

PLANNING FUNDS THAT DELIVER

How stronger planning improves project delivery and transportation outcomes

PLANNING IS THE FOUNDATION OF PROJECT DELIVERY

Strong planning upfront helps **streamline projects, reduce delays, and ensure federal transportation dollars are invested wisely**. When regions plan well, they build consensus early, resolve conflicts before construction, and use data and performance measures to focus on the highest-impact investments, especially for safety, congestion reduction, and economic competitiveness.

Metropolitan Planning (PL) funds are the primary federal funding source for regional transportation planning carried out by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) under federal law. PL funds support the work that makes projects possible.

THE ISSUE

Less than 1% of federal transportation funding is used to plan our systems, even though planning determines how the other 99 percent of dollars are invested. At the same time, PL funds have not kept pace with the growing federal responsibilities placed on MPOs, inflation, or the increasing complexity of today's transportation systems.

IF IT DOES NOT GET PLANNED, IT DOES NOT GET BUILT.

Investing in planning is one of the most **cost-effective ways to speed up project delivery, reduce costs**, and ensure federal transportation dollars deliver real value for communities nationwide.



WHAT CONGRESS CAN DO

#1 Increase Planning Funds

- Increase planning funds to **2.5 percent** of the Federal Aid Highway Program so regions can deliver better projects faster and more efficiently.

#2 Remove Barriers

- **Eliminate the local match requirement** for PL funds, recognizing that planning is federally required and should not be constrained by local fiscal capacity.

#3 Streamline Access

- Give MPOs the option to **receive PL funds directly**, allowing dollars to reach regions more quickly and reducing administrative delays.

#4 Modernize Eligible Uses

- **Update eligible uses** to support the full project lifecycle, including data, modeling, and project scoping studies.



AMPO

Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)?

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) coordinate transportation planning for urban areas **with populations over 50,000**, ensuring that federal and state funds are effectively invested in local and regional projects. Operating under the **Cooperative, Comprehensive, and Continuing (3C) process**, MPOs play a critical role in determining how federal and state transportation funds are allocated, ensuring that projects reflect local priorities while addressing broader regional needs.

By **bringing together local governments, transit agencies, community groups, and state partners**, MPOs develop long-term strategies to enhance mobility, improve safety, reduce congestion, and drive economic growth.

Each MPO is unique, shaped by its regional context, population size, and specific challenges. This diversity requires MPOs to wear many hats—**planners, problem-solvers, funders, and conveners**—adapting to their communities' needs and delivering tailored solutions that work best for local priorities.

1973

Year Congress established MPOs via the Federal-Aid Highway Act

410 MPOs

Nationwide

80%

National population living in an urban area (2020 Census)

View your state's MPO map here:
hepgis.fhwa.dot.gov/fhwagis/

**MPO 101
GUIDE**



Key Priorities for MPOs

AMPO's legislative priorities provide MPOs with the tools and flexibility to make smart, transformative investments in transportation infrastructure, ensuring that decisions made at the regional level best serve the unique needs of rural, suburban, and urban areas.

**Learn More
About AMPO's
Legislative
Priorities**

ampo.org/policy/reauthorization/

