

Agenda Item Number 16.B.

2000 Census Results and Changing MPO Status

Presenter: Tom Schwetz

Action Recommended: Information and Discussion.

Issue Summary:

The 2000 Census results indicate that the population of the Eugene-Springfield urbanized area has reached 224,049. Being over 200,000 requires the region to take on additional MPO-related activities. MPOs over 200,000 are classified as Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) by federal regulations. This memo summarizes the general requirements of TMAs, the expected schedule for formal designation, and describes the broad set of tasks anticipated for transition to TMA status.

2000 Census Results

As part of every census, the Census Bureau identifies those areas in the country consisting of densely settled territory containing 50,000 or more people as “urbanized areas”. The listing of urbanized areas is used by the US Department of Transportation to identify areas qualifying as Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). For example, the 2000 census resulted in the addition of 76 new MPOs (including Corvallis and Bend). In the ISTEA legislation enacted in 1992, Congress established the classification of MPOs over 200,000 in population as Transportation Management Areas, or TMAs.

The Census Bureau published the 2000 Census list of urbanized areas on May 1, 2002. As a result of this listing, the Eugene-Springfield (224,049) and Salem (207,229) areas now join Portland Metro (1,583,138) as the three urbanized areas over 200,000 in Oregon. The listing indicates that the Eugene-Springfield area is the 139th largest urbanized area in the country and one of 153 over the 200,000-population threshold. While the grouping of urbanized areas over 200,000 comprise 33 percent of all urbanized areas, TMAs include approximately 85 percent of the urbanized population in the country.

TMA Requirements

As the designated MPO for the Eugene-Springfield area since 1974, LCOG is responsible for completion of a number of tasks related to federal transportation planning and programming requirements. These tasks generally fall in to the following work elements:

- Modeling and data maintenance
- Long Range Planning
- Technical Assistance
- Programming and Implementation
- Public Involvement
- Air Quality Conformity
- Intergovernmental Coordination

TMA status adds responsibilities and makes several changes to the MPO's relationships with both ODOT and USDOT. A primary additional responsibility is the development of a Congestion Management Plan. This plan would establish a congestion management system that "provides for effective management of new and existing transportation facilities through the use of travel demand reduction and operation management strategies".

In addition, several changes related to the policy structure and current practice of the MPO need to be made. Federal regulations require that the voting membership of an MPO policy body must include representation of local elected officials, officials of agencies that administer or operate major modes or systems of transportation, e.g., Transit operators, local airports, maritime ports, rail operators, etc., and appropriate State officials. Under these regulations, the MPO in cooperation with ODOT and LTD is responsible for carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process. The federal regulations and ODOT's responsibility to be a partner in the MPO process suggests that ODOT needs to be given a vote in the policy setting process.

The relationship with USDOT (primarily FHWA and FTA) changes with respect to program certification. Currently LCOG self-certifies the program (most recently in a resolution passed by the Board last month). This would change under TMA status to a 3-year review performed directly by FTA and FHWA. Experience in other TMAs indicates that this is a much more formal and "robust" review of the MPO's performance of federal requirements.

The amount of federal funds allocated to the MPO also changes with TMA status. This area will be able to access a proportional share of Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds reserved at the state level for TMAs upon formal designation as a TMA.

Currently, the MPO receives approximately \$1.4M in STP funds annually. While the amount available under TMA status has not been finalized at this point, ODOT's analysis indicates that as much as an additional \$2M would become available annually. Amendments to TransPlan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) will likely be required in order to access these additional funds.

MPO Boundary Changes Resulting from the 2000 Census

One of the primary means used by the Census Bureau in establishing urbanized area population is the delineation of an urbanized area boundary. This boundary is based on a number of criteria focused on identifying a contiguous area of dense development. The MPO is required to include within its boundaries, at a minimum, the urbanized area established by the 2000 Census. Federal guidelines suggest that the MPO planning boundary include areas expected to become urbanized within the time horizon of the region's long range plan.

Preliminary review of the new urbanized area boundary for the Eugene-Springfield area indicates that Coburg, and perhaps other surrounding cities, should be more directly involved in the MPO process.

Summary

Formal designation as a TMA is conferred by the US Secretary of Transportation. FHWA has indicated that this action will take place prior to October 1, 2002. After that designation, LCOG will have a period of time in which to transition into compliance with TMA requirements.

To recap, transition to TMA status will likely require changes to the current MPO policy structure, an expansion of the MPO planning boundary, an expansion of the MPO responsibilities, and potentially, amendments to the plan and the TIP.

This memo is meant to be an introduction to the issues associated with the transition to TMA status. Staff will be coming back to the Board over the next several months with more specific options and recommendations.