



**2014**  
**Certification Report**  
**Pensacola**  
**Transportation**  
**Management Area**

**Florida-Alabama**  
**Transportation Planning**  
**Organization**

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## **Executive Summary**

Federal Law requires the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to jointly certify the transportation planning processes of Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) at least every four years (a TMA is an urbanized area, as defined by the US Census, with a population over 200,000). A certification review generally consists of four primary activities: a site visit, a review of planning documents (in advance of the site visit), a FHWA/FTA certification report and a certification review closeout presentation.

A joint FHWA/FTA Federal Review Team conducted a review of the Florida-Alabama Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) June 10-13, 2014. Since the last certification review in 2010, this TMA has made significant improvements to its transportation planning processes. As indicated by the nine noteworthy practices highlighted in this report, it is clear that this MPO has taken considerable steps toward ensuring requirements and objectives of applicable federal laws are considered and incorporated where appropriate. There were two corrective actions identified during this review. There were also seven recommendations made that the Florida-Alabama TPO should consider for improving their planning process.

Based on the overall findings, the FHWA and FTA jointly certify that the transportation planning process of the Pensacola TMA (Florida-Alabama TPO) substantially meets the federal planning requirements in 23 CFR 450 Subpart C subject to the TPO satisfactorily addressing the Corrective Actions stated in this report. The TPO is encouraged to provide the FHWA and FTA with evidence of satisfactory completion of the Corrective Actions as they occur and in accordance with the noted deadlines. This certification will remain in effect until **December 2018**.

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## Florida-Alabama Transportation Planning Organization (TPO)

### Section I. Overview of the Certification Process

Under provisions of 23 CFR 450.334 (a) and 49 CFR 613.334 (a), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the planning process of Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) “not less often than once every four years”. This four-year cycle runs from the date of the previous jointly issued Certification report.

The primary purpose of a Certification Review is to formalize the continuing oversight and evaluation of the planning process. The FHWA and FTA work cooperatively with the TMA planning staff on a regular basis by reviewing and approving planning products, providing technical assistance, and promoting best practices. The formal assessment involved in a Certification Review provides an external view of the TMA’s transportation planning process and helps ensure that the major issues facing a metropolitan area are being addressed.

A certification review generally consists of four primary activities. These activities include: a “desk audit” which is a review of the TMA’s main planning process documents (e.g. Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)); a “site visit” with staff from the TMA’s various transportation planning partners (e.g. the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), local/regional transit service provider(s), and other participating State/local agencies), including opportunities for local elected officials and the general public to provide comments on the TMA planning process; the preparation of a “FHWA/FTA TMA Certification Review Report” that documents the certification review’s findings; and a formal FHWA Florida Division presentation of the review’s findings at a future TPO Board Policy meeting.

The certification review of the TMA includes a review of the transportation planning processes for the Florida-Alabama TPO, as well as an overall assessment of regional coordination activities. The review for the Florida-Alabama TPO was held June 10 -13, 2014, in Pensacola, Florida. During this site visit, the Federal Review Team met with the staff of the Florida-Alabama TPO, the FDOT, the associated transit authorities for Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties in Florida and for Lillian, Alabama, representatives from the TPO Board, the Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee, the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee as well as other partnering agencies and the public. See **Appendix A** for a list of review team members and site visit participants. See **Appendix B** for the site visit agenda.

The public hearing for this certification review was held on Thursday, July 31, 2014. The purpose of the public meeting is to inform the public about Federal transportation planning requirements and allow the public the opportunity to provide input on how the transportation planning process is meeting the needs of the area. The meeting was advertised in local newspapers, direct mail and on the Florida-Alabama TPO website. For those that could not attend the public meeting or who did not want to speak at the public meeting, contact information for the Federal Review Team was provided. Members of the public are given 30 days from the date of the public meeting to mail, fax or email their comments; and may also request a copy of the certification review report via these methods. No written comments were received. Verbal comments from the public meeting included accolades for the MPO, its staff, multimodal planning and transit, and feedback related to low meeting attendance by the public. Comments received during this certification review that were project specific have been relayed to the appropriate FHWA and FDOT personnel. A copy of the public meeting notice is provided in **Appendix C**. A summary of public comments is provided in **Appendix D**. A copy of the minutes from the public meeting is provided in **Appendix E**.

## **Section II. Florida-Alabama TPO Previous Certification Findings Status/Update**

The following is a summary of the previous findings made by the Federal Review Team to the Florida-Alabama TPO in 2010.

### **A. Corrective Actions**

**1. Public Involvement:** In the 2006 Certification Finding, the Federal Review Team recommended that the staff update and use its community profile to assist in public involvement efforts. To date this community profile has not been completed. In addition to not completing this profile, it appears that staff has not been effective in its engagement and considerations of underserved populations. The approach to this effort should be documented in the updated public participation plan, which would have a process for “Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services” 23 CFR 450.316(vii). **The deadline for completion of this corrective action is June 1, 2011.**

**Update:** This item was completed in conjunction with Corrective Action #3 shown below. On March 9, 2011, the TPO board adopted both the Community Profile and a new Title VI Plan which included both a Limited English Proficiency Plan and an American with Disabilities Act Plan. A copy of the Board Resolution and new documents were transmitted to FHWA on April 25, 2011. FHWA found that this Corrective Action was satisfactorily completed in a letter addressed to the Florida-Alabama TPO dated June 28, 2013.

**2. Public Involvement:** The Federal Review Team acknowledges the effort of the Florida Alabama TPO to improve the Public Participation Process. However, the current Public Participation Plan does not reflect the current practices of the TPO. The information included in the plan is outdated and contains strategies that are not currently being used by TPO staff. This lack of specificity deprives the public of knowing in advance how the Florida Alabama TPO staff engages the public for input. **As required in 23 CFR 450.316, 23 CFR 450.322 and 23 CFR 450.324, the PPP needs to be updated to be more of a participation document. The deadline to update the entire Public Participation Plan needs to be completed by June 1, 2011.**

**Update:** This item was completed at the June 8, 2011 TPO Board Meeting when a new Public Participation Plan was adopted. A copy of the Board Resolution and new Public Participation Plan was transmitted to FHWA on June 10, 2011. FHWA found that this Corrective Action was satisfactorily completed in a letter addressed to the Florida-Alabama TPO dated June 28, 2013.

**3. Civil Rights:** In accordance with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Executive Order 13166, the Florida Alabama TPO must develop an LEP plan. FHWA and FDOT stand ready to assist with this effort. **The deadline for the TPO Board to approve this Plan is February 1, 2011.**

**Update:** This item was completed in conjunction with Corrective Action #1 shown above. On March 9, 2011, the TPO board adopted both the Community Profile and a new Title VI Plan which included both a Limited English Proficiency Plan and an American with Disabilities Act Plan. A copy of the Board Resolution and new documents were transmitted to FHWA on April 25, 2011. FHWA found that this Corrective Action was satisfactorily completed in a letter addressed to the Florida-Alabama TPO dated June 28, 2013.

## **B. Recommendations**

**1. FHWA Recommendation - TPO Organization/Structure:** The Federal Review Team is concerned about the lack of diversity of members of the TPO's various advisory committees. While it recognizes that filling committee member's seats can be challenging, it is important that staff continue their efforts to achieve representation on the TPO's advisory committees that reflects the composition of the public within the planning boundary. The TPO is encouraged to document their outreach efforts to fill these positions.

**TPO Staff Response:** TPO staff currently has several measures in place to address diversity of members of the advisory committees. TPO staff participates annually in the Latino Festival in October, utilizing this activity to reach out to the Latino population to encourage and promote participation in the planning process. TPO staff also

participates in the Juneteenth and Goombay Festivals in previous and current years. TPO staff is working to establish and build community relationships with local African American churches as well as strengthen the communication with the local NAACP in order to foster interaction and promote participation on the TPO advisory committees. An initial step of locating Native American tribes has begun and recruitment is planned once these areas are identified. Outreach to high schools and colleges have also occurred to access different age groups. Discussion has continued about various advisory committee meeting locations and times in order to accommodate a broader percentage of the population. The current advisory committee membership is also geographically diverse.

**2. FHWA Recommendation – TPO Organization and Structure:** Over the past four years, there have been several recommendations by FHWA and FTA during discussions with FDOT and TPO staff to update the Staff Services Agreement. This Agreement needs to be updated to more closely define the responsibilities each party has in carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process. The TPO must make active steps to establish a separate identity as the Florida-Alabama TPO with its partners and the public.

**TPO Staff Response:** TPO staff is in the process of updating the Staff Services Agreement. The Florida-Alabama, Okaloosa-Walton and Bay County TPO logos have been placed on the windows on the front of the West Florida Regional Planning Council office building to help the public distinguish a separate identity for the TPOs. Also, the TPO has its own website which is separate from the WFRPC.

**3. FHWA Recommendation – Public Involvement:** The TPO should research the availability of minority media such as newspapers, newsletters, media, and service organizations, etc. and utilize those as primary sources for getting the word out to traditionally underserved communities. The Federal Review Team also recommends that the staff explore partnerships with local schools as well as community and civic groups as a means to inform and engage underserved populations about the role of the TPO and the transportation planning process.

**TPO Staff Response:** TPO staff has partnered with the Latino media annually for the Latino Festival in October. This effort has been an ongoing activity since 2009. Latino media outlets are also included on the TPO media listing that is the email distribution list for mass emails such as press releases and general notifications. Attempts are being made by the TPO staff to work with local schools to promote education about the planning process and develop innovative ways to engage students, parents and caregivers.

**4. FHWA Recommendation – Public Involvement:** The Federal Review Team recommends that the TPO document how it plans to “consult” with Land Use Management; Natural Resources; Environmental Protection; Conservation; and Historic

Preservation, and other “interested parties” as referenced in 23 CFR 450.210(a)(1)(i) and 450.316(a). Having a documented procedure of this “consultation” will help the MPO to more clearly define how it will ensure that the appropriate state and local agencies are involved in the development of the Public Participation Process (PPP) as well as the LRTP and TIP.

**TPO Staff Response:** Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) is the tool used to fulfill the requirements of inter-agency coordination. Within ETDM, agency representatives on the Environmental Technical Advisory Team have been vetted and entered into the LRTP Transportation Information Network. These network members receive notices for TPO meeting agendas posted on the website, including all LRTP Steering Committee meetings. Additionally, a list of agencies and contacts has been developed to create the Transportation Information Network (TIN) to gather input. The TIN is a comprehensive group including staff from appropriate State and local agencies listed in the recommendation. The full list of the TIN includes many agencies, a representative sample of agencies includes: National Park Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, City of Pensacola, Town of Jay, US EPA Region 4, US Coast Guard, FDOT, and the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. The outreach to the TIN satisfies the requirements of 23 CFR 450.316.

**5. FHWA Recommendation – Public Involvement:** In accordance with 23 CFR 450.316 (a) (1) (x), the Florida-Alabama TPO needs to develop a plan which adequately measures the effectiveness of the strategies contained in their Public Participation Plan. The TPO staff has the data but needs to go one step further in assessing what the data reveals about the public involvement efforts and needs of the TPO. The Federal Review Team remains available for additional assistance.

**TPO Staff Response:** TPO staff has a Public Involvement Assessment every quarter. These assessments are included in the Public Participation Plan Quarterly Report. Effectiveness, areas of concerns and possible corrections are included in the narrative portion of the assessments. Because public involvement strategies are continually evaluated for effectiveness in reach and efficiency, new ideas can be tested and if proven to be effective they are continued and penciled in the public involvement plan for addition in future updates. One recent example is the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter for meeting announcements. This specific activity will be added to the PIP update in 2015.

**6. FHWA Recommendation – Transit:** The TPO needs to build a better relationship with Baldwin County Rural Area Transit System (BRATS). The TPO needs to increase their coordination with BRATS and educate their partners to help them understand their role in the planning process. The TPO should continue to request representation from BRATS on the TPO advisory committees to get input from this operator. The TPO should consider having quarterly meetings with Baldwin County (BRATS) to ensure they are complying with the federal planning regulations.

**TPO Staff Response:** There is no longer BRATS service between Baldwin and Escambia counties. However, coordination does continue between TPO staff and BRATS staff. The Director of Transportation for BRATS serves as a member of the Florida-Alabama TPO Technical Coordinating Committee. In addition, there is an annual transit roundtable meeting and ad hoc meetings. The addition of Orange Beach into the Florida-Alabama TPO will necessitate the need for additional coordination in Alabama.

**7. FHWA Recommendation – Congestion Management Plan (CMP):** The CMP is not a stand-alone process (as was the CMS in many cases), but a fully integrated element of the overall transportation planning process. As such, there are different strategies to measure congestion rather than relying on the FDOT LOS tables as a single measure. The Federal Review Team recommends that the TPO review the CMP to determine what additional changes could be made to enhance it and incorporate the CMP into the 2030 LRTP update.

**TPO Staff Response:** Projects identified in the Congestion Management Process Plan are short-term operation strategies/improvements to manage congestion on a particular roadway segment. It is recognized that the FDOT Level of Service Tables are not single measures to consider when developing strategies for a particular congested roadway segment. For example, the following strategies are reviewed with the Congestion Management Process Plan review team: Flextime, Telecommuting, Parking Management, Transit Service, Traffic Surveillance/Control, Computerized Signal Systems, Median Modifications, Intersection Changes, Access Alterations, Employer Trip Reduction, Land Use Management, Incident Management, ITS Options, and Additions of General/Specific Purpose Lanes. Because the Congestion Management Process Plan is not required to be completed annually, the TPO staff plans to have the Congestion Management Process Plan completed by its General Planning Consultant in conjunction with the next Long Range Transportation Plan update which is to be completed by November 2015.

**8. FHWA Recommendation – Congestion Management Plan:** The Federal Review Team recommends that the TPO periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the CMP to ensure accurate data and methods are being employed, as well as looking into more non-traditional strategies (including transportation demand management measures, growth management, congestion pricing, traffic operational improvements, public transportation improvements, and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) measures) to add for the upcoming years. The TPO should also work with FDOT District 3 Traffic Operations staff for CMP coordination on project prioritization criteria and potential CMP projects.

**TPO Staff Response:** The traffic counts are updated annually with projection and level of service calculations. The non-traditional strategies employed are mentioned in the

number seven recommendation above. These strategies are either forwarded to local governments for potential funding on local facilities or to the Departments of Transportation to prioritize for Transportation System Management Funds.

**9. FHWA Recommendation – Safety:** The Federal Review Team strongly recommends that the TPO staff utilizes its bicycle/pedestrian crash data to strengthen its efforts related to safety and the transportation planning process.

**TPO Staff Response:** The Florida Department of Transportation Safety Database is accessible by the TPO’s Geographic Information System (GIS) Coordinator. A crash ratio and crash locations for a particular time period are provided to the Bicycle Pedestrian Committee, Citizens’ Advisory Committee, and Technical Coordinating Committee to consider when reviewing a particular roadway segment for recommended improvements. Each committee provides review and input to the TPO. In addition, Corridor Management Plans look at crash data and recommendations are made for safety on particular roadway segments.

**10. FHWA Recommendation – Safety:** The Federal Review Team recommends that TPO staff utilize a recently released Safety Primer, in their effort to include more safety principles into their planning process. This Primer is a tool to help State and local practitioners, transportation planners, and decision-makers identify, select, and use safety performance measures as a part of the transportation planning process. For more information please go to the following link: <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/hsip/tsp/fhwahep09043/>

**TPO Staff Response:** The Safety Primer provided in the link above has been printed out and distributed to TPO staff for inclusion in the planning process of the projects staff is working on.

### **Section III. Boundaries and Organization (23CFR 450.310, 312, 314)**

#### **A. Description of Planning Area**

The Pensacola, FL-AL Urbanized Area is bordered on the south by the Gulf of Mexico. On the southeast the Gulf Islands National Seashore and Escambia Bay form the border until it reaches I-10. From I-10 the boundary extends eastward to SR 87 then travels northward along CR 87A to Whiting Field. The north side of Berryhill Road and along Quintette Road forms the northern boundary except along the Escambia River where US 90 is the northern border. The north western border is almost to the Alabama state line. The southwestern border is the state line and goes into Alabama in the Lillian and Orange Beach areas.

Between the 2000 Census and the 2010 Census, Pensacola FL-AL Urbanized Area growth has occurred to the west with the inclusion of Orange Beach, AL in the 2010 Pensacola FL-AL Urbanized Area and to the east where the Fort Walton Beach, Navarre, Wright Urbanized Area now extends to the Gulf Islands National Seashore in southern Santa Rosa County. The Florida - Alabama TPO urbanized area (Pensacola, FL-AL) is a Transportation Management Area (TMA).

## **B. Metropolitan Planning Organization Structure**

The Florida-Alabama TPO is made up of representatives from the local governments that are contained within the urbanized planning area. Those local governments are: Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties in Florida, Baldwin County, Alabama, the Cities of Pensacola, Gulf Breeze, and Milton, in Florida, and the City of Orange Beach in Alabama. The City of Orange Beach, AL was incorporated into the urbanized area after the 2010 Census and the TPO approved the new membership apportionment in June of 2013. The final approval by the Governor of Florida occurred in April 2014 with concurrence by the Governor of Alabama in May 2014. The board membership is allocated in the following manner:

- Escambia County - 5 members
- Santa Rosa County - 5 members
- Baldwin County - 1 member
- City of Pensacola - 5 members
- City of Gulf Breeze - 1 member
- City of Milton - 1 member
- City of Orange Beach - 1 member

Each TPO member has one vote. The TPO maintains Bylaws that describe the operating procedures for the TPO and its advisory committees. The Bylaws were adopted in 2004, and updated in 2014. A Technical Coordinating Committee, a Citizens Advisory Committee, a Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee and the Local Disadvantaged Coordinating Board advise the TPO. Ad hoc committees, to advise the TPO and its Staff are formed as needed. Each committee carries out its prescribed tasks and responsibilities at regularly scheduled meetings and when necessary at special meetings.

The Transportation Division of the West Florida Regional Planning Council (WFRPC) is the designated professional staff to the Florida-Alabama TPO and performs the work required to maintain the continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative (3-C) planning process. The WFRPC serves seven (7) counties and is unique in its role in staffing three (3) separate TPOs in West Florida. A Staff Services Agreement, between the TPO and the Regional Planning Council, establishes this staffing arrangement. An update to this agreement is planned for FY2015.

## C. Agreements

The Florida-Alabama TPO active agreements include:

- An Interlocal Agreement for the Creation of the Florida-Alabama TPO, Transportation Planning Funds Joint Participation Agreement (April, 2005);
- A Joint Participation Agreement for Transportation Planning Funds with Florida Department of Transportation (June, 2010); and
- An Intergovernmental Coordination and Review and Public Transportation Coordination Joint Participation Agreement (June, 2010);

The Interlocal Agreement is outdated and the membership stated in the agreement on page 5 does not include membership for Orange Beach, AL. They were added as voting members after the 2010 census results included the Alabama municipality in the metropolitan area. The agreement needs to be updated to add Orange Beach, AL to the voting membership to reflect the current practice of the TPO.

**Corrective Action:** The Federal Review Team noted one corrective action regarding agreements. For more details about this corrective action, please see Section XII.

## Section IV. Scope of the Planning Process (23 CFR 450.306)

### A. Transportation Planning Factors

23 CFR 450.306 requires that the metropolitan transportation planning process explicitly consider and analyze a number of specific planning factors that reflect sound planning principles. The Florida-Alabama TPO addresses the required planning factors throughout the planning process and in the development of transportation planning products. The Long Range Transportation Program (LRTP) contains a matrix showing how each planning factor is considered in the document. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) contains projects which come from the LRTP and thus are consistent with the planning factors. And, the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) also contains a matrix showing how the work activities in the UPWP are aligned with the eight planning factors. Additionally, the planning factors are also incorporated into the Goals, Objectives and Policies (GOPs) of the LRTP.

### B. Air Quality

The Florida-Alabama TPO is currently designated as an attainment area for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The TPO staff watches the announcements of the United States Environmental Protection Agency regarding air quality standards as well as the readings from the air quality monitors in the region.

### **C. Bike and Pedestrian Planning Activities**

Staff recently completed the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan in 2012 which provided a thorough analysis of the entire TPO network of roads and bridges. This plan analysis includes the quality/level of service of existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the road network, calculations of latent/potential demand, benefit-cost indexing, and prioritization of bicycle and pedestrian projects. This data is being used to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian projects for the Long Range Transportation Plan. Staff will be revising it in the upcoming fiscal year to focus on select corridors where bicycle and pedestrian safety and accessibility are identified as most needed. Staff is also collecting data on bicycle/pedestrian crashes throughout the TPO, and has committed to developing a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan in the upcoming fiscal year.

In order to select and prioritize bicycle and pedestrian projects, candidate projects are identified throughout the entire TPO region in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2012). The projects are prioritized in the plan using a benefit-cost index of four main factors: existing conditions, potential/latent demand, public input/identification in prior plans, and construction cost per mile. Those segments with the highest benefit-cost ratio are considered to be the best projects for the TPO to advance. Funding is then allocated to projects based on this priority list.

The TPO's dedication to bicycle and pedestrian projects is evidenced by the fact that the TPO sets aside \$350,000 annually for bicycle/pedestrian projects. Staff has been exploring ways to increase the prominence of bicycle/pedestrian planning in their long range planning process, including bringing key bicycle/pedestrian projects into parity with key roadway capacity projects with regard to the major capacity prioritization process.

### **D. Transit**

Transit service in the bi-state Pensacola urbanized area is primarily provided by Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT) in Escambia County, Florida and Baldwin Rural Area Transportation System (BRATS) in Baldwin County, Alabama. ECAT is a division of the Escambia County government and provides local fixed route bus and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Paratransit service in Escambia County, seasonal Pensacola Beach trolley services and University of West Florida (UWF) on-campus trolley transportation.

ECAT, BRATS and the TPO appear to have a good working relationship. They work closely together in the development of various TPO documents such as the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The TPO assists ECAT with the development of the Transit Development Plan (TDP). Transit projects identified in the 10 year TDP

are used to develop the LRTP and TIP. ECAT annually provides a prioritized list of Public Transportation Projects for inclusion in the TIP. The TPO and ECAT coordinate programming of upcoming studies that need to be included within the UPWP. ECAT and BRATS staff serve on the TPO's Technical Coordinating Committee which reviews and provides input on all Technical Reports and Plans that are acted upon by the TPO.

Escambia County adopted an ordinance forming a Mass Transit Advisory Committee (MTAC). The MTAC holds publicly noticed regular meetings that allow for public comment. The TPO's Transportation Director is the Escambia County Administrator's appointee to the MTAC.

ECAT is also a member of both the Escambia and Santa Rosa County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Boards (LCBs). The TCC also includes the Santa Rosa County Transportation Planner and the Eastern Shore TPO Coordinator. The TPO is also the Designated Official Planning Agency (DOPA) for the Transportation Disadvantaged programs in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. TPO staff works closely with these entities (ECAT, BRATS, Baldwin County, Escambia County, Santa Rosa County, the LCBs and Eastern Shore TPO) to ensure that transit and the transportation disadvantaged are considered in the transportation planning process.

Transit performance data is provided by ECAT to the TPO. The TPO is a member of the Transit Task Force and ECAT is active in all TPO committees. ECAT's particular concern is the overall performance of the existing system. ECAT is addressing system performance by conducting a comprehensive operational analysis.

ECAT, BRATS, the TPO and FDOT demonstrate coordination on transit planning issues. ECAT, BRATS and TPO staff also communicate and share information on a regular basis for a variety of project needs. From information provided during the desk review and subsequent site visit, it was clearly demonstrated that ECAT and BRATS are active participants in the metropolitan planning process.

## **E. Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)**

Regional ITS Architecture is a specific regional framework for ensuring institutional agreement and technical integration for implementing ITS projects in a particular region. The West Florida Regional Planning Council is the host agency for three TPOs. Because of this organizational structure, the Florida-Alabama, Okaloosa-Walton, and Bay County TPOs worked to complete a Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems Plan covering the entire West Florida region. The Regional ITS Plan was adopted in September of 2010 by each of the three TPOs. The plan provides a comprehensive evaluation of the transportation network so baseline conditions can be established and used to measure the impact of ITS projects. Based on the existing network, both major and minor projects were evaluated and recommended for implementation to complete

ITS deployment in a comprehensive fashion in the region. The Plan is consistent with the Florida Department of Transportation's District 3 ITS Architecture.

The Regional ITS Plan includes a list of ITS system needs for each TPO. The existing ITS networks in each TPO were identified and evaluated in the Plan. This approach to the Regional ITS Plan allowed for future needs to be evaluated such as additional staffing needs for operation and maintenance of future ITS improvements. The implementation of a regional ITS network to benefit all three TPOs is included in the Regional ITS Plan. TPO Staff compiles and tracks what each TPO partner has employed or is planning to employ to implement the recommendations outlined in the Regional ITS Plan. This tracking of ITS activities is developed into an annual report and is presented to the TPO on the implementation of the Regional ITS Plan, such as work completed on the signal timing project for the TPO area. Staff monitors ITS deployments and attends meetings with the other organizations/partners. The Regional ITS Plan recommendations were included in the TPO's 2035 LRTP Cost Feasible Plan.

One of the visions in the Regional ITS structure is to create a looped ITS system that seamlessly integrates the ITS systems built in each TPO area and provide a compatible ITS link. The purpose of a looped system is that in the event of a break in the link, the other ends of the looped system can communicate, providing information for movement of freight, emergency vehicles and the traveling public. TPO staff pointed out that there is an economic benefit to looping the systems as it minimizes interruptions in service and thus continues more efficient vehicular movement.

## **F. Freight Planning**

The 2010 Regional Freight Network Plan used data purchased by FDOT from Transearch to evaluate freight movements in the region. The TPO completed a follow-up document to the Regional Freight Network Plan and a Freight Corridor Screenings Plan was adopted in March 2012. This data, from 2003, included detailed commodity origin and destination data disaggregated to the county level. Although the data was seven years old it was the most recent data available at no cost to the TPO. Both FDOT and FHWA have recently purchased freight data for use by the MPOs/TPOs in Florida. This data will allow for more current updates to the freight analysis. Additionally, TPO staff also attended a Statewide Transearch & Freight Data Workshop on May 14 -15, 2014 to further their knowledge of freight planning

Both the Port of Pensacola and the Pensacola International Airport participate in the TPO process and are actively engaged through the Technical Coordinating Committee. During the upcoming LRTP 2040 update, staff will ask the Port and Airport to assist in identifying shippers to provide input. The Port and Airport staff have assisted in developing project priorities and review the UPWP which includes a freight task. The TPO has reached out to the Florida Trucking Association and the President and CEO did attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Emerald Coast Transportation Symposium. TPO staff hopes

to utilize this contact to further their partnership as they move forward with freight planning. As staff described, Rail interests have yet to be "cracked". In the coming year, staff plans to engage the rail industry using their contact at the Port. Staff did note they have had excellent participation by the Port and Airport, and minimal participation by the rail, trucking and product shipping industries.

### **G. Security Considerations in the Planning Process**

Security was considered in the development of the 2035 LRTP by including security as an explicit goal. Within the 2035 LRTP, Goal H is "Enhance the Security of the transportation system." This goal generated two objectives within the LRTP which are to:

1. Communicate with the seaports, airports and other points of entry to the transportation system to coordinate and, where possible, improve the security measures at these points.
2. Cooperate with the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Coast Guard, and other federal and state agencies to enhance the security of the transportation system.

While these objectives are within the plan, the staff of the TPO stated that no strategies or implementation steps are identified in the LRTP.

Staff has a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) that has been tested since the last certification review. A potential storm in 2012 and then ice storms in early 2014 forced the COOP to be activated. Each employee has a "carry-away" kit which is a set of essential office items to enable the employees to work from a remote location.

### **H. Safety Considerations in the Planning Process**

The goals and objectives of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan were incorporated into the LRTP as the TPO's approach to safety. The direct linkage of the LRTP and the Strategic Highway Safety Plan is an example of good planning and coordination of documents. Specifically, the LRTP includes language regarding aggressive driving, intersection safety, reducing bicycle/pedestrian fatalities, and lane departure crashes, which are all emphasis areas in the SHSP.

Additionally, staff has collected and analyzed data on bicycle/pedestrian crashes to use in future long range planning and have also performed Pedestrian Safety Action Plans on some corridors in the region. The TPO has committed to developing additional Pedestrian Safety Action Plans for future planning. The TPO expressed their gratitude for the partnership FDOT has provided in the form of robust crash data. Staff has also been active in the local Community Traffic Safety Team, coordinating the Safe Routes to School program and collecting bike crash data for analysis. During the early part of

the site visit, staff also mentioned that they have found unique opportunities for outreach and promoting awareness by attending events where they can distribute bike helmets which the TPO provides. This safety outreach has given the TPO the opportunity to expose the region to the overall effort of the TPO and is a good example of mixing outreach with safety implementation.

## **Section V. Unified Planning Work Program (23 CFR 450.308)**

The expenditure of all funds, including federal funds, are monitored on a monthly basis. The Regional Planning Council's finance department completes a report of expenditures by budget category that is reviewed by the Director of Finance and the Director of Transportation Planning. The report of expenditures is put into a progress report which is submitted to FDOT and FHWA. The report is also used to bill both state and federal funds.

The process of developing a new Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) starts prior to the February TPO meetings when TPO and FDOT staffs meet to discuss the upcoming Work Program and projects that may be included. A draft UPWP is presented at the February meeting and a final document is presented for adoption at the April TPO meeting. The April version of the document incorporates or addresses comments received from all reviewers. The TPO staff coordinates this effort with the regional partners through the Advisory Committee process. TPO staff also put out a call for projects to member communities to capture any potentially regionally significant studies that are locally funded.

In developing the 2015 and 2016 UPWP, members of the TPO's staff and transit operator's staffs met in December to discuss upcoming transit projects. At this meeting it was determined that both shorter term and longer term projects would be addressed in the UPWP. The projects jointly identified for inclusion in the current UPWP are a Transit Amenities Assessment Study; a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats identification; and a Feasibility Study of a Regional Transit Authority.

## **Section VI. Interested Parties (23 CFR 450.316)**

### **A. Outreach and Public Participation**

Florida-Alabama TPO has made significant progress in improvements to both its public involvement and nondiscrimination programs. Further, despite recent turnover of critical staff, the TPO has addressed the corrective actions from the last Federal Certification Review and also adopted a number of the recommendations. Public Involvement is now ongoing and targeted, with staff maintaining scrapbooks and evaluations of each event.

While the evaluation of events had not been previously used to shape changes to the updates of the PIP, with the addition of new staff, the TPO has started evaluating events and efforts with the intention of using this information to effect changes during the scheduled 2015 update of the PIP. Also, rather than carrying the responsibility of outreach entirely on its own, the TPO piggybacks on community and other agency events, ensuring that awareness of its programs and services are broadly distributed. As with most TPOs, Florida-Alabama TPO is becoming more comfortable with and reliant upon electronic methods of public involvement, including social media. However, the TPO's website, while easy to find and navigate, is somewhat lackluster, with few photos or attractive links. Moreover, the website is closely tied to that of the West Florida RPC, detracting from the TPO's brand and potentially confusing to members of the public who may not understand the relationship between the TPO and West Florida RPC. Finally, the TPO generates an interesting and informative quarterly performance report for Public Involvement that includes both qualitative and quantitative measures of effectiveness.

**Noteworthy Practice and Recommendation:** The Federal Review Team offers one noteworthy practice and one recommendation related to Public Involvement. For more details about these items, please see Section XII.

## **B. Environmental Coordination**

Environmental coordination occurs through a consultation process which originates with state and local government entities. Through ETDM and local land use plans, local and state conservation areas and natural resources are identified and filtered out in the development of the Urban Land Use Forecasting Model which is built during the LRTP development process. The ETDM consultant assists the TPO staff in assigning degrees of effects for projects in the Needs Plan by considering natural resources, wetlands, conservation areas, and historic resources. Contacts for state and local agencies are identified in the TPO's Transportation Information Network. Contacts in the Network receive notices of the Long Range Transportation Plan Meetings and document postings on the TPO web site. Also, these agencies receive notices of the TPO's agendas for meetings when they are posted on the web site. The TPO's ETDM coordinator also consults with state and local environmental agencies during the ETDM review of projects. State and local agencies also attend and/or serve on the TPO's Technical Coordinating Committee.

## **C. Tribal Coordination**

While there are no federally recognized tribes located in the TPO area that would require formal coordination with the TPO, two letters have been written to the Federal Tribal contact in Mississippi for the Florida area with an offer to meet with them to discuss the metropolitan planning process in general and the development of the Long

Range Transportation Plan specifically. The letters, which were sent in early and late 2013, did not generate a response from the tribe.

#### **D. Title VI and Related Requirements**

The TPO has a compliant Title VI/Nondiscrimination Policy as well as adequate complaint filing procedures and nondiscrimination statements, including a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan. These documents are now about three years old and scheduled for updating, particularly the LEP Plan, which used 2000 census data. The TPO has completed a current community characteristics inventory, which it calls a Community Profile. Each municipality and region within the TPO is included, described by census and validated through a variety of outside sources, often site visits. All of the TPO nondiscrimination documents appear to be written concisely and in plain language, helping to ensure public access. Overall, the Review Team concludes that the TPO has demonstrated substantially compliant public participation and nondiscrimination requirements.

**Noteworthy Practices and Recommendations:** The Federal Review Team offers four noteworthy practices and four recommendations related to Title VI. For more details about these items, please see Section XII.

#### **Section VII. Linking Planning and Environment (23 CFR 450.318)**

Projects in the LRTP are ranked using a number of scoring criteria, one of these criterion is the level of environmental impact based upon an Efficient Transportation Decision Making Tool (ETDM) review. Consequently, environmental considerations are captured in the project selection process.

Within the LRTP are Purpose and Need Statements for each project that are part of the Cost Feasible Plan (CFP). FDOT develops Purpose and Need Statements for Strategic Intermodal System facilities and the TPO Staff posts the Purpose and Need Statements in the Planning Screen of ETDM for Non-SIS Facilities. While the Purpose and Needs Statements are only required for CFP projects, the TPO Staff worked with FDOT's ETDM consultant to develop Degrees of Effect for all Needs Plan projects because the Evaluation Criteria ranks projects based on the impact or degrees of effect.

Conservation areas and natural resources were identified and filtered out in the development of the Urban Land Use Forecasting Model. The TPO's consultant also considered natural resources, wetlands, conservation areas, and historic resources while assisting the TPO staff in assigning the degrees of effect for projects in the Needs Plan. The Blueprint 2035 LRTP contains a discussion of types of potential

environmental mitigation activities and potential areas to carry out these activities in section 5.5, Environmental Considerations of the Final Report.

For ETDM reviews, FDOT develops purpose and need statements for Strategic Infrastructure System (SIS) facilities and the TPO staff develops the purpose and need statements used in the planning screen of ETDM for non-SIS facilities.

### **Section VIII. Long Range Transportation Plan (23 CFR 450.322)**

The current LRTP, Blueprint 2035, was adopted by the Florida-Alabama TPO Board in November of 2010. The TPO is currently working on the update to the LRTP which will have a horizon year of 2040. In Florida the TPOs, FDOT and FHWA have partnered to standardize many aspects of Long Range Transportation Plans and to insure compliance with federal requirements. The Florida-Alabama TPO follows these standardized procedures.

Florida-Alabama TPO created a Land Use Committee made up of representatives from local governments, the Haas Center of the University of West Florida, Pensacola State College, Boards of Realtors, Builders, and Gulf Power to address land use assumptions used in the 2035 LRTP. An example of considering changing land uses during the 2035 LRTP was in considering the plans for the Pensacola Maritime Park. The Park was identified as a Special Generator in the Transportation Model. Master Plans for the port and airport were obtained and reviewed to determine what would be a suitable land use definition for the future. The 2040 update will reference the West Central Escambia Sector Plan, Master Plans for Milton, Gulf Breeze, Perdido Key, and the University of West Florida as well as Port and Airport Master Plans. The TPO also plans to coordinate with the military. A Land Use Committee similar to what was used in the 2035 LRTP will be convened for the upcoming 2040 LRTP update.

The FDOT developed 2040 SIS Plan Projects that were used for the 2035 LRTP Cost Feasible Plan amendments and will be used again for the 2040 LRTP. The TPO coordinates closely with FDOT's MPO Liaison to ensure that the priorities of FDOT are reflected in the LRTP. Other plans such as the Northwest Florida Transportation Corridor Authority Master Plan are reviewed during the LRTP process, as well as the Transit Development Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, ITS Regional Plan, Freight Plan, and the Master Plans referenced earlier. The TPO reviews other plans to insure the LRTP is consistent with local efforts and as part of their regional coordination.

During the 2035 LRTP, the Alabama portion of the TPO area was represented through membership on the Land Use subcommittee (Baldwin County, AL planning department) and Baldwin County is a voting member of the Technical Coordinating Committee and the TPO Board, which reviews and approves all aspects of the LRTP including the final adoption. Because the money attributed to the Alabama portion of the TPO is so small,

the only projects funded are operational projects related to Bicycle and Pedestrian modes. However, these projects were solicited through a meeting at the Lillian, Alabama Community Center with local citizens.

Within the LRTP, the TPO made planning assumptions related to the amount and location of permanent population, housing, employment, school enrollment, and hotel/motel units. These assumptions were validated by updating the socio-economic data to the base year conditions and then forecasting the data to the horizon year for the Long Range Transportation Plan update. This process produced the travel demand that assisted the TPO in developing the Needs Plan and the Cost Feasible Plan. During each Long Range Transportation Plan Update the transportation model produces travel patterns by select zone and select link analysis, allowing the planners to confirm the planning assumptions identified or to modify the assumptions or make changes to the model, whichever is appropriate.

Changes to the LRTP fall into one of two categories, amendments and modifications. Both are initiated by a request from FDOT or a member local government. For amendments, the requested change is authorized by the TPO. The TPO staff schedules public workshop(s) and coordinates with FDOT and local governments on the amendment. The amendment is adopted through a public hearing at the TPO meeting, the Advisory Committees review the amendment at their meetings and recommend to the board to adopt or not. TPO Staff posts the Final Amendment Report on the Web Site. For modifications, the process is similar. A modification is authorized by the TPO. The TPO Staff advertises the modification in the newspaper with the largest circulation and requests public comment. After the public comment review process, public comment is considered. If there are not compelling negative issues, the TPO's Transportation Director then writes a letter to DOT's Planning Director indicating the modification is approved. The approval letter is included on the next TPO agenda as information. TPO Staff posts the Final Modification Report on the Web Site. Staff noted that on March 5, 2014, FDOT provided LRTP amendment thresholds.

Performance measures are an emerging area. As such, the 2035 LRTP does not contain performance measures. However, since the 2035 Plan has been adopted, the TPO staff has participated in a State of Florida committee on the development of performance measures. This committee was initiated as a result of the passage of Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21). At this time, FHWA rule making is ongoing. The 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan will be adopted by November of 2015, near the time State Performance Targets could be established. In the interim, the TPO has committed to coordinating with the FDOT in selecting targets to ensure consistency. Staff stated that performance measures will be listed in the 2040 Long Range Plan Goals and Objectives section as an "Emerging Issue" based on the "Federal Strategies for Implementing Requirements for the LRTP Update for Florida MPOs, November 2012."

**Noteworthy Practice:** The Federal Review Team offers one noteworthy practice related to the Long Range Transportation Plan. For more details about this item, please see Section XII.

### **A. Travel Demand Modeling/Data**

Florida-Alabama TPO has a modeler on staff, specifically the Long Range Transportation Plan Project Manager. He oversees general planning consultant work on the Northwest Florida Regional Transportation Model for the Florida-Alabama area during LRTP updates. However, the Northwest Florida Regional Transportation Model is maintained by FDOT. The Scope of Services is between FDOT and their consultant but the TPO's Project Manager is very much involved in the process and provides input into the development of the Northwest Florida Regional Transportation Model.

The transportation model that is utilized by the Florida-Alabama TPO is a four step transportation highway only model. The model is validated based on parameters set forth by the Florida Model Task Force. Several iterations and model runs are completed to get the model to perform within the selected parameters. Consultation occurs continuously during the update process between the consultant, FDOT, and TPO staff to review this information and the results of the model runs. Additionally, the FDOT conducts special traffic counts for the base year of the LRTP.

For the Blueprint 2035 LRTP, the base year of the data used to develop the model was 2006, the model contains 1825 internal Travel Analysis Zones (TAZs) and 41 external TAZs. Because the model covers a region much larger than just the TPO planning boundaries, it is important to note that the model contains 338 TAZs for the TPO area. The regional model contains 26,675 links and the TPO portion of the model contains 10,364 links. The 2040 LRTP will use a model containing base year data from 2010.

### **B. Financial Plan/Fiscal Constraint**

For the LRTP, State and Federal Revenue projections were developed by FDOT and accepted by the Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Committee (MPOAC). These projections are the foundation of the financial assumptions for the LRTP. While there are several local funding sources that could be implemented, the TPO board directed staff not to include these alternative revenue sources in the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan in order to provide a conservative financial projection. Since then a Local Option Gas Tax has been implemented in Escambia County. Also, a bonding study was completed by the TPO, but has not been implemented.

State and Federal Revenue projections were developed by FDOT and are the foundation of the financial assumptions for the Long Range Transportation Plan. A Local Option Sales Tax is in place in Escambia County that funds some local transportation improvements, mostly operational versus capacity. A Local Option Gas

Tax (LOGT) has been implemented for Escambia County Area Transit since the LRTP was adopted in 2010. LOGT collections began in January 2014. The alternative financial resources such as Local Option Gas Tax, Local Option Sales Tax, and Ninth Cent Gas Tax were presented to the TPO during Financial Resources development for the 2035 LRTP Update. The TPO directed staff not to include these alternative revenue sources in the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan.

Project cost estimates in the LRTP are developed through several sources. For Florida projects, estimates are furnished by FDOT District 3 based on a review of projects and phases in their work program. Operating and Maintenance Costs are referenced in an appendix furnished by FDOT and Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) will furnish an identical appendix for the 2040 LRTP. Operating and Capital Costs are developed by Escambia County Area Transit and are documented in their Transit Development Plan.

In order to ensure fiscal constraint was met in the document, Florida-Alabama TPO used the revenue report developed by FDOT. The report assumes 20 percent "off the top" for Project Development and Environment (PD&E); Design and the remaining 80 percent funding is for Right-of-Way and Construction. Most amendments and/or modifications to the LRTP have been to advance projects which resulted from reduced costs for projects on the Strategic Intermodal System. The 2035 LRTP demonstrates fiscal constraint by taking the financial resources identified in the TPOs "Financial Resources Report" and applying them to the costs associated with each project on the project priority list to develop the Cost Feasible Plan. The Cost Feasible Plan only contains projects which can be funded by the available funding sources during the timeframe of the LRTP. Fiscal constraint is demonstrated by the projected revenues shown in Chapter 9 of the LRTP, Table 9.1 on page 205 and the comparison of total project costs with revenues in the subsequent table on page 207 which shows revenues in slight excess of expenditures during the timeframe of the LRTP.

Within the TIP the costs of projects are provided by FDOT and local governments. FDOT holds revenue estimating conferences to ensure the projects identified in the Work Program are financially feasible. The projects in the Work Program are carried into the TIP. If local projects are identified in the TIP, they must be regionally significant and financially constrained. In addition, each category includes a breakdown of funding for projects in Appendix G of the TIP. The fiscal constraint demonstration is provided by year and is shown near the beginning of the TIP, with several pages showing the projects funded by fund type and by year, followed by a summary of funds available in the TIP by year.

## **Section IX. Congestion Management Process (CMP) (23 CFR 450.320)**

The CMP covers all of Escambia and Santa Rosa County as well as the Metropolitan Planning Area of Lillian, Alabama. The next update to the Congestion Management Process Plan will include Orange Beach, Alabama. The types of strategies that are considered in the Congestion Management Process Plan range from modal shift to short term operational strategies to adding capacity. The CMP considers the full range of transportation project categories and the implementation of these projects are listed in the TIP.

The TPO does not have a process for periodically evaluating the effectiveness of the CMP. The Congestion Management Process Plan completed in 2013 was the first major Congestion Management Process Plan that was developed for the TPO. Previous plans just reviewed deficient roadway segments through a technical ranking to manage roadway congestion. The staff stated that a process to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the Congestion Management Process Plan will be included in the next major update to the Congestion Management Process Plan. This is expected to occur in conjunction with the Long Range Transportation Plan 2040 Update. The CMP does show the methodology used to evaluate projects and this transparency is a good example of making the process user friendly.

The current performance measure is Level of Service (LOS) which is used to identify deficient roadways that are ranked by technical criteria. The highest ranked segment is reviewed by a committee of planners, engineers, and citizens to develop potential strategies to manage the congestion on this segment. LOS performance measures are also developed for the bicycle, pedestrian, and transit modes on each roadway in the TPO network. Then, these measures are used to consider improvements to these modes--as well as other non-infrastructure strategies--to relieve the congestion on the selected roadway.

The current CMP identifies some performance measures which will be considered in the next major update to the Congestion Management Process Plan which is planned for April of 2015. For roadway facilities, LOS, Vehicle Miles Traveled, and Percent of Roadway Operating and Congested Conditions are identified. For alternate modes, Peak Vehicles, Average Headway, LOS, and Percent of Congested Roadway Centerline Miles with Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities are identified. For Travel Demand Management, the Number of Registered Carpools or Vanpools are identified. For non-recurring congestion, Rate of Accidents, Vehicle Exposure, and Change in Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes by Injury Type are identified. These performance measures are based on actual data and are not modeled.

**Noteworthy Practice and Corrective Action:** The Federal Review Team offers one Noteworthy Practice and finds one Corrective Action related to the Congestion Management Plan. For more details about these items, please see Section XII.

**Section X. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) (23 CFR 450.324, 326, 328, 330, 332)**

The TPO receives the FDOT work program snapshot at the beginning of the calendar year and from this snapshot builds the draft TIP. The snapshot and the later work program downloads contain all regionally significant transportation projects that are federally funded. For the 2015-2019 TIP, TPO staff coordinated with the FDOT to capture projects that were identified during the next five years for the Port of Pensacola. The TPO staff requests, through e-mails to local government planners, to include regionally significant projects that have funding committed in the next five years regardless of the funding source.

The TIP cycle begins in September when Project Priorities are adopted by the TPO and submitted to the Departments of Transportation. This Priority List is then used by the FDOT to develop the State's Tentative Five Year Work Program. The Tentative Work Program is presented to the TPO in December. The Tentative Work Program continues to build the work program which is reflected in the Transportation Improvement Program that is presented as a draft to the TPO in April and for approval at the June meeting. As a new TIP is developed, public comments received on the draft TIP are documented in the June TPO Board agenda enclosure. The enclosure contains staff responses to each comment and each entity can review the response to ensure their concerns have been addressed. While the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) only requires a new TIP every four years, the TPO staff provides a copy to the ALDOT every year.

Separate priorities exist for Bicycle/Pedestrian, Transportation Alternatives Program, and Public Transportation projects. The TPO's Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan initially listed projects in a priority listing through a cost/benefit analysis. The priorities were adopted after review by advisory committees and modification based on the committees' recommendations. Evaluation Criteria adopted by the TPO are used to rank and prioritize the Transportation Alternatives Program Projects. The criteria underwent extensive review in the past year to provide more objectivity and to accommodate programmatic changes in transition from Transportation Enhancement projects to Transportation Alternatives eligible projects. The transit operator, Escambia County Area Transit, provides a prioritized list of Public Transportation Projects. While transit projects are reviewed and recommended by the advisory committees to the full board who may alter the projects, the TPO staff could not recall a time when priorities were changed by the TPO board. ECAT also has an opportunity to review the TIP through the TPO's Technical Coordinating Committee, of which ECAT is voting member. The DOTs also attend and provide comments on projects at the TPO and Advisory Committee meetings.

An Executive Summary of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) includes an explanation of the procedure for amending the TIP. When the TIP is amended, the public is made aware through notices in the media and an opportunity for comment is made available through a public hearing. The TPO has authorized the WFRPC Executive Director to administratively approve changes to the TIP. This is described in the TIP as:

- Airport and seaport amendments, which do not materially affect surface transportation volumes in the vicinity of the subject airport or seaport.
- Modifications to the TIP as described in Section 5.13 of the MPO Handbook.

Eligible modifications to the TIP are only identified as a reference to the FDOT MPO Handbook, Section 5.13. At the time of the certification review site visit, the FDOT MPO Handbook was not available online and the public would not be able to know what constitutes a modification versus an amendment. Changes are documented through an official letter from the TPO's Transportation Director to the Planning Director at the District Offices of the Department of Transportation. The public is made aware of the changes to the TIP through an ad in the newspaper with the largest circulation. For a modification, the letter from the TPO's Transportation Director is included in the next TPO meeting agenda.

As a new TIP is developed, public comments received on the draft TIP are documented in the June TPO Board agenda enclosure. The enclosure contains staff responses to each comment and each entity can review the response to ensure their concerns have been addressed.

The Florida-Alabama TIP displays a list of obligated projects from the previous fiscal year in Appendix E of their TIP. The list of obligated projects also contains transit projects.

**Noteworthy Practice and Recommendation:** The Federal Review Team offers one noteworthy practice and one recommendation related to the Transportation Improvement Plan. For more details about this items, please see Section XII.

## **Section XI. Regional Coordination**

The Florida-Alabama TPO is a sub-part of the West Florida Regional Planning Council which provides planning staff to three TPOs in West Florida. By administrative design, the Florida-Alabama TPO is coordinating with two other TPOs and the collective group plans transportation for five large counties. Florida-Alabama TPO is also a partner in the Northwest Florida Regional TPO which also represents the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization. This entity is made up of eight representatives

from each of the TPOs. This regional TPO has been responsible for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Emerald Coast Transportation Symposiums. These events have provided a platform for transportation planning issues to be raised in the region. Bringing together government and the private sector to look at potential coordination for safety, operational streamlining, and financing of projects, the symposium has begun new discussions about regional coordination in northwest Florida. The Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) has been one of the primary components of regional planning.

The Florida-Alabama TPO and Okaloosa-Walton TPO established the Northwest Florida Regional TPO to coordinate project planning. An interlocal agreement was executed to form the Northwest Florida Regional TPO and they schedule meetings quarterly. The regional TPO considers issues common to both member TPOs such as US98, regionally develops a list of potential TRIP projects which are considered for funding. At this time documents have not been produced to set policy or direction for advancing regional transportation.

**Noteworthy Practice and Recommendation:** The Federal Review Team offers one noteworthy practice and one recommendation related to Regional Coordination. For more details about these items, please see Section XII.

## **Section XII. Findings/Conclusions**

The following items represent a compilation of the findings that are included in this 2014 Certification Review report. These findings, which are identified as noteworthy practices, corrective actions, and recommendations, are intended to not only ensure continuing regulatory compliance of the Florida-Alabama TPO transportation planning process with federal planning requirements, but also to foster high-quality planning practices and improve the transportation planning program in this TMA. The Noteworthy Practices highlight efforts that demonstrate innovative ideas for or are unique in implementing the planning requirements. The Corrective Actions reflect required actions for compliance with the Federal Planning Regulations and must be completed within the timeframes noted. Recommendations reflect national trends and best practices and are intended to provide assistance to the TMA to improve the planning process.

### **A. Noteworthy Practices**

- 1. Public Involvement:** The Review Team congratulates the TPO on the relationship they have developed with the local Center for Independent Living (CIL). Active, sustained, coordinated involvement of those who are disabled is an integral part of ADA compliance, but also an effective way of evaluating the accessibility of current facilities and future needs. The Team was impressed to

see active representation and involvement of the community that is disabled, and hopes that the TPO can broaden outreach to include specific representation by minority organizations and groups representing the elderly.

2. **Title VI:** The Review Team was impressed by the TPO's annual in-service nondiscrimination training, among the best the Team has encountered. The TPO invites local partners as well as RPC staff to attend these events, ensuring broad distribution of the information and encouraging cooperation in the delivery of nondiscrimination programs. The training events are practical, informative and fun. In addition to including the usual Title VI/ADA program information, they also target a special emphasis area, such as mobility, English deficiency or poverty, and require hands-on participation in real world scenarios.
3. **Title VI (Environmental Justice):** Since the last certification the TPO has developed some notable partnerships. First, working with local colleges, it developed an internship program that, while open to all students, is intended to attract more minorities and women to the industry. Also, the TPO has had considerable success in working with Pensacola High School's IB and Trade and Logistics Academy programs, actually obtaining a working crash data map from the students. The Federal Review Team is firmly in support of all activities that market transportation to younger and future users. The Federal Review Team also believes that workforce development can never start too soon, especially in low income and minority communities whose representation in planning and engineering is lower. The TPO should continue these programs, providing the opportunities to other schools and universities, whenever possible.
4. **Title VI (Environmental Justice):** Along with several other Florida TPOs, Florida-Alabama TPO believes that environmental mitigation, context sensitivity, environmental justice and livability/sustainability are all closely related and share a common cornerstone, something the TPO calls 'demographic destiny.' This is more than forecasting transportation movement, but understanding demographic trends, community values and economic and socio-economic needs. The TPO has a number of ways of charting demographic destiny, including maintaining the Community Profiles for the region; attending all CSS and EJ training events and outside courses; and delivering an annual Regional Transportation Symposium, to name just a few. The Federal Review Team believes these and other activities will result in better and more equitable planning products; and it commends the TPO for its efforts.
5. **Title VI (Disadvantaged Business Enterprises):** Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT) recently hosted a DBE and small business development forum, designed to assist DBEs and small business in obtaining work, identifying potential DBE qualified firms, and serving as a link between small business and the industry. The event was well attended and included both FDOT Supportive

Services representatives and large contractors new to the Panhandle. The Federal Review Team met with a number of the attendees, all of whom were complimentary of ECAT's efforts. The Federal Review Team congratulates ECAT on this success and encourages the TPO to participate in and/or assist with this event in future, as workforce development and sustainability is of critical concern to the industry, FDOT and US DOT.

- 6. Long Range Transportation Plan:** The Federal Review Team was impressed by the fact that LRTP Amendments are shown on the- TPO's website with all of the associated paperwork such as TPO board resolutions. This presentation method is very user friendly by having everything in one location.
- 7. Congestion Management Plan:** During the site visit, the TPO staff explained the increase in vanpool and park-n-ride activity in the region. The Region now boasts 37 vanpools and 6 Park and Ride lots, with more in development. The TPO aggressively markets these programs, attending local events and conducting specific outreach in areas where either program might be successful. This effort not only assists with TPO branding, but also in identifying communities where better employment opportunities may be hampered by lack of transportation. The depth of knowledge of the TPO staff regarding user trends, locations and needs was impressive. Further, the knowledge had been field validated by staff who go out and spot check information when it is acquired. The overall staff knowledge of the market is impressive and reflects both their hard work and dedication.
- 8. Transportation Improvement Plan:** The TIP, like many other documents of the TPO, displays the project prioritization methodology and scoring sheets used. This example of process openness and transparency is commendable as it allows the public to clearly understand how projects are ranked.
- 9. Regional Coordination:** The staff of the Florida-Alabama TPO assisted a neighboring region in starting the Eastern Shores MPO in Alabama. This effort was an excellent example of regionalism and establishing the relationship needed to maintain regional coordination with adjacent MPOs.

## **B. Corrective Actions**

- 1. Agreements:** As identified by 23 CFR 450.314(a), the TPO needs to update their Interlocal Agreement since it is out of date and not reflective of current practices. For example, the city of Orange Beach, AL, is a voting member of the TPO board and is not reflected in the voting membership. **An updated Interlocal Agreement needs to be executed by December 31, 2015.**
- 2. Congestion Management Plan:** As identified by 23 CFR 450.320(c)(6), the CMP needs to contain evaluation measures that must be used to provide feedback to determine the effectiveness of strategies in the CMP. **This requirement for evaluation measures to be included in the CMP needs to be met by November 30, 2015 and in use by April 30, 2016.**

## **C. Recommendations**

- 1. Public Participation Plan:** Florida-Alabama TPO's governing public involvement document is due for update in the coming months. As noted in the previous certification review, the TPO needs to examine this document to ensure that, at a minimum, it has all of the requisite information from 23 CFR 450.316 and is a useful roadmap, advising the public of its services and outlining distinct, reasonable and measurable goals for involving the public. The update needs to also utilize the quarterly assessments as feedback, which would then be used to improve outreach, and improve the document based upon quantifiable data collected.
- 2. Title VI (Nondiscrimination):** In support of the OneDOT initiative, FHWA now recommends that sub-recipients update Nondiscrimination programs and documents triennially, preferably in conjunction with updates for FTA, if applicable. This conveniently coincides with the TPO's schedule, as 2014 marks the three year anniversary of its program. Because the Federal Review Team found various, older documents combined with the approved 2011 plan, it is important that the TPO carefully review all of its webpages, planning documents and paper files, removing outdated or inconsistent information. The Team also recommends that the TPO provide a link to nondiscrimination documents from the main webpage. This will help with access and avoid duplication or inconsistency.
- 3. Title VI (Environmental Justice):** The Federal Review Team recommends that the TPO use the community profile, ETDM, Public Involvement and other methods to ensure that EJ analyses are conducted and described in planning documents. The Federal Review Team understands that EJ in planning is at a

broader level than during PD&E. Nevertheless policies, projects and other activities advanced to benefit or to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse impacts on minority and other communities should be described.

- 4. Title VI (Americans with Disabilities, Disadvantaged Business Enterprises):** FDOT and the Division recently participated in the TPO's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Transportation Symposium, as did local representatives from the air and sea ports and other area stakeholders. However, the Federal Review Team did not identify any specific local transit agency participation. Moreover, representatives of organizations that serve minority and disabled individuals were conspicuously underrepresented (with the exception of county health departments). The Federal Review Team recommends including speakers and panelists that represent all of the region's stakeholders. This may necessitate scholarships or reduced fees for those organizations that cannot pay the \$175.00 registration. FHWA has already fielded one informal complaint about the exclusivity of the Symposium. The TPO should work to ensure this excellent initiative is not overshadowed by allegations of underrepresentation, inequity or discrimination.
- 5. Title VI (Americans with Disabilities):** During the Board Meeting, the Team captured a number of references to ADA accessibility at 12th Street and Bayou in Pensacola. While most of the complaints were ancillary to the issue of tree removal and none were specific, the Federal Review Team nonetheless surveyed the existing, partially completed project and found that some of the current pedestrian features are likely inaccessible and in violation of ADA standards. For example, the height of and reach ranges to the pedestrian buttons on the northeast and southeast corners of 12th and Bayou appear to be in excess of the maximums described in Chapters 308.2.1 and 308.2.2 of the Standards. In addition, installation of the detectable warning mat on the northeast corner does not extend to within 2" of the return curb and the northwest corner lacks a level landing pad to access the ped buttons. Crossing times are about 15 seconds and, given the volume and speed of traffic, should be checked for adequacy. The Federal Review Team recommends that the TPO work with FDOT as the project continues to ensure that the intersection when completed is fully compliant.
- 6. Transportation Improvement Program:** The TIP references the FDOT MPO Handbook to explain the TPO's TIP modification process, but does not describe these procedures. The Federal Review Team recommends the TPO provide specific procedures in their documents, rather than referring to a non-MPO document, to define the TPO's TIP modification process.
- 7. Regional Coordination:** The Florida-Alabama TPO has a military installation within its planning boundaries. This is quite common among Florida MPOs and the staff may wish to consider reaching out to other MPOs with military

installations to see if a meeting with the MPOs would produce ideas on how to work with the military and to share best practices, tips and ideas.

Based on the overall findings, the FHWA and FTA jointly certify that the transportation planning process of the Pensacola TMA substantially meets the federal planning requirements in 23 CFR 450 Subpart C subject to the Florida-Alabama TPO satisfactorily addressing the Corrective Actions stated in this report. The TPO is encouraged to provide the FHWA and FTA with evidence of satisfactory completion of the Corrective Actions as they occur and in accordance with the noted deadlines. This certification will remain in effect until **December 2018**.

## **APPENDIX A: Florida-Alabama TPO Site Visit Participants**

### **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)**

Stacie Blizzard, Florida Division  
Carl Mikyska, Florida Division  
Carey Shepherd, Florida Division  
Tracy Duval, Florida Division  
Justin Morgan, Utah Division  
Lynn Heisler, Alabama Division  
Clint Andrews, Alabama Division

### **Federal Transit Administration (FTA)**

Elizabeth Orr, Region IV  
John Sprowls, Headquarters

### **Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)**

Jim DeVries  
Starsky Harrell  
Bryant Paulk  
Christy Johnson  
Sean Santalla

### **Alabama Department of Transportation (ADOT)**

James Doolin

### **Florida-Alabama TPO**

Terry Joseph  
Mary Bo Robinson  
Dawn Schwartz  
Gary Kramer  
Rob Mahan  
Mary Beth Washnock  
Vicki Garrett  
Jordan Rockwell  
Brandi Thompson Whitehurst  
Dan Deanda  
Brian Youpatoff  
Jill Lavender  
Kate Daniel

### **Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT)**

Diane Hall  
Tonya Ellis  
Kim Hansen  
Herold Humphrey

### **Baldwin County**

Matthew Brown

## APPENDIX B: Florida-Alabama TPO TMA Certification Agenda

Florida-Alabama Transportation Planning Organization

### Federal Certification Meeting

*June 10–13, 2014*

<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>June 10, 2014</b>	<b>Day One</b>
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Federal Team  
 Carl Mikyska, FHWA  
 Stacie Blizzard, FHWA  
 Tracy Duval, FHWA  
 Carey Shepherd, FHWA  
 Justin Morgan, FHWA  
 Parris Orr, FTA  
 John Sprowls, FTA

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Lead</b>
1:00 PM	Welcome/Introductions > Purpose of the Certification Process > Review Schedule and close-out process	Federal Review Team
1:30 PM	Discussion of Previous Review Findings > Federal TMA Certification > State/MPO Annual	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
2:15 PM	MPO Overview including changes within the MPO since the last TMA Certification > Demographics > Boundary > Political > MPO Structure > Process Changes	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
3:15 PM	Share Best Practices, Lessons Learned	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
3:45 PM	MPO Priority Planning Areas	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
4:30 PM	Break for the Day	

Florida-Alabama Transportation Planning Organization

**Federal Certification Meeting**

*June 10–13, 2014*

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<b>Time</b>	<b>Wednesday, June 11, 2014</b>	<b>Day Two</b>
<b>8:30AM</b>	Federal Team Arrives to Board Meeting	Federal Review Team
<b>9:00 AM</b>	Florida-Alabama TPO Board Meeting	
<b>11:30 AM</b>	End of Board Meeting - Lunch	
<b>1:00PM</b>	Public Involvement/Participation /Title VI/DBE	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
<b>2:30 PM</b>	Agreements and Contracts	
<b>3:00 PM</b>	MPO Plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Long-Range Transportation Plan<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Travel Demand Forecasting</li><li>• Financial Planning</li><li>• Air quality</li></ul></li><li>➤ Transportation Improvement Program<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project Selection</li><li>• List of Obligated Projects</li></ul></li><li>➤ Unified Planning Work Program</li><li>➤ Other</li></ul>	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
<b>4:30 PM</b>	Regional Coordination	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT, ALDOT
<b>5:00 PM</b>	<b>Break for the Day</b>	

Florida-Alabama Transportation Planning Organization

**Federal Certification Meeting**

*June 10–13, 2014*

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<b>Time</b>	<b>Thursday, June 12, 2014</b>	<b>Day Three</b>
<b>8:30 AM</b>	Review of Previous Day discussions/ Follow up Questions	All
<b>9:00 AM</b>	Transit and Coordination	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
<b>10:30 AM</b>	Environment and Streamlining	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
<b>11:00 AM</b>	Congestion Management Process	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
<b>11:30 AM</b>	Future Needs, Requests for Technical Assistance	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
<b>12:00 PM</b>	<b>Break For Lunch</b>	
<b>1:30 PM</b>	Freight	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
<b>2:00 PM</b>	Land Use and Transportation Planning	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
<b>2:30 PM</b>	ITS	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
<b>3:00 PM</b>	Safety and Security	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
<b>3:45 PM</b>	Financial Planning	Federal Review Team, TPO, FDOT, ECAT
<b>4:30 PM</b>	<b>Break for the Day</b>	

<b>Time</b>	<b>Friday, June 13, 2014</b>	<b>Day Four</b>
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<b>8:30 AM</b>	Follow up from Previous Discussions Questions	All
<b>9:00 AM</b>	Federal Review Team Discussions	Federal Review Team
<b>10:00 AM</b>	Preliminary Findings Discussions with Federal Team	All
<b>10:30 AM</b>	Wrap-up	All
<b>11:00 AM</b>	<b>Federal Team Departs</b>	

# APPENDIX C: Florida-Alabama TPO Notice of Public Meeting



Published Daily-Pensacola, Escambia County, FL

## PROOF OF PUBLICATION

State of Florida

County of Escambia:

Before the undersigned authority personally appeared Virginia Hollingsworth who, on oath, says that she is a personal representative of the Pensacola News Journal, a daily newspaper published in Escambia County, Florida; that the attached copy of advertisement, being a Legal in the matter of:

### Legal Notice

Was published in said newspaper in the issue(s) of:

**July 24, 2014**

Affiant further says that the said Pensacola News Journal is a newspaper published in said Escambia County, Florida, and that the said newspaper has heretofore been published in said Escambia County, Florida, and has been entered as second class matter at the Post Office in said Escambia County, Florida, for a period of one year next preceding the first publication of the attached copy of advertisement; and affiant further says that she has neither paid nor promised any person, firm or corporation any discount, rebate, commission or refund for the purpose of securing this advertisement for publication in the said newspaper.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this **24th Day of July, 2014**, by Virginia Hollingsworth, who is personally known to me.

Virginia Hollingsworth Affiant  
Lanmann Suchcicki Notary Public



JUL 25 2014

## **APPENDIX D: Summary of Public Comments**

FHWA/FTA would like to thank everyone that contributed comments for the Pensacola TMA Federal Certification Review. The public comments are a vital element of the certification review because the citizens are providing input about the transportation planning process and how the process is meeting the needs of the area. The comments received at the public meeting included accolades for the MPO, its staff, multimodal planning and transit. In addition, during the public meeting, a criticism was made by some attendees regarding the low number of people who attended the public meeting portion of the certification review and the affiliation of those attendees. Attendees provided verbal feedback on how the planning process could be improved. Comments received at the public meeting that were project specific were relayed to the appropriate FHWA and FDOT personnel. The Federal Review Team acknowledges the challenges to obtaining public input on the planning process. We continually look for ways to improve these feedback opportunities, including offering a variety of methods for the public to provide comments. There were no other written comments received. All feedback received during the course of this certification was considered throughout the writing of this report.

## **APPENDIX E: Florida-Alabama TPO Public Meeting Minutes**

### **Florida-Alabama Transportation Planning Organization Federal Certification Review Public Input Meeting –July 31, 2014 Presenter: Carl Mikyska**

An introduction and overview of the site visit was given. Contact information was shared and the deadline for comments (September 1, 2014) was emphasized.

Comments were made that long range plans seem to be turning into programming documents. Plans are supposed to be general in nature, not specific with details about how you are going to fund something 20 years from now. It's hard for planners and technical coordinating committee members to make plans when they are required to have this level of detail so far in advance.

Comments were made that the meeting was only attended by those already involved in TPO activities by serving on committees. Attendee felt that more effort should be put into public involvement, but that PI is improving.

Comments were made that the public needs more education about what the TPO does. Attendee feels that participation is difficult because public does not know what projects are being planned in their neighborhoods. Attendee feels that because public workshops for plans are done so far in advance and are so subject to change, citizens are misled.

Comment was made that NEPA process has so much in the front end that causes problems later when public meetings are held. Process is so lengthy. He advocates more meetings along the process. He has multiple projects in PD&E stage. Attendee also comments he has great relationship with TPO and FDOT staff. Feels it is frustrating that the first stage of a project takes 10 years while construction only takes 10 months. That comments and responses are piecemealed out by FDOT contributing to lengthy delays.

Comment that it is frustrating that game-changing infrastructure takes so long. We have to get FHWA to sign off in a timelier manner so projects can be expedited. MAP-21 says it will expedite development. Technology should allow for easy changes. The PD&E process should be really fast. Does not feel MAP-21 is expediting anything.

Another comment that citizens do not know what is going on with projects. There are ways to involve citizens that are not so bland. Need to focus public involvement in the areas of community impact.

Comment that the city and county have the money to spend on needs but they spend it on wants. That it is too political.

Comment that DOT needs us (local governmental staff) because they don't know what local needs are. Relationships are getting better but we have to keep communication open.

Comment that the public should be educated that a project won't be done immediately. The process from beginning to end has to be explained. Need to improve how information is given to the public.