**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**Planning Implications of Census 2010 for Transit Providers in**

**New Urbanized Areas and Transportation Management Areas**

The demographic and development patterns identified by the 2010 Census brought significant changes to census geography, including the designation of new urbanized areas (UZAs) from formerly rural areas, expansion of UZA boundaries to encompass formerly rural communities, and urban area population growth bringing population in selected UZAs to 200,000 people. The following FAQs describe the impacts of these UZA changes on the transportation planning activities of transit providers, including suggested approaches for how transit providers can participate in newly established, or expanded, planning processes most effectively.

While this guidance focuses solely on the planning-related actions of transit providers, previously issued guidance provides a broader overview of how the Census 2010 UZA designations affected planning processes across the U.S., as well as eligible activities and recipients of FTA’s grant programs. The following websites present that work.

1. [Census Urbanized Areas and MPO/TMA Designation](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/census_issues/urbanized_areas_and_mpo_tma/faq/) –This guidance answers common questions on the metropolitan transportation planning implications of the 2010 Census. In developing these FAQ, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) relied on statutory and regulatory provisions where they existed and a "reasonable implementation strategy" where statutory provisions did not exist.
2. [Census 2010 and FTA Formula Grants](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/Census_2010_and_FTA_Formula_Grants10-25-12.pdf) –Presented in FAQ format, this guidance answers the most common questions related to FTA’s urban formula program (49 U.S.C. 5307). UZA designation and emergence of large UZAs with populations greater than 200,000 people have important implications for eligibility and award of funding under that program. Additional information on the impacts of UZA designation on FTA programs is available [here](http://www.fta.dot.gov/12853_12408.html).

Following are an additional set of FAQs that focus on the planning implications for transit providers of Census 2010 UZA designation. The topics range from early activities by transit providers to support designation of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in new UZAs through strategies for participating in newly established planning processes most effectively. For completeness, there is occasional redundancy between discussions in the following FAQs and the two sets of web-postings noted above.

For more information, please contact your FTA Region Office.

**Question #1: Can localities appeal the Census UZA designation for their area to FTA?**

No. All questions on UZA designation must be presented directly to the Census Bureau. Please note that we are unaware of any successful challenges to Census Bureau UZA designations.

**Question #2: What is an MPO, and when must new MPOs be designated?**

MPOs are intergovernmental organizations with Policy Boards comprised of the chief officials of local units of government of the metropolitan area, as agreed upon by the Governor and local governments that together represent at least 75 percent of the affected population, including the largest incorporated city, based on population. Communities that lie within Census-designated UZAs are required to form a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) or join an existing MPO located adjacent to the area, in order to receive capital and/or operating funds from the Federal transit and Federal-aid highway programs (see [49 U.S.C. 5303(d)](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/49/5303)). Each UZA listed by the Census Bureau in the [Federal Register](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-03-27/pdf/2012-6903.pdf) on March 12, 2012 should have been represented by a MPO within 12 months of that date, or March 27, 2013.

**Question #3: What role do transit providers have in designating / re-designating an MPO?**

Transit providers should work with their local elected officials to support MPO designation, MPO expansion, or an MPO’s formal re-designation to include the new localities [(see 23 CFR 450.310)](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=7f5985b5d2fe301f3fd5a6f537e6bfb8&rgn=div5&view=text&node=23:1.0.1.5.11&idno=23#23:1.0.1.5.11.3.1.6). Transit providers should inform local officials and planning partners that securing FTA funds to serve their communities is contingent upon MPO designation. Transit providers also may consider seeking voting membership on the MPO Board. As MPO Board members, they would have a stronger voice in setting the future regional transportation vision and agenda, as well as in advocating for their projects and strategies to be included in the metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) and transportation improvement program (TIP). As a note, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) requires MPOs serving a Transportation Management Area (TMA), which is an urbanized area with population over 200,000, to have transit representation by October 1, 2014 (see [49 U.S.C. 5303(d)(2)(B)](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/49/5303). Although transit representation in non-TMA MPOs is not required, non-TMA transit providers may seek such standing if the Governor and local communities intend to re-designate the MPO.

**Question #4: What is the role of the transit provider in setting the Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary for the MPO?**

After each decennial census, MPOs, States, and transit providers jointly review the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) boundaries, and adjust as necessary, to maintain compliance with Federal law (see [23 CFR 450.312](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=7f5985b5d2fe301f3fd5a6f537e6bfb8&rgn=div5&view=text&node=23:1.0.1.5.11&idno=23#23:1.0.1.5.11.3.1.7)). When an MPO is designated, expanded, or formally re-designated, transit providers should participate with local agencies, the MPO, and the State in determining the MPA, and ensure that transit service areas are appropriately considered. The MPA boundary determines what projects and services come under the purview of the MPO or the State.

**Question #5: What is the role of the transit provider in preparing the Metropolitan Planning Agreement?**

When an MPO is designated or re-designated, the Metropolitan Planning Agreement, which identifies their mutual responsibilities in carrying out the planning process, is prepared or modified cooperatively by the MPO, the State(s), and public transportation provider(s) (see [23 CFR 450.314](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=7f5985b5d2fe301f3fd5a6f537e6bfb8&rgn=div5&view=text&node=23:1.0.1.5.11&idno=23#23:1.0.1.5.11.3.1.7)). Transit providers should review the Agreement to ensure they are afforded a voice in both the MPO’s policy and technical work, by their participation/representation on policy and technical “advisory committees.”

**Question 6: What is the role of the transit provider in preparing the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) of a new MPO?**

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is a program of work activities that augments and implements the transportation planning process within a metropolitan planning area during the next one or two-year period. A UPWP includes a description of the planning work activities, identifying the resulting planning products, the agencies completing the work tasks, the schedules and time frames, work task cost estimates, and the associated source(s) of funds (see [23 CFR 450.308](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=7f5985b5d2fe301f3fd5a6f537e6bfb8&rgn=div5&view=text&node=23:1.0.1.5.11&idno=23#23:1.0.1.5.11.3.1.5)). Once the MPO is designated, transit providers should participate in the development of the UPWP. They can propose activities that build that the MPO’s technical capacity to plan future transit and multimodal strategies for the MPA. This may include transit studies that identify and document future corridor needs, thereby establishing the rationale for transit projects in the MTP and TIP. Transit providers should also review UPWP tasks proposed by other agencies to ensure that transit options are appropriately considered. A full description of the UPWP, including a list of eligible planning activities, is provided in [FTA Circular 8100.1C](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FTA_C_8100.1C.pdf).

**Question #7: What FTA funding can a transit operator use to support planning activities?**

FTA provides formula funding to MPOs for multimodal planning, for which transit providers may propose transit-related activities to list in the UPWP (see [49 U.S.C. 5303(d)](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/49/5305)). ‘Planning’ also is eligible under FTA’s Urban Formula Program (see [FTA Circular 9030.1D](http://www.fta.dot.gov/legislation_law/12349_11492.html)), and transit providers should consider using those funds to support their service and capital needs planning.

**Question #8: What is the role of transit providers in preparing the MTP and TIP?**

Once the MPO is designated, it must develop its transportation planning process and begin preparation of two key planning products: the metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) and the transportation improvement program (TIP).

* The MTP identifies the vision, goals, needs and strategies to implement the integrated regional multimodal transportation system (see [23 CFR 450.322](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=7f5985b5d2fe301f3fd5a6f537e6bfb8&rgn=div5&view=text&node=23:1.0.1.5.11&idno=23#23:1.0.1.5.11.3.1.12)). This plan includes a fiscally constrained prioritized listing of strategies and projects covering a 20-year horizon.
* The TIP is a fiscally constrained short-range program listing of transportation projects, covering the upcoming 4 years period (see [23 CFR 450.324](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=7f5985b5d2fe301f3fd5a6f537e6bfb8&rgn=div5&view=text&node=23:1.0.1.5.11&idno=23#23:1.0.1.5.11.3.1.13)).

All projects receiving FTA or FHWA funds must be included in TIP, and be consistent with the MTP. Projects may range from long-range capital projects, transit re-investment to short-range operational and preventive maintenance efforts. Transit providers should share and coordinate their proposed project listing with the MPO and their local agencies during the development of the MTP and TIP. Transit providers should also participate in the MPO’s technical and/or policy advisory committees in identifying and selecting projects, and allocating project funding.

**Question #9: What is the role of a transit agency serving an UZA that was designated as a transportation management area (TMA)?**

After the decennial census, FTA and FHWA designate UZAs with populations over 200,000 people as Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) (see [49 U.S.C. 5303(k)](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/49/5303)). The list of TMAs based on the 2010 Census was published in the July 18, 2012 [Federal Register](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-07-18/html/2012-17514.htm). Transit providers serving communities in TMAs are affected in the following 3 ways:

1. TMA’s Authority to Set Implementation Priorities in the TIP – MPOs serving TMAs select TIP projects for implementation (see [23 CFR 450.330](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=7f5985b5d2fe301f3fd5a6f537e6bfb8&rgn=div5&view=text&node=23:1.0.1.5.11&idno=23#23:1.0.1.5.11.3.1.16)), and transit providers should work with the MPOs in TMAs to identify TIP project selections – across modes – that may best aligned with the transit’s operational needs.
2. Congestion Management Process (CMP) - A Congestion Management Process (CMP) identifies travel demand reduction and operational management strategies to effectively manage new and existing transportation facilities. MPOs in new TMAs must implement a CMP by January 18, 2014. Transit providers should cooperate with those MPOs to identify congestion management strategies that support transit and transit improvements. Because the CMP serves as a key input into the MTP and TIP, transit projects that come from the CMP have a higher priority for advancement and ultimate implementation (see [23 CFR 450.320](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=7f5985b5d2fe301f3fd5a6f537e6bfb8&rgn=div5&view=text&node=23:1.0.1.5.11&idno=23#23:1.0.1.5.11.3.1.11)).
3. Transit Representation on the MPO Policy Boards –MAP-21 requires that MPOs serving TMAs include transit provider representation by October 1, 2014. This means that transit providers will have a stronger voice in setting priorities for policy, plan, and program development. To be most effective in implementing this provision, transit providers should complement their Policy Board representation by proactively participating in the various MPO advisory committees (see [49 U.S.C. 5303(d)](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/49/5303)).

**Question #10: What are the benefits to transit providers of participating in the metropolitan planning process?**

Participation in the metropolitan planning process enables transit providers to ensure that their preventive maintenance, critical infrastructure renewal, and capital investment needs are communicated to the MPO and included in the MTP and TIP as the basis for receiving funds from FTA and FHWA. Furthermore, transit providers have the opportunity to reinforce the case for transit options and considerations through the policy and technical analyses conducted by the MPO to address the metropolitan planning area’s regional mobility solutions and strategies. Transit studies and related planning activities listed in the UPWP can educate the State and local officials on transit needs, and may lead to an increased funding commitment for transit. Another outcome may include consideration of other flexible funds from FHWA to augment FTA funds.

**Question #11: How can a transit provider serving a newly designated UZA participate most effectively in a newly established metropolitan transportation planning process?**

Transit providers in new UZAs should work with the local agencies, the MPO, and the State to help start the new MPO. The tasks should include the following: drafting the MPO Agreement, defining the Metropolitan Planning Area boundary, participating on policy and technical advisory committees, and participating in the development of key documents - the UPWP, the CMP in TMAs, the MTP, and the TIP, proposing projects for inclusion as appropriate.

**Question #12: What are the respective roles of the MPO and designated recipient in setting transit investment priorities for funding in a large UZA?**

Designated recipients are responsible for receiving and apportioning Section 5307 funds among transit providers within a UZA with more than 200,000 people. While the MPO develops and adopts the TIP, the designated recipient develops the program of projects for spending Section 5307 funds apportioned to the UZA. Because Section 5307 funds can be spent only on projects in the TIP, the MPO and designated recipient must work in close coordination. [FTA Circular 9030.1D](http://www.fta.dot.gov/legislation_law/12349_11492.html) provides a detailed description of designated recipients, their selection, and their roles.

**Question #13: What planning-related technical assistance is available for transit providers?**

A comprehensive review of strategies for effective transit participation in metropolitan planning, along with potential benefits and illustrative case studies, is described in FTA’s “[Transit at the Table](http://www.planning.dot.gov/focus_transit_attable.asp)” report series. Of particular interest to transit providers new to metropolitan planning is “[Transit at the Table II](http://www.planning.dot.gov/documents/TransPlanning/TransTableII.htm),” which provides transit-MPO case studies from the 2000 Census. Further information is available on metropolitan planning and the involvement of transit providers through the joint [FTA-FHWA Transportation Planning Capacity-Building program.](http://www.planning.dot.gov/focus_transit_attable.asp)

FTA is committed to providing technical assistance and support to our transit provider partners. Please contact us if you need any assistance. We are available to provide training and technical support to help form and sustain productive planning partnerships between the transit providers, local agencies, MPOs and the States.