1973. Its Policy Board is composed of the chief elected official from each town, except that the City of Hartford is represented by the Mayor plus three members of the City Council."

Conclusion:

The Capitol Region Council of Governments MPO meets the requirements for organization and designation of 23CFR 450.310.

Boundaries

Regulatory Basis:

Federal legislation (23 USC 134(c); 49 USC 53039(d)) requires boundaries of a metropolitan planning area to be determined by agreement between the metropolitan planning organization and the Governor.

Each metropolitan planning area shall encompass at least the existing urbanized area and the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within a 20- year forecast period and may encompass the entire metropolitan statistical area or consolidated metropolitan statistical area, as defined by the Bureau of the Census. Requirement: CFR 23 Section 450.312 defines the boundary requirements for Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Observations:

The Hartford Urbanized Area as identified by the 2000 Census includes significant parts of the TMA for which three MPOs have transportation planning responsibilities: CRCOG, CCRPA, and Midstate RPA. An extremely small piece of the Urbanized Area also extends into a fourth MPO: COGCNV. Part of the Springfield Urbanized Area extends into the Capitol Region. Following the 2000 census, CRCOG reviewed the Urbanized Area boundaries and developed new urban area boundaries based on the Census boundaries. The urban boundaries encompass all of the Urbanized Area plus a significant area outside the Census-defined Urbanized Area. These more general urban area boundaries are used to help define the functional classification of roadways in the region. Both the urban boundaries and the functional classification were submitted to FHWA.

Conclusion:

The boundaries of the Capitol Region Council of Governments MPO are a contiguous geographic area with a finite boundary.

Agreements/Contracts**Regulatory Basis:**

Federal legislation (23 USC 13) requires the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) work in cooperation with the State and public transportation agencies in carrying out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3C) metropolitan planning process. These agencies determine their respective and mutual roles and responsibilities and procedures governing their cooperative efforts. Federal regulation requires that these relationships be specified in agreements between the MPO and the State and between the MPO and the public transit operators:

“The MPO, the State(s), and the public transportation operator(s) shall cooperatively determine their mutual responsibilities in carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process. These responsibilities shall be clearly identified in written agreements among the MPO, the State(s), and the public transportation operator(s) serving the MPA.” 23 CFR 450.314(a)

If more than one MPO has been designated to serve an urbanized area, there shall be a written agreement among the MPOs, the State(s), and the public transportation operator(s) describing how the metropolitan transportation planning processes will be coordinated to assure the development of consistent metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs across the MPA boundaries...” 23 CFR 450.314(d)

The regulations also require an agreement between the MPO and any other agency responsible for air quality planning under the Clean Air Act. A single agreement should be executed among the MPO, State, transit operators, and designated air quality regulations *“to the extent possible.” 23 CFR 450.314 (c).*

Observations:

CRCOG has four Memorandums of Understanding, which help guide the transportation planning process.

1. "Memorandum of Understanding for Transportation Planning in the Capitol Region" – adopted 1997, the purpose of the MOU is to "ensure that an effective transportation program is developed cooperatively among the stakeholders for the Capitol Region". The MOU defines the roles and responsibilities of the Greater Hartford Transit District, ConnDOT and the Capitol Region.
2. Letter to Commissioner of DEP – adopted 1998, "describes the respective roles and responsibilities for air quality related transportation planning" for both the MPO and the DEP.
3. "Memorandum of Understanding between the Connecticut Department of Transportation and the Connecticut Metropolitan Planning Organizations" was adopted in 1995. The purpose of this MOU is "to formally define conditions, terms, and methods by which the MPOs and ConnDOT will expedite the scheduling and movement of projects within the three year TIP/STIP".
4. "Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Transportation Planning and Funding in the Hartford Urbanized Area" was adopted in 2003. The signatories for this MOU are the four MPOs whose boundaries overlap into the Hartford Urbanized Area, Capitol Region Council of Government, Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, Midstate Regional Planning Agency, and the Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley. The purpose of the MOU is "to define a method for distributing planning funds, STP-Urban and FTA Section 5307 funds attributable to the Hartford Urbanized Area, and to define the responsibilities of each MPO for carrying out its own transportation planning program".

The Unified Planning Work Agreement (UPWP) defines subject roles, responsibilities and cooperative actions within the TMA. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) provides guidance and participates in development of the metropolitan transportation plan, which is coordinated with the statewide transportation plan (STP).

Conclusions:

CRCOG has adopted the necessary MOUs to promote a cooperative planning process among the ConnDOT, the local transit operator, the designated air quality agency, DEP, and the other MPOs that constitute the Hartford Urbanized Area.

UPWP Development

Regulatory Basis:

23 CFR 450.308 identifies the requirements for unified planning work programs (UPWPs) to be prepared in Transportation Management Areas. CFR 420.109 governs how FHWA planning funds are distributed to the MPOs. 49 USC 5303 (h) allocates FTA assistance to metropolitan planning organizations. MPOs are required to develop the UPWP in cooperation with the State and public transit agencies [450.308 (c)].

Elements to be included in the UPWP are:

- Discussion of the planning priorities facing the metropolitan planning area
- Description of all metropolitan transportation planning and transportation-related air quality planning activities anticipated within the next 1- or 2-year period, regardless of funding source or agencies conducting activities, indicating: Who will perform the work, Schedule for completion of the work, and Intended products;
- Include all activities funded under title 23 and the Federal Transit Act [450.308(b)]

Observations:

The UPWP had been prepared each year until FY 2008, at which time CRCOG initiated a two-year UPWP, as allowed under the Federal regulations. CRCOG staff prepares the preliminary draft of the UPWP and develops

initial suggestions as to what tasks to include. The staff addresses all required tasks and considers all optional tasks corresponding to regional issues that local officials, partner agencies, and relevant civic, business, and community groups believe warrant attention. Thus, the staff prepares an 'Important Issues' section of the document that highlights relevant transportation issues raised during the course of the previous year through CRCOG's planning program, including relevant community involvement efforts such as the work of the Environmental Justice Advisory Board, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, the Jobs Access Task Force, and public forums and focus groups for projects such as special corridor studies and the update of the TIP. The issues also include those raised by Federal, State, and other partner agencies during the course of the year. Some are given to CRCOG as directives or guidance from funding agencies.

The UPWP includes a list of all transportation-related activities and issues that will involve CRCOG will be involved over the following two fiscal years. The UPWP lists the tasks necessary to carry out the objectives of the Capitol Region Long-Range Transportation Plan and elements of the transportation planning process. For each project or activity, CRCOG identifies funding sources, products that will be produced, anticipated work schedule, and sponsoring agencies and participants.

Conclusion:

The Capitol Region MPO develops a comprehensive UPWP meeting the requirements of 23 CFR 450.308, in cooperation with the ConnDOT and the local transit operator.

Transportation Planning Process

Regulatory Basis:

The Transportation Planning Process relative to planning factors and other elements of the planning process is contained in the 23 CFR Part 450 and 49 CFR Part 613, Statewide and Metropolitan Planning Final Rule § 450.306. This section will deal exclusively with the "planning factors" as prescribed by section § 450.306 (a) as the other items in this section of the rule will be discussed elsewhere in this report.

The eight planning factors are:

- (1) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- (2) Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- (3) Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- (4) Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
- (5) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
- (6) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- (7) Promote efficient system management and operation; and
- (8) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

SAFETEA-LU also requires a public participation process and plan as a component of the planning process as defined in section § 450.316 (a). This regulation requires that the MPO consult all interested parties including citizens, public agencies, freight shippers, representatives of transportation use groups and other stakeholders. The MPO must create a public participation plan in consultation with all interested parties. The plan should include adequate public notice for all participation activities; visualization techniques to describe the transportation plan and TIP activities; holding public meetings in a convenient, accessible location; and providing ample opportunity for public comment.

Observations:

The review team asked CRCOG to provide a statement describing how it considers the eight SAFETEA-LU planning factors elements in the transportation planning process. CRCOG staff provided a detailed statement relating the region's activities, studies, and policies to the eight elements. The statement, *Capitol Region Transportation Program: Consideration of Eight Planning Factors*, is included in the Appendix.

The statement discusses the process by which the Public Participation Plan, entitled *Capitol Region Council of Government Public Participation Plan*, adopted in 2007, was developed to meet SAFETEA-LU requirements. An appendix to the Plan details the public comment period, comments received, and disposition of those comments.

Conclusions:

The CRCOG has been notably diligent and thorough in responding to the SAFETEA-LU planning factor requirements. The transportation planning process demonstrates strong and substantive influence of the factors, contributing to development of sound, effective methods that address transportation within a broad context of regional socioeconomic, developmental, and environmental needs.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan Development

Regulatory Basis:

The requirements for development of a Metropolitan Transportation Plan are spelled out in § 450.322 of 23 CFR Part 450 and 49 CFR Part 613, Statewide and Metropolitan Planning Final Rule.

"The metropolitan transportation planning process shall include the development of a transportation plan addressing no less than a twenty year planning horizon as of the effective date. The plan shall include both long-range and short-range strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods." 23 CFR 450.322 The metropolitan transportation plan is to be updated every four years in non-attainment and maintenance areas to ensure its consistency with changes in land use, demographic, and transportation characteristics.

The regulation also identifies a number of required elements that must be addressed in the Transportation Plan, including:

- Demand analysis [23 CFR 450.322 (f) (1)];
- Congestion management strategies [23 CFR 450.322 (f)(4)];
- Pedestrian walkway and bicycle facilities [23 CFR 450.322 (f) (2)];
- System preservation [23 CFR 450.322 (f) (5)];
- Design concept and scope descriptions of all existing and proposed transportation facilities, in sufficient detail to permit conformity determinations in nonattainment and maintenance areas [23 CFR 450.322 (f) (6)];
- A multimodal evaluation of the transportation, socioeconomic, environmental, and financial impact of the overall plan [23 CFR 450.322 (f) (7)];
- Transportation enhancements [23 CFR 450.322 (f) (9)];
- "A financial plan that demonstrates how the adopted transportation plan can be implemented." [23 CFR 450.322 (f) (10)]
- Public official and citizen involvement (in accordance with the requirements of 23 CFR 450.316), including participation during the early stages of plan development, availability of document for public review, and at least one formal public meeting in nonattainment TMAs [23 CFR 450.322 (j)];
- Conformity determination in nonattainment and maintenance areas 23 CFR 450.322(l)]

Observations:

The current metropolitan transportation plan, entitled *Transportation 2035*, was completed in 2007. The plan is multi-modal and integrates policies and recommendations from all of CRCOG's planning activities and different modal planning functions, including the *Regional Transit Strategy*, bicycle and pedestrian plans, and several corridor studies. Additional characteristics of the plan are:

- responds to the eight SAFETEA-LU planning factors from the SAFETEA-LU regulations;
- focuses on several "major policy directions," that support creating and maintaining travel choice, coordinating land use and transportation, environmental justice, transit, pedestrian and bike travel, better system operation and management, following through on study recommendations, and addressing federal requirements;
- provides strategic direction for the TIP;
- discusses all modes of transportation, including fixed route public transportation, vehicular, rail, air, pedestrian and bicycle;
- includes conservation and development analysis for all 29 towns within the region; and
- integration of the congestion management process (CMP).

The next update of the metropolitan transportation plan is scheduled for 2011, if not before.

Conclusions:

The CRCOG Regional Transportation Plan meets the requirements of *23 CFR, Section 450.322* and is the result of considerable local involvement and a robust planning process. CRCOG continues to innovate and seek opportunities for enhancing the metropolitan transportation plan as a comprehensive synthesis of rigorous technical analysis and community policy priorities. CRCOG's commitment to project implementation increases the importance of the plan in guiding investment decisions.

TIP Development/Approval/Amendments**Regulatory Basis:**

The MPO is required, under *23CFR 450.324*, to develop a transportation improvement program (TIP) in cooperation with the State and public transit operators. Specific requirements and conditions, as specified in the regulations, include:

"The MPO, in cooperation with the State(s) and any affected public transportation operator(s), shall develop a TIP for the metropolitan planning area. The TIP shall cover a period of no less than four years, be updated at least every four years, and be approved by the MPO and the Governor... The TIP must be compatible with the STIP development and approval process." [*23CFR 450.324(a)*]

- Conformity determination by FHWA and FTA in non-attainment and maintenance areas. [*23CFR 450.324(a)*]
- Reasonable opportunity for public comment in accordance with *23CFR 450.316(a)* and, in non-attainment TMAs, an opportunity for at least one formal public meeting during the TIP development process. [*23CFR 450.324(b)*]
- The TIP shall include a financial plan identifying projects that can be implemented using public or private sources. The State and the transit operator must provide MPOs with estimates of Federal and State funds available for the transportation system serving the metropolitan area. [*23CFR 450.324 (h)*]

- The TIP shall include: all transportation projects, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, proposed for funding under title 23, U.S.C., including Federal Lands Highway projects, but excluding safety projects funded under *23 U.S.C 402*, emergency relief projects, and planning and research activities not funded with NHS, STP or MA funds; all regionally significant transportation projects for which FHWA or FTA approval is required and, for informational purposes, all regionally significant projects to be funded from non-Federal sources; only projects that are consistent with the Transportation Plan. *[23CFR 450.324(c)]*
- Information shall be provided as follows for each project included in the TIP: sufficient descriptive material to identify the project or phase; estimated total cost; the amount of Federal funds proposed to be obligated during each program year; proposed source of Federal and non-Federal funds; identification of funding recipient/project sponsor; in non-attainment and maintenance areas, identification of TCMs and sufficiently detailed description to permit conformity determination. *[23CFR 450.324(e)]*
- Projects that the State and MPO do not consider to be of appropriate scale for individual identification in a given program year may be grouped by function, geographical area, and work type. *[23CFR 450.324(f)]*. In non-attainment and maintenance areas, classifications must be consistent with the exempt project classifications contained in the U.S. EPA conformity requirements. *[40 CFR part 51]*
- As a management tool for monitoring progress in implementing the Transportation Plan, the TIP shall identify the criteria and process for prioritizing the implementation of Transportation Plan elements through the TIP; list major projects implemented from the previous TIP and identify significant delays in implementation. *[23CFR 450.324(l)(1) and (2)]*
- In non-attainment and maintenance areas, the TIP shall describe progress in implementing required TCMs *[23CFR 450.324(l)(3)]*;

Several other regulations govern different aspects of TIP development and implementation:

- *23CFR 450.326* addresses modification of the TIP, stating that the TIP can be modified at any time, subject to the following conditions:
- In non-attainment or maintenance areas, adding or deleting projects that affect emission levels requires a new conformity determination
- Public involvement opportunities are provided consistent with requirements for complete information, timely notice, full public access to key decisions, and other relevant provisions.

23CFR 450.326 also governs the relationship between TIP and STIP:

- A Governor- and MPO- approved TIP shall be included without modification in the STIP
- In nonattainment and maintenance areas, a conformity finding by FHWA and FTA must be made before incorporation in the STIP.
- In TMAs, all Title 23 and Federal Transit Act funded projects not included in the first year of the TIP as an “agreed to” list of projects (except projects on the NHS and projects funded under the bridge, interstate maintenance, and Federal Lands Highways programs) shall be selected from the approved metropolitan TIP by the MPO, in consultation with the State and Transit operator. *[23CFR 450.330 (a)]*
- If the State or transit operator(s) wish to proceed with a project in the second or third year of the TIP, MPO project selection procedures must be followed unless expedited project selection procedures formally exist. *[23CFR 450.330(a)]*
- In non-attainment and maintenance areas, priority will be given to the timely implementation of TCMs included in the applicable SIP. *[23CFR 450.330 (e)]* TEA-21 *[23USC134(h)(7)(B)]* requires the publication of an annual listing of projects for which Federal funds have been obligated in the preceding year. This list shall be consistent with the categories identified in the TIP.

Observations:

The current TIP for the Capitol Region, which covers FY 2007 – FY 2010, was developed in coordination with the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and was approved by both the MPO and the Governor. CRCOG is developing a TIP for FY 2010-2013 in coordination with the development of an updated STIP. The new TIP, which will be completed in the fall of 2009, will follow the same public involvement process, with at least one formal public meeting, other opportunities for comment, and will be posted on the CRCOG website at the beginning of the public comment period and again after adoption.

The TIP covers a 4-year period and includes a complete listing of projects that are programmed for funding during that period.) CRCOG also publishes an annual listing of projects for which Federal funds have been obligated in the preceding year.) It is financially constrained and includes only projects for which funds are available. ConnDOT and FHWA have jointly developed and agreed to procedures for attaining and documenting financial constraint. FHWA, FTA, and the MPO have determined that the FY 2007 – FY 2010 TIP is in conformity with applicable Federal air quality regulations.

Conclusions:

The TIP is developed through a comprehensive and cooperative process and meets the requirements of relevant metropolitan transportation planning regulations.

Financial Planning

Regulatory Basis:

There are two sections of CFR 23 that define financial requirements of MPOs: Section 450.322(e)(10) and Section 450.324(h).

The provisions related to the Transportation Plan include the following requirements:

- Contain system level estimates of costs and revenue sources that will be expected to operate Federal-aid highways and public transportation
- The MPO, Transit Operator and the State should cooperatively estimate funding sources required to support metropolitan transportation plan implementation
- Include recommendations on other financing strategies
- For nonattainment and maintenance areas, the financial plan shall address the specific financial strategies required to ensure implementation of TCMs in the applicable SIP.

The provisions related to the TIP include the following requirements:

- Includes a financial plan demonstrating which projects can be implemented with current revenue sources and which projects require proposed revenue sources
- Takes into account the costs of adequately maintaining and operating the existing transportation system
- Developed by the MPO in cooperation with the State and transit operator
- Developed with estimates of available federal and state funds provided by the state and transit operator
- Includes only projects for which construction and operating funds can reasonably be expected to be available
- Includes strategies for ensuring the availability of new funding sources
- For the financial analysis, considers all projects funded with Federal, state, local private resources.
- In nonattainment/maintenance areas, only includes projects for which funds are available and committed in the first two years.

Observations:

ConnDOT and FHWA have jointly developed and agreed to procedures for attaining and documenting financial constraint. The 2007 TIP is financially constrained and includes only projects for which funds are available. The

costs of projects listed in the STIP do not exceed total Federal funds authorized for each of the four years included. The CRCOG TIP, and the STIP that it is part of, are financially constrained. The spending plan is based on reasonable projections of available statewide resources. As program and schedule changes are made to the TIP, the total expected federal authorizations will be re-allocated to reflect total statewide and regional program needs.

Conclusion:

The CRCOG demonstrates financial constraint in both the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

Air Quality

Regulatory Basis:

Section 176 (c)(1) of the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendment (CAAA) states:

“No metropolitan planning organization designated under *Section 134 of title 23, United States Code*, shall give its approval to any project, program, or plan which does not conform to an implementation plan approved or promulgated under section 110.” The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 subsequently included provisions responsive to the mandates of the CAAA. Implementing regulations have maintained this strong connection. Provisions governing air quality-related transportation planning are incorporated in a number of metropolitan planning regulations, rather than being the primary focus of one or several regulations. For MPOs that are declared to be air quality nonattainment or maintenance areas, there are many special requirements in addition to the basic requirements for a metropolitan planning process. These include formal agreements to address air quality planning requirements, requirements for setting metropolitan planning area boundaries, interagency coordination, Transportation Plan content and updates, requirements for a Congestion Management System (CMS), public meeting requirements, and conformity findings on Transportation Plans and TIPs. Sections of the metropolitan planning regulations governing air quality are summarized below:

- An agreement is required between the MPO and the designated agency responsible for air quality planning describing their respective roles and responsibilities (Also see *Agreements and Contracts* topic area) [23 CFR 450.314 (c)]
- The MPO is required to coordinate development of the Transportation Plan with the SIP development process, including the development of transportation control measures (see *Regional Transportation Plan* topic area). [23 CFR 450.312 (c)] The MPO shall not approve any Transportation Plan or program that does not conform with the SIP [23 CFR 450.312 (d)]
- In TMAs designated as nonattainment areas, Federal funds may not be programmed for any project that will result in a significant increase in carrying capacity for single occupant vehicles, unless the project results from a CMS meeting the requirements of 23 CFR part 500, subpart E. [23 CFR 450.320 (b)].
- The Transportation Plan shall identify SOV projects that result from a CMS meeting Federal requirements. [23 CFR 450.322 (b) (4)] and include design concept and scope descriptions of all existing and future transportation facilities to permit conformity determinations [23 CFR 450.322 (b)(6)]. The FHWA, FTA, and MPO must make a conformity determination on any new or revised Transportation Plan in nonattainment and maintenance areas (see *Regional Transportation Plan* topic area). [23 CFR 450.322(d)]

- In non-attainment and maintenance areas, the FHWA, FTA and MPO must make a conformity determination on any new or amended TIPs [23 CFR 450.324 (b)] and [23 CFR 450.330 (b)].
- In non-attainment TMAs, there must be an opportunity for at least one formal public meeting during the TIP development process [23 CFR 450.324 (c)]
- In non-attainment and maintenance areas, the TIP shall give priority to eligible TCMs identified in the approved SIP and shall provide for their timely implementation. [23 CFR 450.324(d) and 450.330 (b)]
- In non-attainment and maintenance areas, the TIP shall include all regionally significant transportation projects proposed to be funded with Federal and non-Federal funds [23 CFR 450.324 (f)(4) and (5)] and identify projects identified as TCMs in the SIP [23 CFR 450.324 (g)(6)]. Projects shall be specified in sufficient detail to permit air quality analysis in accordance with U.S. EPA conformity requirements. [23 CFR 450.324 (h)]
- For the purpose of including Federal Transit Act section 5309 (former section 3) funded projects in a TIP, in non-attainment and maintenance areas, the TIP shall describe the progress in implementing required TCMs [23 CFR 450.324 (m) (3)] and include a list of all projects found to conform in a previous TIP and are now part of the base case used in air quality conformity analysis [23 CFR 450.324 (m) (4)].
- In non-attainment or maintenance areas, if the TIP is amended by adding or deleting projects that affect transportation-related.

In TMAs that are non-attainment or maintenance areas, the FHWA and FTA will review and evaluate the transportation planning process to assure that the process is adequate to ensure conformity of plans and programs in accordance with procedures contained in 40 CFR part 51. [23 CFR 450.334 (c)]. Air Quality requirements are spelled out in CFR 23 Section 450.322(d) and Section 450.324(b). “In nonattainment and maintenance areas for transportation related pollutants the MPO must make a conformity determination on any new/ revised transportation plan or Transportation Improvement Program, in accordance with the CAA and the EPA conformity regulations.”

Observations:

ConnDOT is responsible for preparing emissions analyses for conformity determinations on TIPs and metropolitan transportation plans in the state, by agreement with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). There are only two air quality districts in Connecticut, each of which encompasses several planning regions. CROCOG and the other regions submit draft TIPs and metropolitan transportation plans to ConnDOT, which prepares air quality analyses for all appropriate regions. CROCOG’s role in this effort is defined in the UPWP and in the Statement of MPO Planning Roles and Responsibilities.

Air quality goals and policies guide CROCOG planning efforts and technical studies, as summarized in the Regional Transportation Plan. CROCOG also has been active in sponsoring and/or advancing clean air projects such as the retrofit of CT Transit buses with diesel particulate filters and the hydrogen fuel cell bus demonstration project at CT Transit. The TIP gives priority to TCMs.

Conclusion:

The CROCOG in cooperation with ConnDOT uses an acceptable practice to demonstrate air quality conformity in both the TIP and the metropolitan transportation plan.

Project Selection Procedures

Regulatory Basis:

CFR 23 Section 450, Subpart C – Metropolitan Transportation Planning and Program spells out a comprehensive planning process for MPOs to follow. Generally, the development and selection of projects for funding shall be completed through a comprehensive planning process with local input. Projects should be identified in the Transportation Plan and listed in the Transportation Improvement Program, and be developed through various planning methods.

Observations:

CRCOG's UPWP includes a section on project selection procedures. CRCOG is dedicated to providing a thorough project selection procedure for the region.

The project selection process for different funding programs is summarized below (from an advance statement prepared by CRCOG).

STP Urban Projects. CRCOG is fully and solely responsible for project selection in the STP Urban program. For programs other than STP-Urban, CRCOG's role in project selection varies. Typically, ConnDOT assumes the primary responsibility, but provides CRCOG the opportunity to suggest projects for consideration, as described below for individual programs.

STP Enhancement Projects. ConnDOT requests project proposals from all regions. CRCOG requests proposals from towns within the boundaries of the Capitol Region and prioritizes the proposed projects. The prioritized list is sent to ConnDOT, which selects final projects from the pool of candidates submitted by all the regions. Typically, each region is guaranteed at least one project.

CMAQ Projects. ConnDOT reserves a portion of CMAQ funds for projects recommended by regions and issues a formal request for projects to the regions, selecting final projects from the pool of candidates.

Local Road Accident Reduction Projects. ConnDOT requests project proposals from all regions. CRCOG then requests proposals from towns and prioritizes the proposed projects. The prioritized list is sent to ConnDOT, which selects final projects from the pool of candidates submitted by all the regions.

FTA Section 5307 Projects. By mutual agreement among regions, transit districts, and DOT, FTA Section 5307 funds are pooled into a statewide program, to avoid programming problems that occurred when annual appropriation levels for individual urban areas were insufficient to cover the cost of regularly scheduled fleet replacement orders. Hartford area annual appropriations were insufficient to cover fleet replacement costs. Pooling the funds allows more efficient and predictable fleet replacement programming.

FTA Section 5310 Projects. ConnDOT requests project proposals from all regions. CRCOG requests proposals from towns and nonprofit agencies in the Capitol Region and then prioritizes the proposed projects. The prioritized list is sent to ConnDOT, which selects final projects from the pool of candidates submitted by all the regions.

Conclusion:

CRCOG and ConnDOT follow an appropriately comprehensive, transparent, and cooperative process for selecting projects for Federal funding, meeting the requirements of *CFR 450.330*.

Outreach/Public Participation

Regulatory Basis:

The requirements for public involvement are set forth primarily in *23 CFR 450.316*, which addresses elements of the public involvement requirements. Public involvement also is addressed specifically in connection with the Transportation Plan in *450.322 (i)* and the TIP in *450.324(b)*.

Requirements related to the planning process generally are summarized in *450.316*, as follows:

- A proactive process
- Complete information
- Develop a participation plan in coordination with all interested parties
- Timely public notice of public involvement activities and information about transportation issues and processes
- Full public access to key decisions and time for public review and comment
- Early and continuing public involvement in developing the TIP
- A minimum public comment period of 45 days before adoption or revision of the public involvement process
- Minimum 30-day review period for Transportation Plan, TIP and major amendments in nonattainment areas classified as serious and above
- Explicit consideration and response to public input
- Consideration of the needs of people traditionally underserved by transportation systems, including low-income and minority households; consistency with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, including actions necessary to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- Periodic review of public involvement effectiveness
- Coordination of metropolitan and statewide public involvement processes
- MPO should consult with other agencies and officials responsible for planning activities such as federal agencies, Tribal governments, transit operators, etc.

The requirements pertaining to the Transportation Plan (*450.322(i)*) are further elaborated as follows:

- Opportunity for public official and citizen involvement in the development of the Transportation Plan, in accordance with *450.316(a)*.

TIP related requirements [*450.324 (b)*] include:

- MPOs must provide reasonable opportunity for public comment in accordance with the requirements of *450.316(a)* and, in nonattainment TMAs, an opportunity for at least one formal public meeting during the TIP development process and provision for public review and comment. The passage of ISTEA in 1991 marked the beginning on an increased emphasis on the role of the public in making transportation decisions that effect their locality.

Public involvement in the transportation planning process is a major feature of ISTEA and TEA-21. The metropolitan planning regulations state that, "The metropolitan transportation planning process shall include a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs". To this end, MPOs must develop and adopt a formal public involvement process for planning and program development.

Observations:

CRCOG updated its *Public Participation Plan* in 2007. The Plan addresses all aspects of the planning process including Environmental Justice (EJ), Limited English Proficiency, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements; review of the TIP, metropolitan transportation plan and UPWP; review of special studies; visualization; and the project selection process. CRCOG also conducts annual self-assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of its public involvement practices. Through this evaluation, CRCOG has been able to improve the public participation process continually over time.

CRCOG updated its public involvement policy and plan twice since the 2004 Certification review. The original *Public Involvement Policy* adopted in 2000, the update to that policy adopted in 2005, and the current *Public Participation Plan* (PPP) adopted in 2007 each were adopted after a minimum 45-day public comment period. The PPP identifies the minimum public involvement effort to which CRCOG is committed and typically CRCOG's outreach efforts exceed the scope of activities included in the plan. The current version, modified to meet the requirements of SAFETEA-LU, was made available for public comment on November 27, 2006 (the draft was posted on the web on November 21) and the Policy Board adopted the Plan on February 28, 2007, affording a total of 93 days for public comment. An appendix to the Plan details the public comment period, comments received and disposition of those comments. An extensive outreach effort was conducted for the PPP, featuring the publication of legal notices in English and in Spanish, distribution of notices to all 29 towns in the region, and to an extensive specialized mailing list of individuals and organizations expressing interest in the planning process in the past. News releases were sent to local access cable television stations and other media. Staff attended a meeting of the Hartford Environmental Justice Network to present the Plan and to receive comments and four meetings were held at which the public was invited to comment on the Plan. Following the receipt of these comments, in many cases, changes were made to the draft Plan before it was adopted on February 28, 2007.

CRCOG's outreach efforts for the metropolitan transportation plan, TIP, and special studies parallel those described above for the PPP itself, consisting of public notices, posts on the CRCOG website, meetings with the Environmental Justice Network, public meetings, and news releases. Regular stakeholders include citizens, member municipalities, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees or unions, public and private providers of transportation, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of persons with disabilities, and other parties who have expressed an interest in the process. In addition, when the metropolitan transportation plan recently was updated, CRCOG coordinated associated planning efforts with ConnDOT, the State DEP and the Office of Policy and Management, which is responsible for the State Plan of Conservation and Development. Meetings of CRCOG's Transportation Committee and Policy Board and for special studies are open to the public at locations chosen for convenience and accessibility to all who may wish to attend.

The PPP requires use of appropriate visualization techniques, such as PowerPoint presentations, maps, graphics, and charts to communicate information about plans and TIPs. For some special studies, CRCOG recently has expanded its range of visualization techniques to include SimTraffic, which graphically illustrates the movement of vehicles with actual signal timing. Visualization techniques are tailored to the size of the program, the outreach method (e.g. meetings vs. online postings) and audience.

CRCOG's PPP requires an annual assessment of its public outreach efforts. This effort was initiated for FY2004 and has been conducted annually since then.

Conclusion:

CRCOG conducts extensive public participation and outreach activities to notify the public of transportation planning activities and to provide opportunities for the public to influence transportation policies, priorities, and

projects. CRCOG's public participation program meets the requirements of pertinent Federal transportation planning regulations.

Self-Certification

According to *23 CFR 450.334* certification review by FTA and FHWA is required in TMAs, concurrent with the TIP submission, the state and MPO shall certify at least every four years that the metropolitan transportation planning process is being carried out in accordance with the following requirements:

- Section 134 of title 23, U.S.C.
- the Metropolitan Planning Regulations,
- Sections 174 and 174 (c) and (d) of the Clean Air Act
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act,
- Section 1101 (b) of ISTEA (as incorporated in TEA-21) *49CFR part 26* regarding the involvement of DBE in FHWA & FTA funded planning projects.
- The provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

Observations:

The TIP for the Capitol Region approved in 2007 includes a self-certification by the MPO.

Conclusions:

CRCOG meets the self-certification requirements of *23 CFR 450.334*.

Title VI Update

Regulatory Basis:

It has been the U.S. Department of Transportation's (US DOT) longstanding policy to actively ensure non-discrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI states the "no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under a program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Title VI bars intentional discrimination as well as disparate impact discrimination (e.g., a neutral policy or practice that has the effect of a disparate impact on protected groups). *23 CFR 450.334(a)(3)* requires the FHWA and FTA to certify that the "planning process . . . is being conducted in accordance with all applicable requirements of . . . Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Title VI assurance executed by each State under *23 U.S.C 324 and 29 U.S.C. 794.*"

Executive Order 12898, issued in 1994, further amplifies Title VI by providing that "each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations." In compliance with *Executive Order 12898*, the US DOT Order on Environmental Justice was issued in 1997.

Observations:

CRCOG has been very active in EJ activities since the 2004 Certification review. CRCOG has an EJ Advisory Board, organized to review the TIP, UPWP, and Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and to address other concerns relevant to transportation planning for the region. The Board meets as needed and contains representatives from the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice (CCEJ), Jobs Access and CRCOG's Transportation Committee.

CRCOG has maintained a close relationship with the CCEJ since 2002, participates in CCEJ meetings and including CCEJ members in CRCOG's EJ Advisory Board. CRCOG also maintains an EJ representative on the Transportation Committee to provide a direct opportunity to influence decision making. Through this close relationship, the EJ Advisory Board is able to influence project selection through key programs like STP and Transportation Enhancements.

CRCOG uses a quantitative assessment tool to evaluate equity in TIP funding distribution. This tool maps identified EJ target areas (e.g. minority, transit dependent, under-represented population subgroups) through Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and then compares the spending in these areas to spending outside of the target areas. CRCOG found that there was no bias in distribution of 2007 TIP funds. Most recently, CRCOG used the tool to determine that the New Britain Busway will benefit all user groups and areas within the region.

CRCOG's special outreach activities include programs to benefit Limited English Proficiency households. Through a 2005 study CRCOG found that public outreach efforts should be extended to Spanish speaking households in the region. CRCOG outreach to households with Limited English Proficiency includes providing regular meeting notices and agendas in Spanish and upon request, interpreters; advertisement in Spanish language newspapers and in Spanish on buses; translated documents including the RTP Exec Summary and TIP Brochure, which are available on the website; and on Special Studies, automatically perform pre-study assessment of languages in the area, allowing for further customization of outreach program based on the study.

CRCOG also takes special care in reducing participation barriers to persons with disabilities. With advance notice, CRCOG is able to provide accommodations at meetings, including sign language interpretation or particular seating for persons with wheel chairs. Most recently, CRCOG changed a public meeting location because large motorized wheel chairs could not fit in the elevator. CRCOG also has modified its website for the visually-impaired and has sponsored workshops and webinars on ADA compliance.

Conclusions:

CRCOG undertakes diligent, conscientious efforts to adhere to environmental justice principles, ensuring that the benefits and burdens of transportation programs and projects are fairly distributed among communities in the Capitol Region.

Management Systems**Regulatory Basis**

Under SAFTEA-LU regulations *23 CFR 450.320* a metropolitan-wide congestion management process is required for new and existing multimodal transportation facilities in the TMA to ensure safe and efficient use of the system. Performance measures and strategies for congestion management should be reflected in the TIP and metropolitan transportation plan. The congestion management processes should include *23 CFR 450.320 (c)*:

- Methods to monitor and evaluate the performance of the multimodal transportation system, identify the causes of recurring and non-recurring congestion.
- Performance measures that are tailored to the locality
- Data collection system coordinated with other data collection efforts
- Congestion management strategies could include:
 - Demand management measures
 - Traffic operational improvements
 - ITS technologies
 - Additional system capacities
- Identification of an implementation strategy and funding sources

Observations

Through coordination with ConnDOT, CCRPA and Midstate RPA, CRCOG is able to monitor and assess transportation system performance through congestion management planning measures such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). The goal of congestion reduction is integrated into most of CRCOG's major programs and activities, such as corridor studies, the Regional Transportation Plan, and project selection and programming, rather than functioning as a separate program. In 2005, CRCOG published The Metropolitan Hartford Area Transportation Monitoring and Management Report in partnership with CCRPA and Midstate RPA. CRCOG implemented new monitoring efforts in 2007 for the entire Hartford metropolitan area. CRCOG serves as the lead agency on the project, with support from CCRPA, Midstate RPA and ConnDOT Highway Operations.

Arterial System:

CCRPA, Midstate RPA and CRCOG are each responsible for a set of roadways within their separate regions. GPS units are used to collect data during peak travel time. Data collection includes average speed and delay time. CRCOG has found the delay measure particularly useful to track trends over time and to compare different arterial corridors. CRCOG also prepares a travel time index, which is a good performance measure, consisting of the ratio of travel time in the peak period to travel time in the off-peak period.

Freeway System:

Freeway monitoring is based on ConnDOT's Regional Traffic Management System (RTMS). The system is primarily used to monitor and manage daily traffic operations. The RTMS consists of 50 miles of freeway with cameras and traffic flow monitors (144 stations located between every half mile to mile). The system records data on volume, speed, and occupancy, recorded for each lane every 5 second, every day, all day. Through coordination with the GIS staff at CRCOG the region has developed a robust dataset to monitor and evaluate freeway performance.

CRCOG uses the data to identify where improvements are needed and to establish priorities for corrective actions. The data is regularly integrated into studies and programs. Corridor Studies are structured to meet congestion management goals, emphasizing Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and operational options, and safety projects first, with the objective of managing existing the existing system safely and more efficiently.

Conclusions:

CRCOG's CMP is well-integrated in the transportation planning process, including the development of the metropolitan transportation plan, and meets the requirements of 23 CFR 450.320.

ITS

Regulatory Basis:

In accordance with SAFTEA-LU regulations 23 CFR 450.320 a metropolitan-wide congestion management process should consider several congestion management strategies including the use of ITS technologies as related to the regional ITS architecture (23 CFR 450.320 (c)(4)(iv)).

Observations:

CRCOG has implemented an ITS strategic plan. A regional traffic management system is now in place, building on projects that were already incorporated in the roadway network. CRCOG has an active incident management committee. Highways have been the focus of ITS until recently but transit applications are becoming a high priority now. A new Greater Hartford Transit District (GHTD) system management is being implemented including Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL). It is the policy of CRCOG to avoid expansion of single-occupant vehicle (SOV) capacity if possible.

Conclusions:

CRCOG works effectively with partner agencies on the continued development of ITS consistent with the regional ITS architecture required under SAFTEA-LU regulations [23 CFR 450.320].

Recommendations:

CRCOG is encouraged in its efforts to identify applications of ITS technologies to improve the performance of area transit systems.