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Working with Metropolitan Planning Organizations: Lessons and Answers for Advocates

This report spotlights proven ways that biking and walking advocates can work with their Metropolitan Planning Organizations to unlock crucial federal funds for healthier, safer communities.



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Introduction

If you live in a city or suburb and want to make biking and walking safer and more convenient, your Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is an important agency to understand.

MPOs make big behind-the-scenes decisions about how federal transportation dollars are spent in cities and their surrounding regions. These choices affect every transportation project in a greater metropolitan area that uses federal funds. For advocates who want to make sure that available dollars go towards creating great places to bike, walk and live, it's important to work with the MPOs that make these critical funding decisions.



Under the current federal transportation law, MAP-21, large MPOs are the new major players in the biking and walking funding picture. Regional agencies have always played an important role in long-term planning and allocation of federal funds, but MAP-21 created a new requirement that MPOs administer Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds through a competitive grant process.

Advocacy Advance spoke with several bicycling and walking advocates who have formed productive working relationships with staff at their MPOs — and have won progress for biking and walking projects.

In this report, Advocacy Advance spotlights proven ways that biking and walking advocates can work with their MPOs to unlock crucial federal funds for healthier, safer communities.

We discuss five principles:

1. Learn Who Makes Decisions
2. Show Up
3. Get the Right Project Prioritization Process
4. Be a Watchdog
5. Treat it Like Any Other Campaign

1. Learn Who Makes Decisions

What processes matter the most? Where are the levers of power? Who has the most influence? Take some time to understand how your MPO works.

Get the basic facts about your agency's configuration, too. Leadership structures may vary depending on whether your MPO is:

- Council of Governments
- Free-standing MPO
- County-level MPO
- State-level MPO



Whatever the type, your MPO will have a board – often made up of representatives from the region's jurisdictions – with final say and responsibility. MPO boards often follow a one-jurisdiction, one-vote rule. Advocates will need to cultivate leaders in small municipalities as well as center cities.

“It’s an absolute necessity that our elected officials who serve on our MPO board be advocates for walkability and bicycle-friendly design,” says Scott Bricker, executive director of Bike Pittsburgh. **“This is where funding for transportation projects is decided upon.”**

Cultivating support on the MPO board, said Bricker, helps “elevate the discussion of these modes among decision makers. That’s why it’s part of Bike Pittsburgh’s strategy to educate the mayoral candidates on our platform and the importance of the MPO, while also educating voters on where the candidates stand on bike/ped issues.”

It’s important to build good relationships with the staff of your MPO, too. Staff can help provide crucial information like policy details, deadlines and political barriers.

Productive relationships with MPO staff can help you learn what is going on before it’s too late to do anything about it.

2. Show Up

In decision-making processes, you're either at the table or you're on the menu. When stakeholders who prioritize biking and walking are not represented in decision-making bodies, active transportation often falls to the wayside.

Perhaps the most common refrain we hear from advocates who have worked with their MPOs is, "Show up!" Participation can ensure that bicycling voices are heard through the planning and funding process.



There are several "tables" where biking and walking advocates can plug in: regional Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committees, project selection committees (as voting members or observers), bicycle or pedestrian master plan committees, safety committees, or other citizen input vehicles. In Washington State, Barb Chamberlain,¹ chair of Bike to Work Spokane (now Spokane Bikes) gained a voting board position at the Spokane Regional Transportation Council, greater Spokane's MPO.

Chamberlain was on the Spokane Bicycle Advisory Board when she was invited to serve as chair of the Spokane MPO's Transportation Advisory Committee. Critically, the MPO's amended charter specified that the Advisory Committee's chair would also be a voting member of the full board. **This meant that Chamberlain:**

- Had an active voice in developing project evaluation criteria to reflect the benefits that bike/ped projects bring to economic vitality, multimodal travel, and environmental friendliness.
- Had a role in selecting Transportation Enhancements (now Transportation Alternatives) projects.
- Was able to support adoption of a model Complete Streets policy.²
- Participated in community outreach, planning and document review.

¹ Chamberlain is now executive director of the Bicycle Alliance of Washington.

² <http://srtctransportation.blogspot.com/2012/10/complete-streets-policy-checklist-now.html>

“That seat at the table really mattered,” Chamberlain said. In her position, she had the rare chance to ask questions in board meetings. She was also able to raise issues that weren’t well understood by other board members, like how travel prediction models accounted for mode shift to bicycling. (Answer: They didn’t.)

Even before getting involved with the MPO, Chamberlain was known and respected by those responsible for appointing the committee chair thanks to her work in higher education policy.

Chamberlain recommends that biking and walking organizations find advocates who can “bring a balanced perspective and be fair to other modes,” then make sure that the people making appointments know them.

“Your most passionate person may be alienating for a local committee,” she noted. “Be realistic about that.” The board that appointed the members of the Advisory Committee included savvy bike-friendly elected officials. They were able to appoint committee members who were bike-friendly and also politically savvy.

“Some of these things won’t happen just because they’re the right thing to do,” Chamberlain explained. **“You have to understand what else is in play politically. Timing really matters —and morale matters, too.”**

Showing public support for your champions’ work and lending more strength to your champions’ team can be a big boost. Bicycle and pedestrian staff are happy to have help and support from eager volunteers, so build relationships and work with key staff.

Chamberlain also directed lots of bicycle blog commenters to MPO blog posts that related to bikes. The MPO’s web page views, Facebook comments, and Twitter mentions demonstrated a strong community interest in bicycling.

Actions: Plugging in with MPOs
Campaign for transportation funds and policy change
Sit on Transportation Advisory Committees and Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committees
Help shape the project prioritization process
Monitor Transportation Improvement Programs and campaign for non-motorized improvements in upcoming projects
Build and maintain relationships with MPO staff and leadership

3. Get the Right Project Prioritization Process

Why fight for just one active transportation project when improving the selection process can systematically boost all bicycling and walking projects?

One of the most important things advocates can do – as Barb Chamberlain did in Spokane – is to help develop the project selection process.

The new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a good place to start. Under MAP-21, MPOs are responsible for distributing a portion of TAP funds for local bicycling and walking projects through a competitive grant process. While some MPOs have already set up grant applications, others have not. If your MPO does not yet have an application process set up, work with MPO staff to create a process that will help communities invest smartly in active transportation. For examples of MPO applications, see [Advocacy Advance's application guide](#).³



Many advocates have already jumped at the opportunity to help MPOs establish their TAP grant processes and to ask that TAP funds be spent for bicycling. Ed Barsotti of the League of Illinois Bicyclists spent time meeting with all five of the TAP-eligible MPOs in his state, after enlisting advocacy local groups to join in the policy asks.

“Our role as statewide advocates is to know how the funding flows, know the national guidelines and be a facilitator for local groups,” explained Barsotti. **“We could provide background information for people who don’t spend as much time on it. We could say: ‘Here’s the opportunity now. Stand with us. Here’s what to ask for.’”**

“From our past relationships with our MPO’s, we suspected they would emphasize biking in their TAP grants,” Barsotti added. “But we felt it was important to organize local bicycling leaders to ask for that, with one voice. This provides some ‘cover’ from pressures to use TAP funds elsewhere.”

3 [http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/MPO_TAP_\(Final\).pdf](http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/MPO_TAP_(Final).pdf)

Bike- and walk-friendly project selection isn't just for Transportation Alternative Program funds. MPOs are also tasked with allocating funds from the Surface Transportation Program (STP) and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ).⁴ Bicycle and walking projects are not only eligible for funding under these programs; they are frequently funded by them.

Important Steps in the TAP Funding Process	
Applications	In their applications, all relevant funding programs should ask specifically about non-motorized transportation components of projects.
Prioritization	Significant weight should be given to bicycling and walking components in larger projects. Stand-alone bike/ped projects should be able to compete fairly with other project types.
Selection	Bicycling and walking advocates should have a legitimate voice in the project selection process.

Actions: Achieving a Functional TAP Funding Process
Help MPOs write or re-write funding applications. Use Advocacy Advance's examples of great regional TAP applications. ⁵
Suggest bicycle- and walking-friendly best practices. Use Advocacy Advance's MPO Best Practices report for reference. ⁶
Work with applicants to prepare and submit good applications.
Ensure applicants understand federal funding process so projects don't get held up
Provide sample letters for local stakeholders to send to their local officials.

4 http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/CMAQ_flow_chart.pdf;
http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/CMAQ_flow_chart.pdf;
http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/HSIP_flow_chart.pdf
 5 [http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/MPO_TAP_\(Final\).pdf](http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/MPO_TAP_(Final).pdf)
 6 http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/MPO_BikePed_Best_Practices_Final.pdf

4. Be a Watchdog

“You’re the only person who comes to these meetings who doesn’t have to be here.”

For Kim Irwin, a health and transportation advocate with Health by Design, those were good words to hear from a member of the Indianapolis MPO. That feedback let Irwin know that she was doing her job.

“You have to go to the meetings,” Irwin said. “Make sure they know who you are – and that you are paying attention from an advocacy standpoint.”

Irwin always makes a point to comment on regional plans, she said, “because it shows them that I am paying attention.” Through her dedicated advocacy, Kim worked with external stakeholders and staff to create a regional bike plan that used health as a factor for prioritization of projects. She also helped shape a Regional Long Range Plan, which dedicated 7% of regional funds to bike/ped projects.

Here’s a handy tip for commenting on projects: read your TIP.

MPOs are required to produce a document called a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that lays out all of the projects the regions plans to build and where the funds will come from. It’s not just a wish-list of projects; these documents present an opportunity for advocates to monitor what projects are coming up and ask questions about them.

“In the TIP, there are quarterly amendments,” explained Irwin. “I’m watching what projects are being added and what projects are being moved up. ... When I see a project is a higher priority than it was, I ask ‘What’s it going to look like? How are you going to make it a Complete Street?’”



When you see an upcoming project, you can call the jurisdiction and ask what the plans are around bike/ped and multi-modal components. “We see what they say and figure out what to do,” Irwin said. “Ask, ‘how can we make this a good project?’”

It’s worth working with your MPO because the agency keeps track of key local projects in a large region. **“All politics is local,”** Irwin explained. **“You have the most power to influence a project at the local level. I can’t cover the 25 jurisdictions in the region, so the MPO is the place where I see all the projects they are working on.”**

For more on TIPs and the statewide STIP, see [Advocacy Advance’s “Planning for Bicycling and Walking Facilities” report](#).⁷

⁷ [http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/Planning_for_Bicycling_and_Walking_Facilities_\(1\)_copy.pdf](http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/Planning_for_Bicycling_and_Walking_Facilities_(1)_copy.pdf)

5. Treat it Like Any Other Campaign

In 2010, all eyes were on Portland's MPO, known as Metro. The agency's Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) was about to set funding targets for \$20 to \$24 million in Regional Flexible Funds for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

The dollars in question were a critical funding source: Regional Flexible Funds had yielded an average of \$19.9 million for bicycling and walking infrastructure in the past two funding cycles, accounting for one fifth of region's active transportation funds.

This time, there was a problem. Historically, about 80 percent of the flexible funds had gone to bicycling and walking projects while around 20 percent went to freight projects. The Advisory Committee was considering a plan to reverse that ratio, committing 80 percent of funds to freight. This would have been a major setback for bicycling.

Gerik Kransky, advocacy director at the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, wrote at the time, "At the current level of funding for active transportation, it will require 166 years to build out all of the trail, bicycle and pedestrian projects in Metro's 2035 Regional Transportation Plan. The majority of these projects derive support from Regional Flexible Funds. Powerful business groups have organized a campaign to leverage funding for freight."⁸

Kransky and the BTA leapt into action. The advocates knew that JPACT was made up of twelve local elected leaders and five transportation and state agency officials. They urged Portland's bicyclists to take three actions:

- Call local elected JPACT representatives to tell them "how important this issue is and that now is not the time to cut funding for beneficial active transportation projects."
- Write a letter to the key MPO staff person. "Tell your personal story and be sure to ask for active transportation funding at or above previous levels."
- Tell a friend, spread the word and build public sentiment for the funding.



8 <http://btaoregon.org/2010/06/jpact-demystifying-one-of-portlands-powerful-acronyms/>

“An MPO campaign is just like any other campaign,” Kransky explained recently. It requires understanding the issues, cultivating allies, and powerfully demonstrating that public is behind your issue.

In this case, the effort was effective. The final vote split the funds with 75 percent for active transportation projects and 25 percent for freight projects.^{9 10}

9 <http://www.portlandmercury.com/BlogtownPDX/archives/2010/07/08/with-bike-funding-even-a-cut-is-a-win>

10 <http://bikeportland.org/2010/07/08/metros-jpact-votes-for-7525-split-in-favor-of-active-transportation-36277>

Frequently Asked Questions

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have been around in some form since the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962. But under the 2012 federal transportation bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), these transportation agencies have new authority to direct transportation investments — making them more important for biking and walking advocates than ever before. Not sure where to start with your MPO? Never fear. We've compiled some of the most frequently asked questions about these important agencies.



FAQs:

About Metropolitan Planning Organizations

What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)?

What do MPOs do?

Do I have an MPO? What is it called?

How are MPOs structured?

Who makes the decisions at an MPO?

How many professional staff do MPOs usually have? Are they likely to be included in bike/ped specialists?

How do MPOs pay their operating costs?

MAP-21

What does the current federal transportation bill, MAP-21, mean for MPOs and bicycling and walking?

How do MPOs distribute Transportation Alternative Program funds for biking and walking projects? Are MPOs required to involve stakeholders?

Do MPOs have to do performance measures?

Best Practices and Getting involved

How can MPOs promote and support bicycling?

As an advocate, how do I work with my MPO to ensure they employ best practices for bicycling and walking?

Do MPOs have bicycle advisory committees? How do I get on mine?

Should my MPO have a bicycle master plan? How do I know if it does?

Do MPOs have their own Complete Streets Policies? Should my MPO?

Do MPOs ever run safety or transportation options campaigns?

About MPOs

What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)?

Metropolitan Planning Organizations are regional transportation planning bodies, made up of representatives from local governments and transportation authorities. Under federal law, any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000 must have an MPO. MPOs are responsible for distributing federal transportation funds to their region.



What do MPOs do?

MPOs are required to undertake a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process (known as “3C”) to produce their region’s Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTP) and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP).

These are the five core functions of an MPO, according to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA):¹¹

Establish a setting: Establish and manage a fair and impartial setting for effective regional decision-making in the metropolitan area.

Identify and evaluate alternative transportation improvement options: Use data and planning methods to generate and evaluate alternatives.

Prepare and maintain a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP): Develop and update a long-range transportation plan for the metropolitan area covering a planning horizon of at least twenty years that fosters (1) mobility and access for people and goods, (2) efficient system performance and preservation, and (3) good quality of life.

Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): Develop a short-range (four-year) program of transportation improvements based on the long-range transportation plan; the TIP should be designed to achieve the area’s goals, using spending, regulating, operating, management, and financial tools.

Involve the public: Involve the general public and other affected constituencies in the four essential functions listed above.

¹¹ The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) “[The Transportation Planning Process: A Briefing Book for Transportation Decision-makers, Officials, and Staff](#)”

If the region has not met federal air quality standards (is designated as a non-attainment or maintenance area), then it is also tasked to:

Protect air quality: transportation plans, programs, and projects must conform with the air quality plan.

The section of law related to MPOs and metropolitan transportation planning processes is 23 U.S.C. §§ 134–135 (<http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/23/134>).¹²

How are MPOs structured?

MPOs can be fully independent agencies, can be integrated into a host agency agency, or can fall somewhere in between.

Types of Host Agencies ¹³			
Host Agency Type	Number	Percent of all Hosted MPOs	Percent of all MPOs
Regional Council	34	37.4%	25.6%
County Government	27	26.6%	20.3%
Municipal Government	26	28.5%	19.5%
Modal Authority	2	2.2%	1.5%
State DOT	1	1.1%	0.8%
University	1	1.1	0.8%

MPOs are often hosted by Councils of Government (COGs). COGs are regional council organizations of local governments with responsibilities beyond transportation. Each local government involved in a COG sends a delegate (typically a mayor, council member, or county executive) to represent its interests.

Freestanding MPOs are agencies that focus solely on transportation. Members of the governing board can be delegates (as in COGs), or they can be appointed by local or state elected officials. Only Portland’s MPO, called Metro, elects its members directly.

¹² 23 U.S.C. §§ 134–135

¹³ Lewis & Sprague, “Federal Transportation Policy and the Role of Metropolitan Planning Organizations in California.”

In most MPO and COG boards, each jurisdiction gets one vote, regardless of the size of the population in that jurisdiction. This means that cities need to work with surrounding areas during decision-making processes.¹³ Thirteen percent of MPOs use a weighting system to give larger jurisdictions proportional input.¹⁴

Who makes decisions at an MPO?

MAP-21 requires that MPOs representing areas with populations over 200,000 (known as Transportation Management Areas, TMAs) have a decision-making structure that incorporates input from local elected officials, officials of public transportation agencies, and “appropriate state officials.”¹⁵

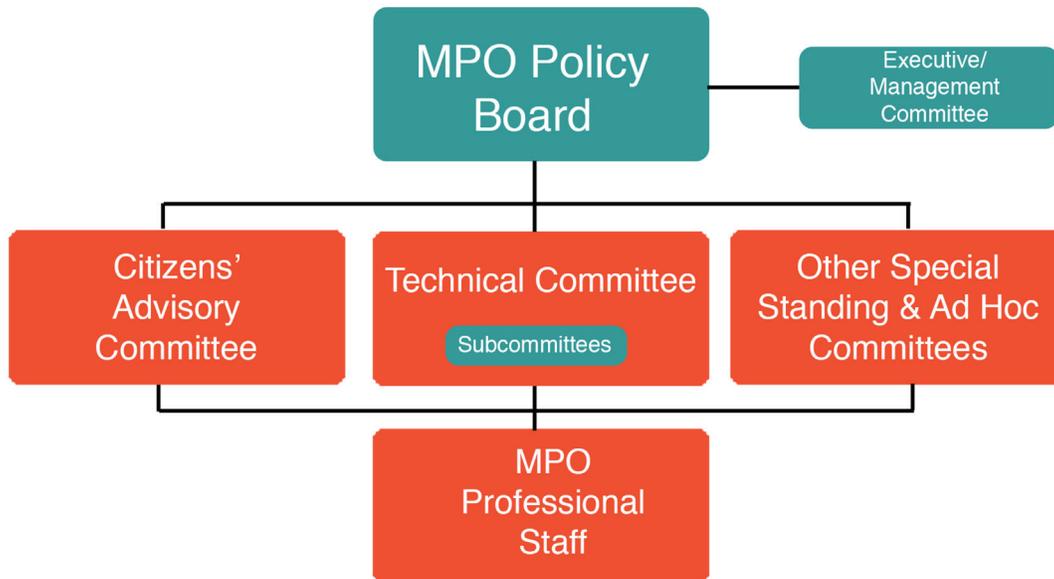
MPO governing boards vary in size from five to 73 members. The median board has 14 members. The most common type of board member is a municipal elected official, followed by county commissioners and state DOT representatives.¹⁶

In theory, the input process looks like this:¹⁷



14 Sanchez, Thomas, “An Inherent Bias? Geographic and Racial-Ethnic Patterns of Metropolitan Planning Organization Boards.”
 15 U.S.C. §§ 134–135
 16 Bond, Kramer, Seggerman, “Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations..”
 17 AMPO.org

Subsequently, the decision-making structure looks like this:¹⁸



The governing body appoints a policy or technical committee that, along with its subcommittees, is highly influential in making the key transportation decisions. These policy committees should – and often do – include bicycling and walking representatives.

18 Bond, Kramer, Seggerman, “Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations..”

How many professional staff do MPOs usually have? Are they likely to include bike/ped specialists?

The most common number of MPO staff is 3, the median number is 6, and the average is 14. The largest MPO has 121 total employees (not FTE).

Some MPOs have bike/ped coordinator positions and/or Safe Routes to School coordinators. Thirty percent of MPOs have a staff member who spends at least half of her time on bike/ped issues.

Specialization of MPO Employees ¹⁹		
Specialization	Percent of MPOs with this Specialty on Staff	Median Staff Size of MPOs with this Specialization
GIS	44.4%	9
Travel Demand Modeling	38.7%	12
Transit	36.3%	10
Bicycle & Pedestrian	30.6%	8.5
Public Involvement	25%	12
Traffic Operations	20.2%	10
Intergovernmental Relations	16.1%	8.5
Air Quality	15.3%	15
Safety	12.9%	10
Transportation Disadvantaged	12.1%	11
Freight	11.3%	15.5
Socio-cultural impacts	4%	12

How do MPOs pay their operating costs?

Most MPOs have no authority to raise revenues. Operating budgets for MPOs come from a combination of federal transportation funds and state and local matching funds. Federal sources for MPO operations include FHWA Planning (PL) funds, FTA Metropolitan Transit Planning (5303) funds, flexed Surface Transportation Program – Urban Allocation (STP), and flexed Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program (CMAQ).¹⁹

19 Bond, Kramer, Seggerman, “Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations.”

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)

What does the current federal transportation bill, MAP-21, mean for MPOs and bicycling and walking?

MAP-21 combined several funding programs (Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails, and Safe Routes to School) into the new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). States are required to sub-allocate a portion of their funds to **MPOs with populations of at least 200,000**²⁰. MPOs must develop a competitive process for awarding TAP funds to local entities, like governments, transportation planning agencies, school districts, and land management agencies.



For a visual explanation, see this [infographic](#) for how TAP funds flow to MPOs.²¹

Bicycling and walking advocates should work with MPO staff to establish evaluation criteria, participate in project selection committees, and provide other input as the process is being created. Advocates can also spread the word to local governments that TAP funds are available from the MPO to encourage local entities to submit quality applications.

MPOs may use the full range of federal aid transportation programs to fund bicycling and walking projects, including the Surface Transportation Program (STP) and the **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)**.²² Advocates can also work with their state to access funds from the **Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)**²³ and Section 402 safety grants.

How do MPOs distribute Transportation Alternative Program funds for biking and walking projects?

MAP-21 stipulates that MPOs for areas with populations over 200,000 must establish a competitive process to select Transportation Alternatives Program projects.

For examples of MPO grant applications that incorporate biking and walking well, see Advocacy Advance's report "[Transportation Alternatives Program Competitive Grant Process: Examples of Regional Applications](#)." This report was written in conjunction with the Safe Routes to School National Partnership.²⁴

20 http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/MPO_list.pdf

21 [Advocacy Advance infographic](#)

22 http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/CMAQ_flow_chart.pdf

23 http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/HSIP_flow_chart.pdf

24 [Advocacy Advance & SRTS](#)

Are MPOs required to involve stakeholders?

Yes. MAP-21 says that the MPO's plans and TIPs must integrate the management of transportation systems "including accessible pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities." The law also stipulates that MPOs shall provide a number of groups, including "representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities" with "a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan."²⁵

Do MPOs have to do performance measures?

Yes, MPOs must create regional performance targets to align with state goals and national performance measures. States and regions must establish performance targets for serious injuries and fatalities per vehicle mile traveled, the total number of serious injuries and fatalities, traffic congestion and auto emissions.

MPOs must incorporate the state's performance targets into their own planning. MPOs are not limited to those categories, however. Ideally, MPOs and states should set separate goals for motorized and non-motorized safety to ensure that bicycling and walking safety is adequately addressed.

25 23 U.S.C. §§ 134–135 (6) (A), <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/23/134>

Best Practices and Getting Involved

Do I have an MPO? What is it called?

If you live in an urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000, your region is represented by a Metropolitan Planning Organization. You can find your MPO using USDOT's [MPO database](#).²⁶

How can MPOs promote and support bicycling?

A working group of MPO professionals convened by Advocacy Advance compiled a list of actions that MPOs can do to better plan for bicycling and walking. They included:

- Integrate biking and walking facilities and programs into Long Range Plans and other plans.
- Ask the community to identify issues and priorities.
- Collect good data on bicycling and walking.
- Support local biking and walking planning efforts.
- Incorporate bicycling and walking criteria into all project selection processes.
- Involve the bicycling and walking advocacy community.

For more suggestions, see Advocacy Advance's report, "[How Metropolitan Planning Organizations plan for and fund bicycling and walking Investments](#)."²⁷ For example Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) applications, see Advocacy Advance's report, "[Transportation Alternatives Program Competitive Grant Process: Examples of Regional Applications](#)."²⁸

Also see these two great reports from the Safe Routes to School National Partnership:

- [A Primer for Regional Governments](#)²⁹
- [A Regional Government Primer for Practitioners](#)³⁰



26 USDOT MPO database, <http://www.planning.dot.gov/mpo.asp>

27 http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/MPO-BikePed-Best-Practices_Final.pdf

28 Advocacy Advance & SRTS

29 <http://saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/RegionalGovernmentPrimer-v5.pdf>

30 <http://saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/RegionalGovernmentPrimer-forPractitioners-v5.pdf>

Do MPOs have bicycle advisory committees? How do I get on mine?

Forty-four percent of MPOs have bicycle and pedestrian advisory committees (BPAC) to help them plan for bicycling and walking in the region. BPACs are the second most common committee behind a “technical advisory” committee, which nearly all MPOs have.

MPO Advisory Committee Frequency ³¹		
Types of Committee	Total	Percent of MPOs
All Respondents	133	--
Technical Advisory	121	91%
Bicycle and Pedestrian	59	44%
Citizens Advisory	54	41%
Transit	32	24%
Transportation Disadvantaged	29	22%
Air Quality	27	20%
Congestion Management	25	19%
Land Use	13	10%
Freight	12	9%
Corridor Management	9	7%
Water	8	6%

To get on your advisory committee, contact the chair of the committee or the MPO’s bicycle and pedestrian coordinator and ask about how new members are added.

For more on Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committees, see the Advocacy Advance report: [“Making Bicycling and Walking a Norm for Transportation Agencies: Best Practices for Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committees.”](#)³²

31 Bond, Kramer, Seggerman, “Staffing and Administrative Capacity of Metropolitan Planning Organizations.”

32 Advocacy Advance BPAC report

Should my MPO have a bicycle master plan? How do I know if it does?

Yes, it should. Both local and regional plans are important because only projects identified on a planning document are eligible for federal transportation funds. Contact your MPO to find out if there is a recent bicycle master plan. Old plans should be made up to date.

Here are some examples:

- [St. Louis region](#)³³
- [Lee County, FL](#)³⁴
- [Santa Fe, NM](#)³⁵

If your region does not have a bicycle master plan, make sure the cities within the region do. For an example, see [Seattle, WA's](#) bicycle master plan.³⁶

Do MPOs have their own Complete Streets Policies? Should my MPO?

Yes. According to the [National Complete Streets Coalition](#), at least 37 MPOs have regional Complete Streets policies or resolutions.³⁷ These include regions as varied as Bloomington, IN, Jackson, MI, Kansas City MO/KS, and Washington, DC.

These policies help ensure that transportation projects accommodate the needs of all road users. By requiring a Complete Streets process of all project applications, MPOs can create a region-wide active transportation network. This avoids misaligned priorities that emerge when some of the region's jurisdictions have Complete Streets policies and other do not.

Do MPOs ever run safety or transportation options campaigns?

Yes. MPOs have hosted bicycle education classes and been part of public awareness campaigns. For example, the New Orleans MPO funded a lively pedestrian safety campaign involving a local – and nationally-known – dance troop, the 610 Stompers. The campaign was called [Brake It Down NOLA](#).³⁸

The MPO that covers Dayton, OH, collaborated with the transit agency, the water district and the parks district – a rare partnership – to deliver a program called [Drive Less Live More](#), which helps residents find alternatives to their cars.³⁹

33 [St. Louis plan](#)

34 [Lee County plan](#)

35 [Santa Fe plan](#)

36 <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/bikemaster.htm>

37 <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs/policy/cs-chart-allpolicies.pdf>

38 New Orleans, LA, "[Brake It Down NOLA](#)."

39 [Dayton, OH, Drive Less Live More](#)

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