



U.S. Department
of Transportation

Federal Highway
Administration

Federal Transit
Administration

Transportation Management Area Planning Certification Review

- ◆ **Metropolitan Council**
- ◆ **Metro Transit**
- ◆ **Minnesota Department
of Transportation**

Final Report

March 20, 2017



1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From August 2016 through January 2017, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conducted a Certification Review of the transportation planning process for the Minneapolis – St. Paul, MN-WI urbanized area (UZA)/transportation management area (TMA). FHWA and FTA are required to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process for each UZA over 200,000 in population at least every four years. This is done to determine if the process meets the federal planning requirements per 23 USC 134(k)(5)(A) and 49 USC 5303(k)(5)(A) and the rules stated thereunder.

The TMA Certification Review involved an examination of many different planning elements. Based on the Current Status and Findings, FHWA/FTA could issue one of three actions for each element: Commendation, Recommendation, or Corrective Action. Key definitions are provided below:

Current Status and Findings: Statements of fact, interpretations and conclusions regarding the conditions found during the review. These statements provide the primary basis for determining the federal actions (Commendations, Recommendations, or Corrective Actions), if any, contained in the Certification Report.

Commendations [(C)(Noteworthy Practices)]: Practices that demonstrate innovative, highly effective, well-thought-out procedures for implementing the planning requirements. Procedures addressing issues that have frequently posed problems nationwide could be cited as noteworthy practices. Commendations may also be cited for significant improvements and/or resolution of past findings.

Recommendations (R): Procedures that could improve regulatory compliance and/or represent best planning practices. Recommendations are somewhat less substantial than a corrective action. However, they are significant and FHWA/FTA are hopeful that the pertinent planning partners will implement them accordingly.

Corrective Actions (CA): Practices that fail to meet requirements of the transportation statutes and regulations, thus seriously impacting the outcome of the overall process. The expected changes and timelines for resolution are clearly defined.



1.1 Previous Findings and Status

The first Certification Review for the Minneapolis – St. Paul, MN-WI UZA was conducted in 1992. Subsequent Certification Reviews were conducted every four years, with the last review taking place in 2012-13. The 2013 review findings and their status are provided in Appendix B and summarized below as follows.

Table 1 - 2013 Review Findings Status

Review Area	Finding	Code (C, CA or R)	Resolution Method	Status
Transportation Policy Plan: Fiscal Constraint 23 CFR 450.322(f)(10)	The MTP did not contain a clear, detailed Financial Plan.	R	Include in next MTP update.	Ongoing
Transportation Policy Plan: Listing of Projects 23 CFR 450.322(f)(6)	The MTP did not have a comprehensive listing of all projects for 20-year horizon.	R	Include in next MTP update.	Ongoing
Congestion Management Process (CMP) 23 CFR 450.320	The CMP was not effectively compiled and summarized to document the process.	R	Include in next MTP update.	Incomplete
Operations and Maintenance (O&M) 23 CFR 450.322(10)(i)	The TIP and MTP did not identify and discuss O&M costs.	R	Include in next TIP and MTP update.	Complete
Freight Transportation Planning 23 CFR 450.306	Lack of emphasis on freight planning.	R	Improve efforts to study and plan for freight movement / collect data / identify freight corridors.	Complete
Documentation	The Federal Review Team noted the value of the discontinued Implementation Report.	R	Consider resuming publication of Implementation Report.	Complete
Title VI and Environmental Justice	Lack of clarity in identifying minority and low income populations.	R	Break out demographics separately and identify projects in the TIP that provide benefits to Title VI and EJ populations.	Ongoing
Public Participation	Demonstration of extensive and innovative public outreach efforts.	C	N/A	Ongoing
Consultation and Coordination	Demonstration of leadership and cooperative efforts in the Metropolitan Planning Process.	C	N/A	Ongoing



Review Area	Finding	Code (C, CA or R)	Resolution Method	Status
National Leadership	The Metropolitan Council was the first MPO to include a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Managed Lane as an alternative.	C	N/A	Complete

1.2 Summary of Current Findings

The current review found that the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted in the Minneapolis – St. Paul, MN-WI UZA **substantially meets** federal planning requirements and is **certified with conditions**.

As a result, FHWA and FTA are certifying the transportation planning process conducted by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Metropolitan Council Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the public transportation operators of the region - Metro Transit, Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, Plymouth Metrolink, Southwest Transit, and Maple Grove Transit. Certification is subject to satisfactory resolution of identified corrective actions. This report also contains recommendations to improve the transportation planning process and commendations for recognition of exemplary planning practices.

Table 2 - 2017 Commendations Summary

Review Area	Commendation
Environmental Justice, Executive Order 12898	MPO and MnDOT participation in the 2016 US DOT Ladders of Opportunity Every Place Counts Design Challenge, which considered innovative solutions for the disparate impacts of the I-94 urban expressway on minority communities.
Transportation Planning Process 23 CFR 450.306	APTA award to Metro Transit: 2016 Transit System of the Year for 2013-15. Accomplishments include safety, operations, maintenance, expanding ridership/ access, community relations, and advances in sustainability.
Transportation Safety 23 USC 134(h)(1)(B) 23 CFR 450.306(b)(2)	MnDOT’s State Traffic Safety Engineer has been added to the committee that reviews Metro HSIP project proposals. Including an individual with safety-related experience on this committee is a noteworthy practice.
Transportation Improvement Program 23 CFR 450.326(n)(1)	The use of equity as a project selection criterion helps inform the policy board, project sponsors, and the planning process about the impact of the investment.



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Table 3 - 2017 Corrective Action (CA) and Recommendation (R) Summary

Review Area	Finding	Code (CA or R)	Corrective Action or Recommendation	Resolution Due Date
MPO Structure and Agreements 23 USC 134(d) 23 CFR 450.314(h)(1) 23 CFR 450.310(d)	The MOU does not include the new requirements to improve planning coordination/transparency.	R	Improve and update the MOU by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including missing regulatory citations / requirements; • Clarifying Metropolitan Council's correct structure (the Council is the MPO); • Adding primary "opt-out" transit operators as signatories; and • Including procedures for compliance with performance-based planning. 	Within 1 year of this report
Unified Planning Work Program 23 CFR 450.308	The UPWP is presented only as a program document with little external exposure. It receives little input from the public and stakeholders.	R	Elevate and recognize the UPWP as a critical planning document by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying context of UPWP studies; • Specifying work task relation to MTP goals. • Discussing project ranking process; • Further breaking down funding and staff time; and • Making UPWP publically available beyond TAB/TAC meetings. 	Next Updates of the UPWP, MTP, Transportation Planning and Programming Guide, and PPP.
Metropolitan Transportation Plan 23 USC 134(c),(h)&(i) 23 CFR 450.324(g)(3) & (4)(i) Performance-Based Planning Per 23 CFR 450.306(d)	The MTP/planning process does not include the new requirements for performance-based planning.	R	Collaboratively develop the required performance metrics/targets with the planning partners for inclusion in an updated MTP.	Next MTP update (2018)
Metropolitan Transportation Plan 23 CFR.324(g)(4)(ii), (j)	The MTP does not evaluate alternative policies beyond the existing investment option per the new FAST Act scenario planning language. This could be considered.	R	Integrate scenario planning into the MTP for investments, projects, and/or population/employment distribution alternatives.	Next MTP update (2018)



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Review Area	Finding	Code (CA or R)	Corrective Action or Recommendation	Resolution Due Date
Metropolitan Transportation Plan 23 CFR 450.324(g)(2)	The parameters for major capital project selection are unclear.	R	Improve procedures and transparency of rating/selecting capital projects. Consider quantitative methodology such as benefit-cost analysis.	Next MTP update (2018)
Metropolitan Transportation Plan 23 CFR 450.324(g)(11)	The MTP Financial Plan does not identify regionally significant projects and categories of projects in the year of expenditure throughout the 20 years of the plan.	R	Include non-expansion regionally significant projects for each of the first four years and subsequent five year bands through the MTP horizon.	Next MTP update (2018)
Transportation Improvement Program 23 CFR 450.326(k)	The TIPs include projects without committed federal funding in the first two years, which is non-compliant with 23 CFR 450.326(k).	R	Move projects that do not have federal funding committed from years one and two of the TIP to years three or four.	Within 60 days of this report.
Transportation Improvement Program 23 CFR 450.326(j), (p) 23 CFR 450.330	The TIP lacks clarity on change procedures and Year of Expenditure (YOE) dollars. Time is also not allocated for federal input on the TIP/STIP.	R	Add criteria for amendments, administrative modifications, inflation rate to the TIP. Revise the procedures for federal TIP/STIP review to allow for revisions.	Within 60 days of this report.
Transportation Improvement Program 23 CFR 450.326(n)	The TIP's investment categories and subcategories are incomplete.	R	Complete a system-level assessment to determine the level of performance/ investment need for the Regional Solicitation.	Prior to or in concert with the next MTP
Public Participation 23 USC 134(i)(6) 23 CFR 450.326(b) 23 CFR 450.316(a) 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(iii) 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(vi) 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(x)	The Public Participation Plan (PPP) is lacking in certain areas. It only provides a high-level conceptual overview of the methods and procedures indicated. Visualization techniques, methods for engaging the public and public comment consideration practices are missing.	R	Update and enhance the PPP. Areas updated should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving potential stakeholder engagement methods; Adding visualization techniques; Demonstrating a clear process for public comment consideration; and Documenting a process for evaluating the PPP's overall effectiveness. 	In time for the next MTP update.
Environmental Justice, Executive Order 12898	The benefits and burdens analysis is incomplete.	R	Analyze plan impacts on disadvantaged communities, overall regional populations in terms of travel distances, and times & air quality by mode.	Next MTP update (2018)



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Review Area	Finding	Code (CA or R)	Corrective Action or Recommendation	Resolution Due Date
Consultation, Coordination and Environmental Mitigation 23 USC 134(g) & (i) 23 CFR 450.316(b), 23 CFR 450.324(g)(10), (h)	The Partner Agency Work Group supported environmental mitigation in the MTP's development, but it is unclear what input was provided. It is also unclear how this group and other agencies and officials were involved in TIP and UPWP development. Greater transparency is needed.	R	Improve the process by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documenting consultation with federally-recognized tribes; • Documenting procedures for environmental mitigation and coordination in support of the MTP; and • Updating natural and historic resources and document in MTP. 	Next Update of the PPP, MTP, TIP, and UPWP.
Transportation Safety 23 USC 134(h)(1)(B) 23 CFR 450.306(a)(2) 23 CFR 450.318	The safety and mobility needs for the system are not fully developed.	R	Follow the Principal Arterial Intersection Conversion Study by more detailed corridor planning studies that look at lower-cost alternatives. Explore options that can be quickly and realistically funded and constructed.	Ongoing
Congestion Management Process / Management and Operations 23 USC 134(k)(3) 23 CFR 450.322	The CMP is not fully compiled, summarized and implemented.	R	Improve the CMP to fully comply with 23 CFR 450.322 and the 8-step federal process. Specific areas for improvement include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing non-freeway principal and minor arterials; • Including SMART regional objectives; • Incorporating greater public transparency of CMP implementation; • Documenting steps taken to consider potential CMP strategies; • Evaluating previously implemented strategies; • Integrating the CMP into the project selection process; • Evaluating project benefits and costs in relation to congestion mitigation; and • Defining operation problems and expected solutions/benefits. 	Within 2 Years of this report, with periodic updates on progress