RPOs Past, Present and Future
RPOs Past, Present And Future

• History of RPOs in Alabama
• Challenges
• MPO/RPO relationships
• Future of RPOs
MPOs vs RPO

• Federal Aid Highway Act 1964 authorized Metropolitan Planning Organizations for urban populations above 50,000
  – Local governments work with Department of Transportation and Highway Administration to develop and prioritize transportation projects
  – Breached the gap between local, state and federal governments
    • St. Louis, Kansas City etc
Alabama
- 67 Counties
- 12 Regions
- 13 MPOs and 2 Cross-State MPOs
- In Alabama most of the MPO counties are not completely within the MPOs’ study area
MPOs vs RPO

• Metropolitan Planning Organizations are for urban populations above 50,000
• Control of Transportation funds through Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
• Rural areas (populations under 50,000) consist of sparse populations served mostly by local and state governments
  – Public involvement process included public meetings for planned transportation projects
Alabama RPOs

- 2-Year pilot project (FY 2005-2006) West Alabama Regional Commission and the Alabama Department of Transportation
- Alabama Department of Transportation designated Regional Commissions to begin Rural Planning Programs in 2007.
Purpose of RPO

• Provide a forum for continued public participation in the transportation planning process

• Provide transportation related information to local governments

• Address rural specific transportation issues
Value of Process

• Communication has improved
  – Regularly scheduled meetings with established agendas

• State DOT and 5th Division response
  – Active participation by the 5th Division staff
  – Numerous safety issues already addressed
  – Understanding unique rural problems

• Local officials have a better understanding of the State DOT requirements, regulations, and funding

• Coordination with joint projects
Required Work

• Committee meetings
• Documents
  – Work program
  – Semi-annual report
• Safety Program
• Research
Committee Structure

• Policy Committee
  – County commissioners/mayors, ALDOT Division representative

• Technical Committee (Advisory to Policy Committee)
  – County engineers, transportation providers, ALDOT district representatives

• Citizens Committee (Advisory to Policy Committee)
  – Four citizens appointed from each county
  – Three out of four meetings are held in the rural counties
Meetings

• Quarterly meetings
• 1 Set of committee meetings per quarter
  – 2nd month of every quarter
  – November, February, May, August
• 6 Citizens Subcommittee Meetings each quarter
• One combined Citizens, Technical and Policy meeting held in November
Documents

- Work Program*
- Semi-Annual Report*
- Bylaws*
- Long-Range Transportation Plan**
- State Transportation Improvement Program input (STIP)**
- Public Involvement Plan
- Summary Document
- Record of Public Involvement
- Safety Program List

*Required

**MAP-21
Annual Work Program

• Developed to coordinate the transportation and related planning activities for a cooperative, continuing and comprehensive (C3) planning process.
• Due in late August to ALDOT Planning
• Describes what work the RPO staff plan to accomplish in the upcoming Fiscal Year
• Include budget for each task described and total program
Work Program

- Administration and management
  - Invoicing, progress reports, training
- Committee service
  - Conducting meetings, document meetings, technical assistance
- Data management
  - Databases, spreadsheets, and GIS files of relevant data
- Reports
  - Long-range plan, summary document, bylaws, safety suggestion report, work program
- Public involvement
  - Citizens committee meetings, news releases, public involvement plan, record of public involvement
## Work Program Budget

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*SPR = State Planning & Research Funds  
WARC = West Alabama Regional Commission*
Semi-Annual Report

• Purpose is to show the staff’s work accomplished in the program
• Due to ALDOT Planning every April and October
  – One hard copy mailed to ALDOT Planning Department
• Format should follow the work program
• 1.0 General Administration
• 1.1 Rural Planning Organization (RPO) Administration
  – Prepared invoices for the Alabama Department of Transportation on a monthly basis.
  – Updated the RPO section of the WARC website on a monthly basis.
  – Prepared the Transportation Department's monthly reports from March 2013 through August 2013.
  – Prepared a semi-annual report for ALDOT covering the period from October 1, 2012 through March 31, 2013.
  – Prepared a TAP grant for the Town of Gordo (Main Street sidewalks) and the Greene County Commission (Courthouse Square).
  – Prepared and submitted the annual Alabama State Data Center Affiliate report.
  – Reviewed a draft transportation planning manual.
  – The following technical assistance list (26 items) is in chronological order.
    • Pickens County resident (flood maps)
• 1.2 Work Program
  – Prepared two draft fiscal year 2014 Work Programs and posted the documents on the WARC website.
  – Completed the fiscal year 2014 Work Program, mailed copies to ALDOT, and posted on the WARC website.
• 1.3 Education and Training
  – Studied appropriate material to maintain job skills and to improve job performance.
  – Continued ARC/INFO – ARCGIS Map Info training.
  – Attended a Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) GIS conference in Greenville, SC (4/23/13).
  – Attended NADO Rural Transportation Conference in Greenville, SC (4/24/13 - 4/26/13).
  – Participated in a FHWA webinar regarding "right-sizing" streets (4/30/13).
• 1.4 Capital and Operating Purchases
  – During this time period the following purchases were made:
    • RPO Policy Committee (5/17/13) meal
    • RPO Policy Committee (8/9/13) meal
Invoices

• ALDOT requires multiple copies of a detailed invoice and F-25 forms for RPO reimbursement. ALDOT provides the F-25 forms. If you need additional forms please contact Mr. Doolin (334) 242-6097, doolinj@dot.state.al.us
• ALDOT does not allow indirect employees to charge directly to the RPO or MPO programs.
  – Indirect employees are expected to be paid from the commission’s indirect cost pool.
  – Indirect employees usually include executive directors, accounting staff, receptionists, and secretaries.
# Invoices

## REGIONAL COMMISSION

### RURAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING - SPR FUNDS

PERIOD COVERED: October 1, 2013 through October 31, 2013

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4.1 Public Involvement Process

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Bylaws

- Should be developed at the beginning of program
- Outlines the general policies of the rural planning organization.
- Bylaws provide detailed information regarding the membership and responsibilities of each committee as well as meeting procedures.
- Review periodically to ensure they are current and pertinent.
Long-Range Transportation Plan (MAP-21)

• A document that describes how an area will meet its transportation needs over a 20 to 25 year time period
• Focus is on federally funded highway and transit projects
• Inventories present transportation facilities
• Documents the long-range transportation needs in the local area
• Provides purpose and vision for the program
Long-Range Transportation Plan (continued)

– Format/Sections (example)

  • Introduction
  • Vision Statement and Goals
  • Mode Chapters
  • Descriptions
  • Needs
  • Strategies
Long-Range Transportation Plan (continued)

– Format/Sections
  • Project Descriptions
  • Continuing Efforts

– Appendices
  • Transportation Planning Terms and Acronyms
  • RPO Description
  • Public Participation Items
State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

- State may use recommended projects in Long Range Transportation Plan in STIP
- In the future it may be necessary for the RPOs to develop and maintain portion of STIP
Other Documents

• Public Involvement Plan
• Summary Document
  – Includes purpose, required documents and committee organization
  – Used to provide new members/interested persons information about program
• Record of Public Involvement
• Safety Program List
  – Annual summary of safety recommendations
Research

• Continual update of contact list for news releases and other information
• Updates on population data, traffic counts and other statistics
• Mapping of socioeconomic data
Maintaining a RPO

- Periodically review documents and documentation
- Review committee structure and meeting flow
- MPO/RPO coordination (including coordination with other government plans)
- Maintain invoices
- Continual improvement
Challenges

• Funding
• Organization
• Poor understanding of process by local officials & general populace
• MPO / RPO schedule overlap
• Lack of trained staff at non-MPO regional commissions
• AARC Region lines do not correspond with State DOT Division lines
Challenges to Engage Local Officials (Short-Term)

- Poor understanding of process
- Part-time elected officials
- Lack of dedicated funding for projects
Challenges to Engage Local Officials (Long-Term)

• Long time frame of major highway projects
• Election turn-over
• Advisory role
• Change of committee members
• Decreasing participation from committee members
What has worked for us

• CTAC meetings at each county provide understanding of rural transportation issues, and better participation

• Safety Observations
  – Transportation Safety issues observed by members (mostly CTACs)
  – Usually quick fix solutions
  – RPO members see results of process
Safety Observations

P10-1

Location: SR-14 at 3rd Avenue in Aliceville

Observation: There is a bad dip in the road. Aliceville recently added a culvert to this area, but it has not been resurfaced.

Contact: Mr. John Smith, (205) 555-2440

Jurisdiction: ALDOT/Aliceville

Response: This intersection has been repaired.

Comments:

Status: CLOSED.
What has worked for us

• Long Range Plan
  – Provides focus
  – Helps with understanding of process
  – Identify recommended projects that should go into, stay, or be deleted from STIP
  – Helps ALDOT prioritize STIP

• One combined meeting annually to exchange ideas and resolve common issues

• Great partnership with ALDOT 5\textsuperscript{th} division
What has worked for us

• Project Status report
  – Provided quarterly at the Technical Coordinating Committee by ALDOT 5th Division Pre-Construction Engineer and each county engineer
  – Provides status and progress of transportation projects
  – Facilitates coordination between state and county engineer
What has worked for us

• Project Status report

Alabama Department of Transportation

1. US-82 in the Sipsey Bottom (Slide Correction) - This project is scheduled to be let in January 2013.

2. US-82 from Reform to Gordo (Add lanes) - This project is scheduled to be let in November 2013. The right-of-way phase of this project has started.

3. US-82 Gordo Bypass (New road) - This project is scheduled to be let in November 2014. This project is in the design phase.

4. US-82 Centreville Bypass (New road) - The base and pave portion of this project is scheduled to be let in April or May 2013. The grade and drain portion of the project is complete.

5. I-20/59 from US-82 to the Coaling Exit (Add lanes) - The project is scheduled to be let in March 2013. This project has been divided into two projects with the division occurring near the JVC plant. The bridges at McFarland Boulevard, Skyland Boulevard, and University Boulevard will be replaced during this project.
RPO – MPO Relationship

- Transportation infrastructure knows no boundaries
- Decreasing funding and increasing needs
- Should spur metropolitan and rural local officials to come together to enhance the coordination, planning and implementation of new transportation improvement initiatives.
RPO – MPO Relationship

• State and local policy makers and planners recognise the relationship between transportation and issues such as economic development, environmental stewardship, housing, land use, commuter patterns and freight movement.

• Coordination and cooperation with neighboring regions

• Develop and maintain transportation outreach lists to include neighboring regions’ professional staff and leadership to notify of upcoming meetings or significant projects and issues
RPO – MPO Relationship

• RPO and MPO staff members of neighboring regions meet or communicate regularly to share transportation plans and project priorities, discuss emerging issues, and inform of significant residential, commercial or industrial developments that may impact the transportation network.

• RPOs and MPOs form interregional staff networks for GIS and modeling activities to improve staff capacity and share data, forecasts and analysis.
RPO – MPO Relationship

• Tuscaloosa Area MPO Policy committee chairman is a non-voting member on the RPO Policy Committee

• RPO Policy committee chairman is a non-voting member on the MPO Policy Committee

• WARC and ALDOT 5th Division staff work both MPO and RPO programs
RPO – MPO Relationship

• Joint projects
  – Coordinated Transit Plan
  – Air Quality issue
  – Emergency Management
  – Economic Development

• Updated status of other program is an agenda item for both committees
1. Call to order by chairman
2. Roll call (Sign-in Sheet)
3. Approval of minutes from the previous meeting
4. Communications from the presiding officer
5. Report of officers and/or committees
   a. Local government plans and new development report
      - See new development report
      - 2010 housing growth map
   b. Safety discussion
      - See safety observations
   c. Current projects status report
      See Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) project status report (Green Page)
   d. West Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO) report
   e. Transportation system management and operation planning discussion
AGENDA
1. Call to order
2. Roll call
2. Approval of previous meeting minutes [*Action Required]
4. Communications from the presiding officer
5. Report of officers and committees
   a. Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) attendance
   b. Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) attendance
   c. Safety discussion
   d. Project status report (February 10, 2011)
   e. Tuscaloosa Area MPO report
   f. Community reports
The Future of RPOS

• Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) gives more weight to process
  – Elevate participation from “consultation” to “cooperation.”
  – Establishes federal definition & basic work program for RPOs
  – Long-Range Transportation Plan
  – Input into STIP (funding for projects)
RPOs Past, Present And Future

- History of RPOs in Alabama
- Challenges
- MPO/RPO relationships
- Future of RPOs
Questions?
Contact Information

David Norris/Jill Hannah
West Alabama Regional Commission
4200 Highway 69 North, Suite 1
Northport, AL 35473
Telephone: 205-333-2990
FAX: 205-333-2713
Website: www.warc.info