

## WHAT IS AN MPO?

Greatly enhanced by the freedom of the automobile, the settlement of land around cities and into suburban environs has developed into regional economies that span across governmental boundaries. The federal government recognized that regional economics are dependent on the large-scale movement of people and goods over regional transportation networks; however, it is difficult to address regional transportation impacts and needs when you have multiple jurisdictions of political authority.

The federal government sought to address regional transportation by requiring states to establish Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), composed of local elected officials and state representatives to review and approve transportation investments in urbanized areas. The *Highway Act of 1962* required a Metropolitan Planning Organization to be established in all urbanized areas over 50,000 in population and made federal highway aid contingent a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process know as the “3-C Process”. Over the years, Congress has significantly added and revised the expectations for the 3-C Process, such as the addition of performance-based planning.

The five core functions of an MPO include:

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

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

*Maintain a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP):* Develop and maintain a transportation plan covering a planning horizon of at least twenty years that is multimodal modal, fiscally constrained, fosters mobility and access for people and goods, provides efficient system performance and preservation, and improves the quality of life.

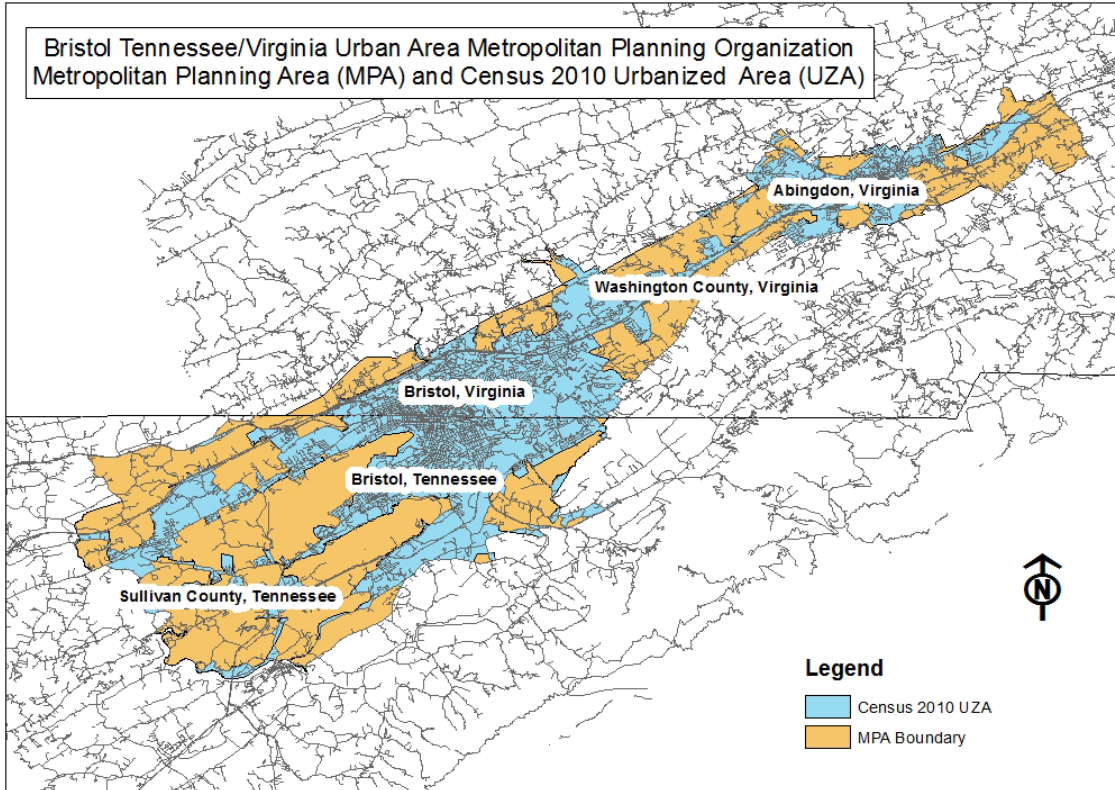
*Development a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):* Develop a short-term (four-year) program of transportation investments based on the long-range transportation plan.

*Involve the Public:* Involve the general public and other interested parties in the essential MPO functions listed above.

### **BRISTOL TENNESSEE/VIRGINIA URBAN AREA MPO**

Following the 1980 Census of Population the U. S. Bureau of the Census designated Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia as an “Urbanized Area.” As a result, the Bristol MPO was established in 1982 under agreement with the governors of the State of Tennessee and Commonwealth of Virginia, and the local governments within the urbanized area. Each successive Census redefines the urbanized area based on the changes in population characteristics. As delineated in the Bureau of the Census 2010 urbanized area designations, the Bristol Tennessee/Virginia urbanized area includes the City of Bristol, Tennessee; the City of Bristol, Virginia (an independent city outside of the jurisdiction of any county); the Town of Abingdon, Virginia; and certain surrounding areas of Sullivan County, Tennessee, and Washington

County, Virginia. The Metropolitan Planning Area for the Bristol Tennessee/Virginia Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organizations represents the existing urbanized area and the contiguous geographic area expected to become urbanized within a 20-year forecast period of the transportation plan.



**MPO Structure.** The MPO functions under a committee structure comprised of an Executive Board and Technical Staff. Final responsibility for transportation planning and policy decision-making is vested with the Executive Board. The Technical Staff is comprised of individuals of governments and agencies with technical responsibility for implementation of transportation planning activities. The MPO staff provides daily administrative functions and coordination of the Metropolitan Planning Organization.

