

Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Planning



September 26, 2018

Overview

- Refresher on MPO and RPA structure and responsibilities
 - Systems Planning will provide a more detailed MPO/RPA 101 training to staff members upon request
- Presentation may be useful for boards or committees that are less familiar with overall transportation planning responsibilities or metropolitan and regional planning in Iowa
 - Systems Planning will work with your DTP and/or attend a Technical or Policy meeting to discuss these types of items upon request



Glossary

- COG – Council of Governments
- FHWA – Federal Highway Administration
- FTA – Federal Transit Administration
- ISTEA – Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act
- LRTP – Long Range Transportation Plan
- MPO – Metropolitan planning organization
- PL – Metropolitan Planning (federal funds)
- PPP – Public Participation Plan
- PTP – Passenger Transportation Plan
- RPA – Regional planning affiliation
- SPR – State Planning & Research (federal funds)
- STIP – Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
- STP/STBG – Surface Transportation Program, now called Surface Transportation Block Grant program (federal funds)
- TIP – Transportation Improvement Program
- TPWP – Transportation Planning Work Program



Overview

- Background provided for:
 - COGs (17 in Iowa; all staff an RPA, five staff an MPO)
 - MPOs (9 in Iowa; federally designated entities)
 - RPAs (18 in Iowa; state designated entities)



Iowa Councils of Governments (COGs)

- Established in 1968 by Executive Order
- Codified by General Assembly in 1990; Iowa Code chapter 28H
- Each COG provides services that are tailored to the unique needs of its region and communities. Per Iowa code, required services include:
 - Planning services and technical assistance
 - Coordinating delivery of community development programs and services with local, state, and federal programs and activities
 - Preparing a regional community development plan
- COG staff members often serve as an extension of city/county staff for planning
- All COGs serve as an RPA and five COGs serve as an MPO
- Four MPOs and one RPA are not staffed by COGs

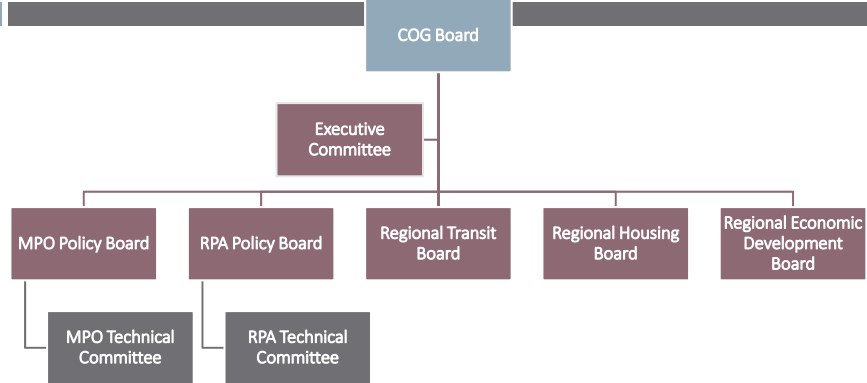


Typical COG activities/planning areas

- Community development
- Comprehensive planning
- Economic development
- Environmental
- GIS and mapping
- Hazard mitigation
- Housing
- Land use
- Recreation
- Transit
- Transportation (RPA and/or MPO)
- Watershed
- Workforce development
- Workplace safety



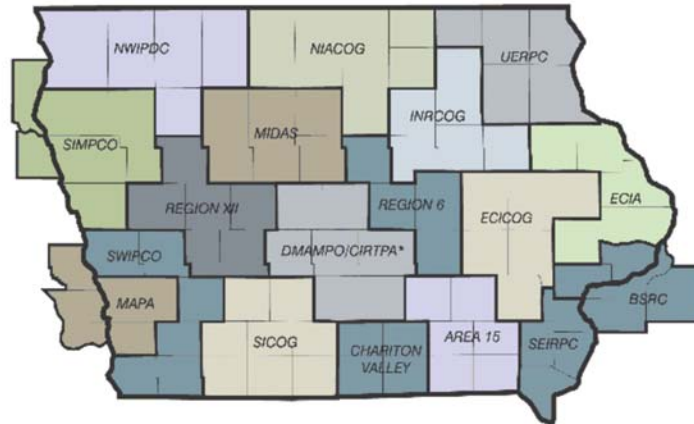
Example COG structure



- COG structures vary depending on regional responsibilities and planning activities
- Boards are typically elected or appointed officials
- COG staff helps provide support to these boards



COG boundaries



*DMAMPO/CIRTPA provides MPO/RPA planning and other planning services to central Iowa, but is not a COG
 Source: <http://www.iarco.com/FindCOG.htm>



MPO history

- 1962: Transportation planning requirements set forth in Federal-Aid Highway Act
 - Planning process a condition of receiving federal funds in urban areas larger than 50,000 population
 - Precursor to modern MPO planning process
- 1960s: seven urban areas in Iowa over 50,000; currently nine MPOs
- MPOs are federally designated and required to conduct a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process by FHWA/FTA
- MPO planning and programming requirements are outlined in 23 CFR 450 Subpart C



RPA history

- RPAs created following passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991
 - ISTEA eliminated prior funding programs that directed allocations to cities and counties; replaced with flexible STP funding
 - Required additional planning partners – cities under 5,000, rural transit operators, non-motorized, rail, freight; required greater level of public involvement and intergovernmental cooperation
- Rather than programming funds at the state level, the Iowa Transportation Commission decided to make the majority of funding available to local planning organizations to facilitate this process and to prioritize for regional needs
 - Survey of other states after ISTEA – about half kept all STP funds to program at the state level

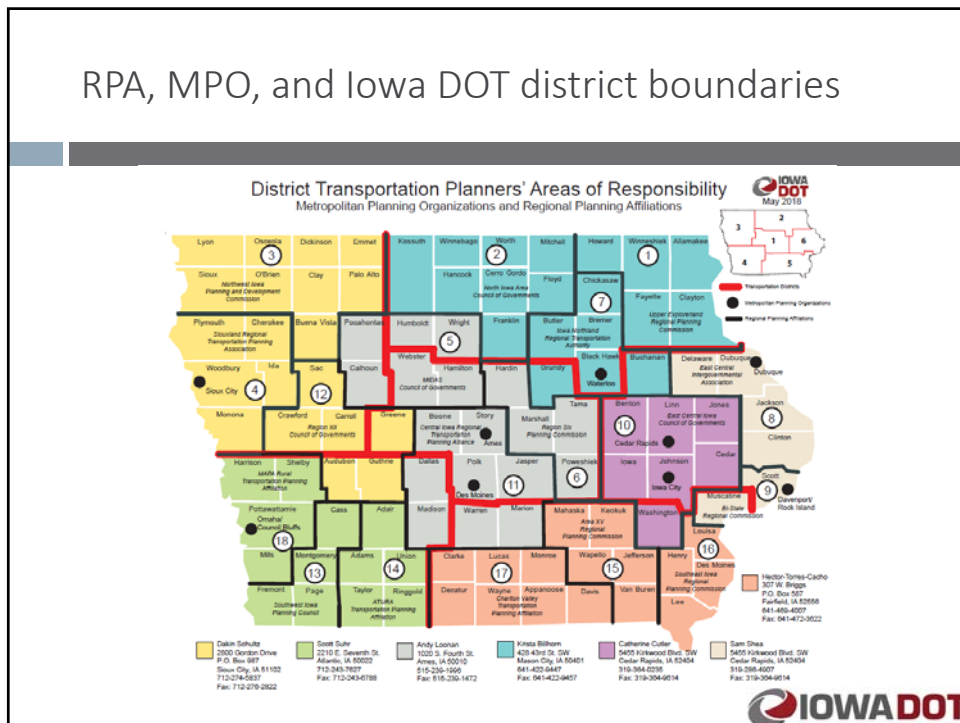


RPA history (cont.)

- Commission’s goal was to create a framework for decision-making on the use of STP funds that establishes regional needs and funding priorities and develops an investment plan which represents the aggregate interests of Iowa
 - Planning process for areas over 50,000 in population had been required since 1962 and had been successful in Iowa; RPA structure and responsibilities were modeled off MPOs
 - Began with 16 regional planning areas as basis, gave locals opportunity to change affiliation
 - Resulted in 18 RPAs – most aligned with COGs; all but one staffed by COGs
 - Intention was that RPAs who suballocated STP funds would move away from this over time



RPA, MPO, and Iowa DOT district boundaries



MPO and RPA benefits

- Benefits of metropolitan and regional planning
 - Regional perspective and priorities
 - Grass-roots planning, rather than top-down
 - Flexible/responsive public input techniques
 - More equitable statewide funding distribution, including to rural areas
 - Local decision-making
- Iowa RPA process is often referenced nationally as a best practice



MPO and RPA responsibilities

- MPOs and RPAs are responsible for transportation planning and programming at the metropolitan and regional levels
 - The transportation planning process is a condition of receiving federal funds through the Iowa DOT
- Iowa has remained committed to regional transportation planning through subsequent federal bills
 - After each bill, the distribution of funding to MPOs/RPAs for programming as part of their planning processes has been reaffirmed by the Commission



Expectations/requirements

- Part II of the annual planning agreement between the planning agency and Iowa DOT includes requirements for the MPO/RPA and its committees
 - Department may, at its discretion, withhold payment if Agency does not meet the requirements that are outlined
 - All transportation planning requirements not completed by the Agency may be completed by the Department. If this happens, projects from Agency planning area will compete for funding with any other projects in the state when the STIP is developed.
 - In other words, regional programming authority is forfeited



Expectations/requirements

- MPOs and RPAs are required to conduct comprehensive, continuing, cooperative transportation planning processes
 - Includes development or review/confirmation of the following work products annually
 - **Transportation Planning Work Program** (annual budget for planning activities)
 - **Public Participation Plan** (plan for providing users with opportunities to provide input)
 - **Passenger Transportation Plan** (documentation of passenger transportation needs and projects; encourages coordination)
 - **Long Range Transportation Plan** (future 20+ year vision for multi-modal transportation in the region)
 - **Transportation Improvement Program** (four-year list of transportation projects programmed for federal aid in the region)



Funding sources for planning

- Federal sources provided through Iowa DOT
 - ▣ FTA funding
 - MPOs: 5305d
 - RPAs: 5305e and 5311
 - ▣ FHWA funding
 - MPOs: Metropolitan Planning (PL) funds
 - RPAs: State Planning & Research (SPR) funds
- Optional federal source if allocated by MPO/RPA
 - ▣ FHWA funding through Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program
 - ▣ Typically, 3-4 of the 9 MPOs and 14 of the 18 RPAs utilize some STBG funding for planning
- Local funding – used to provide 20% match to federal funds
 - ▣ Typically per capita dues from agency members or split among Policy Board members



Expectations/requirements

- MPOs and RPAs recommend the programming of certain federal transportation funds apportioned to the area by the Iowa DOT
- MPOs and RPAs conduct special planning studies and/or provide technical assistance to transportation providers or local governments as may be determined beneficial
 - ▣ MPO/RPA Policy Board and Technical Committee should provide direction to MPO/RPA staff in this area
 - ▣ Example additional planning activities – individual city or county transportation plans, trail/bicycle plans, pedestrian plans, parking studies, retroreflectivity data collection, freight studies, safety plans, corridor studies



Expectations/requirements – Policy

- Transportation Policy Board is required to be maintained in mutual agreement with local governments
- Minimum responsibilities for the Policy Board
 - Meet at least quarterly
 - Prioritize and select projects for the TIP
 - Assist and direct MPO/RPA staff in developing the LRTP, TIP, PPP, PTP, and TPWP



Expectations/Requirements – Tech

- MPO Technical Committee is required
- RPA Technical Committee is established at the discretion of the Policy Board (all RPAs have Technical Committees)
- Roles for the Technical Committee
 - Provide technical advice to the Policy Board
 - Fulfill duties as established by the Policy Board



Summary of responsibilities

- Policy Board (elected/appointed officials) provides direction and guidance to staff and has decision-making authority
 - Minimum expectations established in planning agreement between Iowa DOT and agency
 - Bylaws may spell out additional requirements
- Technical Committee (engineers/planners/subject matter experts) advises Policy Board
- MPO/RPA is staffed by the umbrella COG or agency, and staff members carry out activities to meet planning requirements and additional activities at direction of Policy Board

