

**MARTIN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
POLICY BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING**

Martin County Administrative Building Commission Chambers
2401 SE Monterey Road, Stuart, FL 34996
(772) 221-1498
www.martinmpo.com

Monday, August 15, 2016 @ 9:00 a.m.

AGENDA

ITEM

ACTION

1. **CALL TO ORDER – 9:00 a.m.**
2. **PRAYER – Rev. L.C. Campbell**
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
4. **ROLL CALL**
5. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA** **APPROVE**
6. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**
(PLEASE LIMIT YOUR COMMENTS TO THREE MINUTES; COMPLETE CARD TO COMMENT)
7. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
 - A. **NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING (NPRM) -
MPO COORDINATION AND PLANNING
AREA REFORM** **DISCUSSION**
8. **COMMENTS FROM FDOT**
9. **COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**
10. **NOTES**
11. **NEXT MEETING – September 19, 2016 @ 9:00 a.m.**
12. **ADJOURN**



ITEM
NUMBER:
7A

**MARTIN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
POLICY BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY**

MEETING DATE: August 15, 2016	DUE DATE: August 8, 2016	UPWP#: 5.1
WORDING: NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING (NPRM) - MPO COORDINATION AND PLANNING AREA REFORM		
REQUESTED BY: MPO	PREPARED BY: Beth Beltran/ Alice Bojanowski	DOCUMENT(S) REQUIRING ACTION: Comments to FHWA/FTA

BACKGROUND

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) jointly released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on June 27th that would make potentially significant changes to the structure and functioning of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. The NPRM would require that each of the urbanized areas (UZAs) in the nation to be contained wholly within a single metropolitan planning area (MPA). Where more than one MPO exists within an MPA, the NPRM would require that the MPOs either merge or be required to produce one unified set of planning documents for the entire UZA.

The following changes would occur if the proposed rule were to become final:

- MPA boundary would change to include the entire urbanized area plus the contiguous area forecast to become urbanized within the 20 year planning horizon;
- Governor could force MPOs to merge or, alternatively the Governor and affected MPOs could determine that multiple MPOs are warranted within a single MPA based on size and complexity;
- Multiple MPOs must jointly prepare Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and performance targets, and establish procedures for joint decision-making and resolving disagreements.

ISSUES

The proposed rule would create large MPAs that remove the transportation decision-making process from local communities. The Martin MPO boundary includes two UZAs that would become part of two larger MPAs under the proposed rule (see attached). The Port St. Lucie UZA is in the northern part of Martin County. The Miami UZA in the south part of Martin would expand to include the Town of Jupiter Island and remove Hobe Sound and Indiantown from the MPA. The balance between the State and local perspectives for transportation planning would be reduced.

The Martin MPO is currently the lead agency in developing the 2040 Regional LRTP which will cover regional transportation needs for St Lucie, Indian River and Martin counties. The local needs for Martin County are already being served with the multi-modal Cost Feasible Plan of the

Martin MPO 2040 LRTP. Staff finds that existing local and regional transportation needs are well-addressed. The proposed rule, which is a reinterpretation of Federal Law that has been in place for many years, is unnecessary, disruptive and potentially expensive. Martin MPO's draft correspondence for submittal to the docket is also attached.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- a) Approve the draft correspondence for submittal to docket, with or without comments.
- b) Provide direction.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Martin County Urbanized Areas map
2. Draft correspondence

Okeechobee County

MARTIN MPO Urbanized Areas (UZAs)

St Lucie County

PORT ST. LUCIE, FL

Martin County

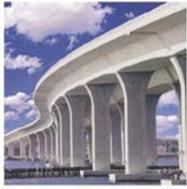
INDIANTOWN, FL

Palm Beach County

MIAMI, FL



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MARTIN MPO

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

2401 S.E. Monterey Rd.
Stuart, Florida 34996
<http://www.martinmpo.com>

August __, 2016

Docket Management Facility
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordination and Planning Area Reform Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Docket No. FHWA-2016-0016; FHWA RIN 2125-AF68; FTA RIN 2132-AB28

Dear Sir/Madam:

On behalf of the Martin Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed rule regarding Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Coordination and Planning Area Reform. This proposed rule changes the definition of Metropolitan Planning Areas (MPAs), requiring them to include the entire urbanized area (UZA) and the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within 20 years. MPOs will be required to merge or, alternatively the Governor and MPOs would determine whether multiple MPOs are warranted within a single MPA based on size and complexity of the area. The Martin MPO has serious concerns about the proposed rule, primarily the fact that it lessens the balance between the State and local perspective in the transportation planning decision-making process. The proposed rule ignores current regional coordination and successful processes in land use planning and economic development. U.S. DOT appears to be reinterpreting Federal Law that has been in place for many years, and the reason is unclear.

Along the East Coast of Florida, the MPAs in most instances mirror the MPO boundaries. The Martin MPO boundary includes two UZAs that will become part of two large MPAs under the proposed rule. The Port St. Lucie UZA is in the northern part of the county, and the Miami UZA covers a small area in southern Martin County. With the proposed rule, the Town of Jupiter Island would become part of the Miami MPA, and the communities of Hobe Sound and Indiantown would no longer be part of an MPA. Indiantown has a significant Hispanic and low income population, and Martin MPO's partnership with that community has resulted in crucially needed projects, including sidewalk connections funded by a Safe Routes to School grant in order that area elementary and middle school children do not have to walk in the road to school. Martin MPO has also supported Indiantown representatives in working with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) on improvements to State Road 710.

TROY MCDONALD
Chair
Commissioner For
The City Of Stuart

ED FIELDING
Vice-Chair
Martin County Commissioner

VINNY BARILE
Commissioner For
The Town Of Sewall's Point

EULA R. CLARKE
Commissioner For
The City Of Stuart

JOHN HADDOX
Martin County Commissioner

ANNE SCOTT
Martin County Commissioner

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As a result, SR 710 serves as a multimodal corridor through the community's town center as well as a regional freight corridor. If Indiantown were not part of an MPA, this indispensable coordination would diminish.

MPOs were created by Federal law to ensure that the local perspective is incorporated into the transportation planning process. The proposed rule will create large MPAs that will remove the transportation planning decision-making process from local communities. If the Martin MPO were to merge with the MPOs to the north to comply with the proposed rule, representatives currently serving on the Martin MPO Board from the City of Stuart and the Town of Sewall's Point may not get to serve on the new combined Board. Moreover, a larger geographic region of the MPA would require meetings in central locations, removed from the local community. Low income, minority and the elderly populations that often rely on alternative modes of transportation will likely not be able to attend public meetings. These underserved populations would not have the opportunity to serve on committees. Martin MPO has a blind person on its Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), as well as elderly and minority representatives on its Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). The Martin MPO finds it very disturbing that the U.S. DOT would suggest a policy that would disengage these individuals from the transportation planning process.

The proposed rule states that the Governor and the affected MPOs within the new MPA boundaries must either agree to merge, or determine collectively between the MPOs and Governor that the MPOs remain separate. However, if the Governor and the affected MPOs disagree about merging, the Governor has the power by this proposed rule to force a merger. As the result of an incorrect boundary, the MPO would get a corrective action on its Federal Certification Review. The MPO could not re-establish its boundary and become re-certified without the Governor's approval. This gives the State excessive power over the local community in a practice that was established to bring local perspective into the transportation planning process.

If it were agreed upon by the Governor and affected MPOs that multiple MPOs would exist within an MPA, the MPOs would be required to jointly develop a single long range transportation plan, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and performance targets. In Florida, MPA boundaries resemble MPO boundaries in order to correspond with other planning processes including land use and economic development. The new larger MPA boundary may be practical in a monocentric area where a UZA has grown around an urban core. However, to implement such a change in other areas would create serious problems. For example, in the polycentric region that exists along the East Coast of Florida where areas have their own defined character, this change in MPA boundaries would result in disconnected decision-making between transportation and land use which is made at the County level. As Martin County has two different UZAs, the proposed rule would bisect Martin County which would result in two different sets of performance targets, creating inconsistencies in land use and transportation planning. Prior

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to this proposed rule, the Federal planning regulations have maintained flexibility related to the designation of appropriate boundaries.

The Martin MPO is not aware of a requirement in Federal Law that states neighboring MPOs sharing a UZA need to produce joint planning documents. Currently, the Martin MPO is the lead agency in the development of a 2040 Regional Long Range Transportation Plan through the Treasure Coast Transportation Council (TCTC). The TCTC serves as a forum for coordination and communication among the Treasure Coast MPOs, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and other agencies to address regional transportation planning issues. Established in 2006, the TCTC is composed of six voting members, two each from the Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River M/TPOs. To best serve our MPA, the Martin MPO also developed its own 2040 LRTP which contains a multi-modal Cost Feasible Plan.

The Martin MPO is working successfully at the local and regional levels. As the proposed rule will significantly de-localize the MPO process, the Martin MPO requests that U.S. DOT reconsider its new interpretation of UZA and MPA.

Sincerely,

Troy McDonald
Chairman

TM/bb

cc: Martin MPO Policy Board Members
U.S. Senator Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator Bill Nelson
Congressman Patrick Murphy
State Senator Joe Negron
State Representative MaryLynn Magar
State Representative Gayle Harrell