

# Organizational Structures of Statewide Associations of MPOs Across the U.S.

## Final Report

PREPARED BY  
Center for Urban Transportation Research  
University of South Florida



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# Organizational Structures of Statewide Associations of MPOs Across the U.S.

Final Report  
CUTR Internal Award Project

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PREPARED BY

Tia Boyd, AICP

Research Associate, Planner, [tiaboyd@usf.edu](mailto:tiaboyd@usf.edu)

Transportation Planning, Policy, and Processes (TP3)

Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR)

Taylor Dinehart, AICP, MPH

Research Associate, [tdinehart@usf.edu](mailto:tdinehart@usf.edu)

Transportation Planning, Policy, and Processes (TP3)

Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR)

Jeff Kramer, AICP

Director, [kramer@usf.edu](mailto:kramer@usf.edu)

Transportation Planning, Policy, and Processes (TP3)

Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR)

SPONSORED BY

Center for Urban Transportation Research

University of South Florida

4202 E. Fowler Avenue, CUT100

Tampa, FL 33620

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## Executive Summary

The findings of this report are based on a systematic manual web search, consultation with key representatives of statewide associations of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and the use of external resources (i.e. academic papers, reports and publications from transportation agencies, legislative documents, and other relevant materials that provide insights or data on the organizational structures and practices of statewide MPO associations). It provides an analysis of statewide associations of MPOs and their significance in promoting collaboration, coordination, and advocacy efforts among MPOs within a state. The report explores the criteria used to define statewide associations of MPOs, the organizational structures, membership compositions, leadership, activities, and formation methods of these associations.

Statewide associations of MPOs serve as crucial platforms for communication and information exchange among MPOs, state Departments of Transportation (DOTs), and other transportation stakeholders. By facilitating collaboration, these associations enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of transportation planning processes at the regional and state levels and support MPOs and DOTs in meeting Federal (and sometimes State) requirements for coordination and cooperation. They provide opportunities for sharing best practices, discussing emerging trends and challenges, and advocating for policy and funding improvements.

The definition for statewide associations of MPOs used for this project was established based on a number of criteria including network relationship type, direction of the relationship, member selection criteria, and network function. The study only included associations that have a formal agreement or formal documents of creation. The study then considered associations with horizontal relationships between MPOs and other similar agencies within its membership. To better distinguish statewide associations of MPOs from other association types, a membership continuum was developed ranging from associations that only include MPOs as members to associations with MPOs and one or more other types of organization. Finally, in those associations with MPOs and one or more other types of agencies, the extent to which the association focuses on MPOs, and MPO-related topics was used to determine if the association falls within the definition of a statewide association of MPOs.

Using these criteria, sixteen statewide MPO associations were identified across various regions of the U.S., each exhibiting diverse organizational structures and membership compositions. These include:

- Alabama Transportation Planners Association (ATPA)
- Arizona COG/MPO Directors Association
- California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG)
- Colorado Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC)
- Florida MPO Advisory Council (MPOAC)
- Georgia Association of MPOs (GAMPO)
- Indiana MPO Council
- Michigan Transportation Planning Association (MTPA)
- New York State Association of MPOs (NYSAMPO)
- North Carolina Association of MPOs (NCAMPO)
- Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) Transportation Committee
- Oregon Metropolitan Planning Organization Consortium (OMPOC)
- Tennessee MPO Association
- Texas Association of MPOs (TEMPO)
- Virginia Association of MPOs (VAMPO)
- West Virginia Association of MPOs (WVAMPO)

The likelihood of forming a statewide association of MPOs tends to increase with the number of MPOs in a state, with a threshold of around five MPOs. States with fewer MPOs, such as Vermont, Hawaii, South Dakota, and Maine, typically do not form such associations.

This report highlights the diverse formation methods of statewide associations of MPOs, including intergovernmental agreements, state statutes, non-profit designations, and informal arrangements. Each method has its own advantages and challenges, and the choice of method depends on the unique needs and circumstances of the state and its MPOs. Membership compositions of statewide associations of MPOs also vary, with some associations consisting solely of MPOs, while others include Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs) and other agencies. The composition of the associations depends on the state's transportation planning needs and the relationships between MPOs and other planning entities within the state.

Ten of the sixteen associations have bylaws that were available online or sent to the project team by association personnel. The bylaws commonly detail definitions, purposes, membership, governance, meeting rules,

committee guidelines, financial considerations, record keeping, and amendment procedures. The stated purposes of these associations generally focus on enhancing transportation planning, facilitating information exchange, providing discussion forums, and advocating for policy and funding improvements.

Leadership structures typically include positions such as Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer/Secretary, with some associations having additional leadership roles. Staffing can involve dedicated professionals for technical assistance, research, inter-agency coordination, and administrative support. However, only a few associations have dedicated or support staff.

The activities of statewide MPO associations include hosting annual conferences, providing professional development workshops, and facilitating best practice exchanges. Meeting frequencies vary, with some associations meeting weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, or annually. Committees or working groups are established by most associations to address specific issues and facilitate focused collaboration.

Statewide MPO associations are diverse and complex, but can play an essential role in fostering collaboration, enhancing transportation planning, and advocating for policy and funding improvements. The varied organizational structures, formation methods, and activities reflect the adaptability of these associations to meet the unique needs of their member organizations and regions. By providing platforms for information sharing, advocacy, support, education, and professional development, these associations play a pivotal role in advancing transportation planning across the United States. The findings of this report provide valuable insights for policymakers, transportation planners, and other stakeholders involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process and can serve as a guide for the establishment and operation of statewide associations of MPOs.



### Introduction

Statewide associations of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) serve as critical forums for coordination between MPOs within a state and key stakeholders such as the Department of Transportation (DOT). These associations facilitate information exchange and collective decision-making on policy and other matters of importance, significantly contributing to the efficacy of transportation planning processes. Preliminary research indicates considerable variation in how these associations are defined, developed, organized, and maintained. However, existing studies do not fully document or compare these associations across states. There is currently no single source providing comprehensive information about statewide associations of MPOs. This project aims to fill these gaps by identifying and documenting the state of practice related to the organizational structures of statewide associations of MPOs across the U.S.

The Federal Highway Act of 1962 mandated states and local governments to engage in a continuous, comprehensive, and cooperative (3C) transportation planning process. The Federal Highway Act of 1973 subsequently established MPOs to manage this 3C process in metropolitan areas with populations exceeding 50,000. While much of the existing literature documents various strategies MPOs use to coordinate with partners such as the DOT and other MPOs, one such strategy, statewide associations, is underexplored in terms of organizational structures and support for the 3C metropolitan transportation planning process. Given the dispersed and often inaccessible nature of available information on statewide associations of MPOs, this project compiles this information into a single, accessible resource. This initiative aligns with a growing national interest in understanding coordination mechanisms among MPOs and their stakeholders, as well as between individual MPOs. Recent NCHRP syntheses and projects underscore this interest, highlighting the need for research that explores specific coordination mechanisms, such as statewide associations, in detail.

This research employed a multi-method approach to gather comprehensive information on statewide associations of MPOs:

- 1. Literature review:** Conducting a detailed review of existing literature to gather background information on the organizational structures and functions of statewide associations of MPOs and develop a clear definition of statewide associations of MPOs.

2. **Internet scan and consultation:** Identifying existing statewide MPO associations through internet searches and direct communication with key statewide associations of MPOs representatives.
3. **Data compilation and analysis:** Documenting the identified associations using a structured spreadsheet format, capturing key elements such as governance structures, creation documents, staff and leadership details, and operational practices.
4. **Framework application:** Using the literature review findings and definition of statewide associations of MPOs to ensure consistency and distinguish these associations from similar entities.
5. **Review and synthesis:** Analyzing the collected data to identify patterns, common practices, and unique features of statewide associations of MPOs, which were then synthesized into the final report.

### Literature Review

To provide a comprehensive understanding of how and why MPOs collaborate at the statewide level, this chapter summarizes a review of current literature on communication at a multi-agency scale, specifically focusing on the regional level. The literature used for this review was derived from a variety of disciplines including transportation planning, public policy, public administration, sustainability, governance, administrative sciences, and urban affairs.

Documents evaluated for the literature review included federal legislation, journal articles, research reports, guidebooks, white papers, agency manuals, and books. Key search terms included one or a combination of the following:

- Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)
- Statewide associations
- Interorganizational communication
- Interorganizational collaboration
- Interorganizational coordination
- Interorganizational cooperation
- Interorganizational relations
- Institutional collective action framework
- Organizational network structures
- Collaborative network structures

This literature review begins with an overview of MPOs, briefly describing their creation and purpose. The next section defines communication at various scales, including collaboration, coordination, and cooperation as they relate to interorganizational relationships. These definitions are followed by a short synopsis of interorganizational network structures. The final section of this chapter provides a summary of the available literature on statewide associations of MPOs and a definition of statewide associations of MPOs for use in this study.

### Overview of MPOs

Through the 1962 Federal Highway Act, states and local governments were required to participate in the comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing transportation planning process, also referred to as the 3C's. Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) were formally created in 1973 to carry out the 3C metropolitan transportation planning process in urbanized areas with populations over 50,000 (Transportation for America, 2014). Subsequent federal legislation—beginning with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act

(ISTEA) in 1991 and carrying on to the most recent Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in 2021, has strengthened and expanded the role of MPOs in the metropolitan transportation planning process to include the planning factors listed in the federal code of regulations (23 C.F.R. 450):

- Economic vitality
- Safety
- Security
- Accessibility and mobility
- Environmental quality
- Multimodal connectivity
- System efficiency
- System preservation
- Resilience and reliability
- Travel and tourism

MPOs are designated by agreement between the governor and local government agencies that represent at least 75 percent of the affected population or in accordance with state or local law (23 C.F.R. 450.310). MPOs are required to be designated in urbanized areas (UZA) with populations over 50,000, as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau. It should be noted that the U.S. Census Bureau no longer distinguishes between urban areas based on population size and, therefore, no longer uses the term urbanized areas. The term “urban areas” is now used to identify all urban areas regardless of population size (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). However, as of 2024 when this report was written, the U.S. Code, Code of Federal Regulations, and the IIJA (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) use the term urbanized area or UZA. Unless otherwise specified, this report will also use UZA for consistency with current federal laws. Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) are UZAs with populations over 200,000 in population or as designated by request of the governor and the affected MPO or affected local officials. Therefore, MPOs are typically identified as either TMA MPOs or non-TMA MPOs. As of 2024, there were over 400 MPOs in the U.S. (BTS, 2019; FHWA, n.d.).

Federal requirements for MPOs are outlined in 23 U.S.C. § 134, Metropolitan Transportation Planning, 49 U.S.C. § 5303, Metropolitan Transportation Planning, and 23 C.F.R. 450 Subpart C, Metropolitan Transportation Planning and Programming. MPOs produce a variety of plans, programs, and studies and are required to use a performance-based approach for planning and programming. At a minimum, federal laws require MPOs to develop the following products:

- A metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) (also referred to as a long range transportation plan (LRTP))

- A transportation improvement program (TIP)
- A unified planning work program (UPWP)
- A public participation plan (PPP)
- A congestion management process (CMP) for TMA-MPOs. Non-TMA MPOs may elect to have a congestion management process.

In addition to these required plans and programs, MPOs that have a CMP may also develop a congestion management plan, but they are not required. TMA-MPOs also have the option to create and maintain a housing coordination process and develop a housing coordination plan.

MPO plans and programs are required to be developed cooperatively with the state and be consistent with state plans and programs to the extent feasible. For example, 23 U.S.C. § 134 requires MPOs to integrate the goals, objectives, performance measures, and targets of the state's transportation plans and processes into the MPO's planning processes. Additionally, MPOs are encouraged to consult (or where possible coordinate planning processes) with other agencies responsible for land use, economic development, housing, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, airport operations, and freight (23 U.S.C. § 134).

The U.S. Code and the Code of Federal Regulations also address state requirements for coordination and cooperation with MPOs on metropolitan planning processes and products in 23 U.S.C. § 135 and 49 U.S.C. § 5304, Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning, and 23 C.F.R. 450 Subpart B, Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning and Programming. The Code and Regulations both require cooperation between states and MPOs. In addition to these federal requirements, states may establish additional requirements for MPOs and the metropolitan planning process through state laws.

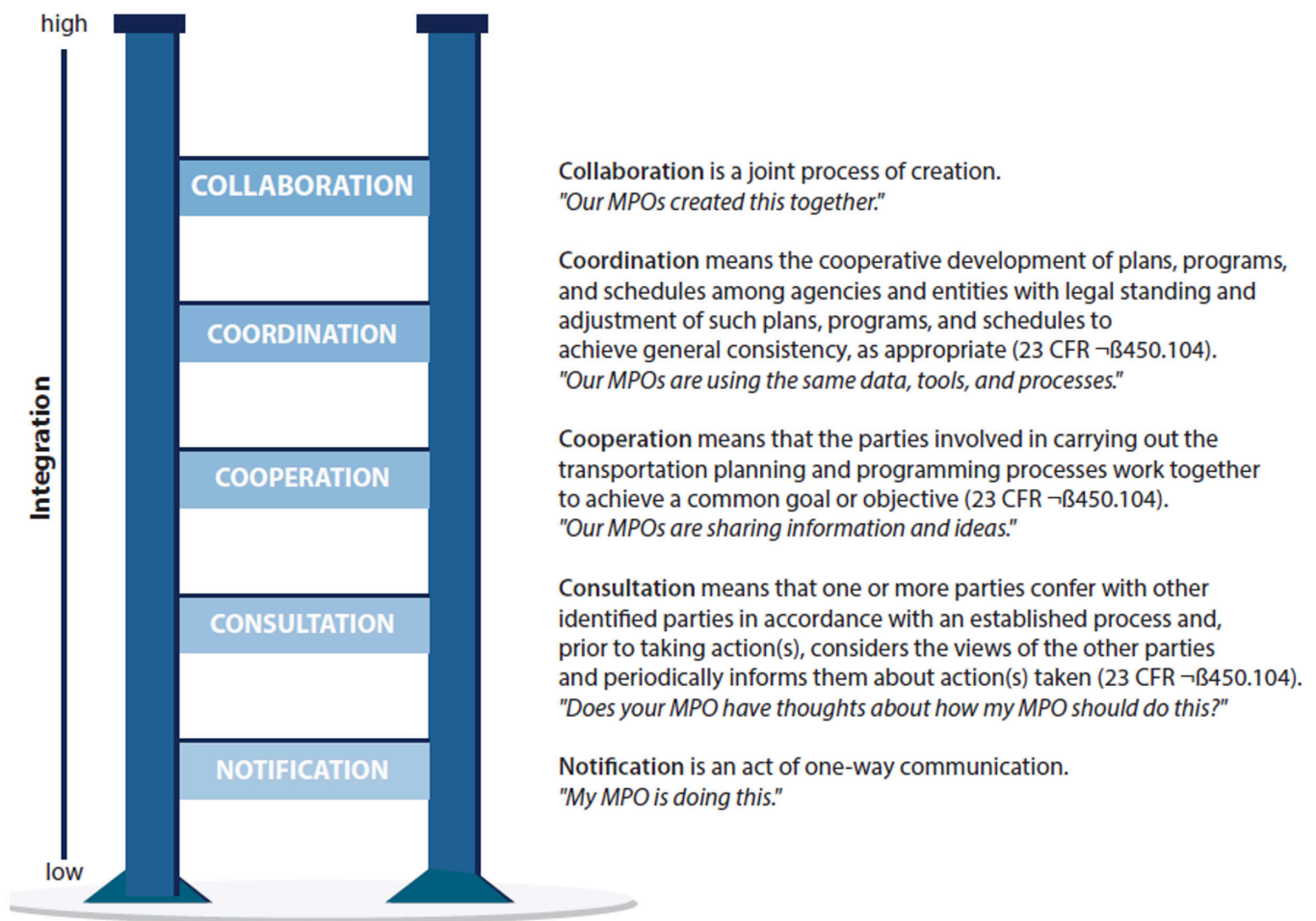
The nature of MPOs—from their creation to modern-day participation in the 3C transportation planning process, as well as the multi-jurisdictional nature of transportation and its effects—necessitates communication and partnerships with a variety of stakeholders. Goldman & Deakin (2000) describe the role of MPOs as being to “coordinate local interests and achieve a workable agreement on the regional plan, and [to] cooperate with the state highway department to get regional projects funded” (p. 49). Some MPO stakeholders are required to participate in the 3C planning process by federal law or state statutes, while other partnerships are more organically established. These partners may include local agencies within the metropolitan area, the state Department of Transportation (DOT), other MPOs in the state, MPOs and local jurisdictions in other states (particularly where UZA boundaries cross state lines), modal providers, and a variety of other partners.

MPOs communicate with their partners using formal mechanisms such as memorandums of understanding (MOUs) or master agreements, and informal mechanisms such as phone calls or emails. The concepts of formal and informal mechanisms and networks are well-defined in the network governance literature (Moretti, 2017). Formal or institutional mechanisms are the rules, procedures, and contracting mechanisms. Informal or social mechanisms are less restrictive and include information and knowledge exchange, ongoing interactions, and joint activities and decision-making. While there are a number of mechanisms that can be used by MPOs to facilitate communication and partnerships, this report focuses on the formal networks established between MPOs at the state level through statewide associations of MPOs. The next section introduces and defines key concepts related to interorganizational communication and lays the foundation for a discussion about statewide associations.

### Interorganizational Communication

Generally, the literature does not always agree on the definition and scales of multi-agency communication (Imperial, 2005; Oswald Beiler, 2016). For example, in regards to scale, the document *Multi-MPO Planning: A Transportation Practitioner's Guide*, describes communication between multiple MPOs as occurring at varying levels on a continuum of integration (U.S. DOT, n.d.). As shown in Figure 1, these levels include notification at the lowest level and collaboration at the highest level. Feiock et al. (2012) provide an alternative theory, explaining that coordination and cooperation are not measured on a scale, but rather, they are different forms of collaboration. In this context, coordination and cooperation present different types of values, risks, approaches, and network structures and functions. A third theory is presented by Oswald Beiler (2016), who describes collaboration as interchangeable with interorganizational coordination, partnering, and cooperation where the level of communication is informed by “the frequency, duration, method, and purpose of communication” (p. 31).





■ FIGURE 1. Levels of communication/integration

Source: Morley et al., 2020

Despite these differences in the definition and scale of communication, there are some consistencies between these schools of thought. In each of these sources, collaboration is identified as the highest level of communication and/or integration between multiple agencies with partners working together as a joint effort toward mutually beneficial outcomes (Feiock et al., 2012; Morley et al., 2020; Oswald Beiler, 2016; U.S. DOT, n.d.). Imperial (2005) explains that the evaluation of the relationships and activities between participants is essential to understanding collaboration in interorganizational networks. These collaborative networks are dependent on the prescriptive mechanisms used to sustain collective decision-making, such as rules, norms, and structures, as well as the social interaction between participants, such as communication, mutual interests, and relationships. Therefore, the remainder of this literature review will focus heavily on collaboration, referring to coordination and cooperation only where required to expand on specific ideas.

Within the purview of interorganizational communication, collaboration is also multi-level. It may be vertical, between agencies at different scales, or horizontal, between agencies at the same scale (Castillo, 2019; Lubin, 2020; Oswald Beiler, 2016). Horizontal collaboration is described as being a bridge for regional authorities, benefitting participants by increasing agency capacity, improving responsiveness, improving cost efficiency in service delivery, and supporting strategies for economic growth (Lubin, 2020). The benefits of vertical collaboration are described as increasing access to resources and capital, espousing authority to address large-scale spatial issues, and supporting enforcement and implementation of collaborative planning activities. Lubin explains that a balance of horizontal and vertical collaboration is necessary for effective regional collaboration. For example, statewide associations of MPOs are typically horizontal, as the memberships are comprised of MPOs or other similar planning agencies within a state. Still, these associations may also have participation from stakeholders at different levels such as the state DOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Divisional Office, the Federal Transit Agency Regional Office, modal providers, other statewide associations, community groups, or other stakeholders, resulting in both horizontal and vertical collaboration through these venues.

Shuman & Twombly (2010) describe the motivation to collaborate as dependent on “relationship currencies” or the exchange of resources that are only available through collaboration. In other words, the motivation to collaborate is determined by the participants and what they value. As described in the previous section, MPOs are responsible for a wide range of activities and products in the metropolitan planning process. These responsibilities require a balance to meet the needs of multiple stakeholders for a variety of priorities related to environmental, social, and economic factors—also referred to as the triple bottom line. Triple bottom-line improvements for MPOs require public involvement and multijurisdictional planning at all levels (Oswald Beiler, 2016).

Several other factors relay the importance of collaboration between MPOs. For example, transportation extends beyond the area covered by a single MPO, spreading over multiple geographic and political boundaries, thus requiring regular coordination between multiple parties (Lubin, 2020; Markiewicz et al., 2016; Morley et al., 2020; Oswald Beiler, 2016; Sciara, 2017). Additionally, 23 C.F.R. 450 Subpart C requires MPOs that serve the same urbanized areas to have written agreements that include coordination. Policies and programs are typically created with problem-solving in mind, requiring multiple participants with varying degrees of authority, resources, and knowledge to work together to address identified problems (Imperial, 2005). To this end, collaboration is needed because government processes cannot be effectively implemented by agencies that exist in siloes. Finally, specifically discussing MPOs, Lubin (2020) explains



that collaboration reduces the possibility of fragmentation and inefficiencies in land use, infrastructure, and transportation services.

## Benefits and Risks of Collaboration

Collaboration between agencies (including coordination and cooperation) has multiple benefits. It supports organizational sustainability, provides cost-reduction opportunities, increases efficiency and effectiveness, encourages problem-solving and innovation, increases organizational and community capacity, and leads to improved decision-making (Booher, 2004; Feiock et al., 2012; Moretti, 2017; Oswald Beiler, 2016; Vaz Lopes & Silva Farias, 2022). Specifically describing the benefits for MPOs, Markiewicz et al. (2016) explain that cooperation supports agencies in reaching common goals as follows (p. 4):

- Working together can help agencies make the most of limited staff capacity and planning resources.
- Agencies can save time and money while achieving superior results when working together.
- Cooperating across jurisdictional boundaries provides planning agencies with expanded opportunities to optimize decision-making about transportation investments.
- Regional cooperation allows transportation agencies to identify and address the highest priority regional needs and issues that will have the greatest impact on the traveling public in the region.

Although there is wide documentation on the benefits of interorganizational communication, the literature also addresses the potential risks and challenges associated with collaboration (Castillo, 2019). The nature of interorganizational collaboration creates challenges in two primary ways. First, the multidirectional nature of collaboration described earlier in this section (horizontal and vertical) creates challenges related to participants' power dynamics (Booher, 2004; Lubin, 2020; Oswald Beiler, 2016). Second, the different approaches needed to manage collaborative governance structures and traditional single-organization governance structures introduce challenges that can create perceptions of risk and uncertainty (Booher, 2004; Imperial, 2005; Song et al., 2020). Other challenges for collaboration include conflicting or competing goals between participating agencies, the cost of collaboration, the availability of resources, and a lack of willingness to collaborate (Booher, 2004; Feiock et al., 2012; Imperial, 2005; Lubin, 2020; Song et al., 2020). Another challenge that is very relevant to MPOs, as federally designated agencies, is described by Imperial (2005) as follows:

...although the polycentric structure of our federal system creates opportunities for collaboration, it simultaneously imposes constraints (e.g., competing statutory objectives, conflicting values or missions, budgetary

responsibilities, resource constraints, turf, etc.) that limit practitioners' abilities to exploit an interorganizational network's collaborative capacity. (p. 282)

Beyond these challenges, collaborative partnerships present potential risks for participants. The risks are described by several studies as incoordination, unfair division, and defection (Deslatte & Feiock, 2019; Feiock, n.d., 2013; Feiock et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2022; Lubin, 2020; Song et al., 2020; Terman et al., 2020). Each of these risks are described in further detail below:

- Incoordination is grounded in the difficulty of multiple participants agreeing to mutually beneficial goals and tasks, resulting in inaction.
- Unfair division occurs when the benefits and costs of the efforts cannot be evenly distributed between participants, potentially belaboring negotiations.
- Defection risks occur when one or more participant(s) do not comply with the agreement, resulting in poor outcomes for some or all of the other participants.

Deslatte & Feiock (2019) identify defection risks as significant for heterogeneous metropolitan regions because of different values or motivations for collaborating between potential participants. This risk is reduced when collaborative partners are similar, but homogeneity may limit the reach and effectiveness of collaborative efforts. Deslatte and Feiock add that, despite potential risks, fragmentation in collaborative participant structures may introduce additional partners and can make coordination easier, but this is only if there are shared values between participants and all participants are committed to collaborating. In organizational analysis, these concepts are described as the homophily principle and heterophily principle and are described in more detail in the Interorganizational Networks section of this chapter.

## Factors for Successful Interorganizational Collaboration

Several factors for successful collaboration have been identified in the literature. The most commonly noted factors include (Booher, 2004; Castillo, 2019; Imperial, 2005; Markiewicz et al., 2016; Vaz Lopes & Silva Farias, 2022):

- Ease of integration into the decision-making institutions of participants,
- Well-defined agreements between participants, management tools and capabilities for the collaborative activities, common values between participants,
- Mutual sharing of responsibilities, strong relationships between agency staff and leadership, a culture of collaboration, a champion for collaborative efforts,
- Equal commitment,
- Diversity of interests, and
- The ability for all participants to engage in collaborative activities.

Trust, commitment, and acknowledgment of interdependence between participants are also frequently identified as key factors for successful collaboration, although they are more difficult to measure (Booher, 2004; Feiock, 2013; Moretti, 2017; Vaz Lopes & Silva Farias, 2022). Specifically relating to MPOs, state and federal involvement in MPO collaboration can support collaborative efforts, reduce potential risks associated with collaboration, and overall, result in positive outcomes for the agencies involved (Lubin, 2020; Markiewicz et al., 2016).

Authentic and effective collaboration is built on the premise of risk reduction for collaborators - the severity of the risks depends on the collaboration mechanisms used (Terman et al., 2020). The exact mechanism for collaboration depends on the reason for collaborating and the costs/benefits of collaboration (Markiewicz et al., 2016). For example, Oden & Sciara (2020) frame this dilemma for MPOs as follows:

Where MPO collaborations exist, they involve less intensive collaborative activities such as joint meetings, information exchange, data sharing, and identifying joint challenges and potential strategies... This suggests that the costs of more serious megaregional planning and project work currently exceed prospective benefits (p. 9).

Defection risks can be mitigated when all parties have the capacity and political will to collaborate, and when collaboration includes mechanisms with formal elements such as contracts and agreements that clearly state the roles and responsibilities of participants (Lubin, 2020; Terman et al., 2020). For example, the Indiana DOT has a manual on planning roles and responsibilities that serves as a cooperative agreement outlining how the DOT will implement the 3C planning process with the MPOs and regional planning organizations (RPOs) in the state (INDOT, 2020). Informal mechanisms are better suited for collaborative partnerships where the potential risks are smaller or less likely to occur (Terman et al., 2020).

## Interorganizational Networks

As mentioned earlier in the literature review, Feiock et al. (2012) describe coordination and cooperation as forms of collaboration with different types of values, risks, approaches, network structures, and functions. In that section, current literature on values, risks, and approaches was synthesized. To build on that synthesis, this section will briefly summarize the literature on collaborative network structures and network organizations.

Interorganizational networks are multiple organizations connected through a single organization for a common purpose (Imperial, 2005). The elements of the collaborative network structure include “a common mission, interdependent participants, and a unique structural arrangement outside the limits of traditional

hierarchical command-and-control” (Booher, 2004, p. 39). The required elements of the structure may be included in a contract, memorandum of understanding (MOU), or other formal agreement with the goal of ongoing collaboration on activities. A similar term, “networked government,” is discussed by Vaz Lopes & Silva Farias (2022). Networked government occurs when public services can be improved through collaborative relationships where elected officials and agency staff mediate and manage the collaborative efforts together. Collaborative network design principles, as described by Shuman & Twombly (2010), include the following:

- Organizations and people only actively engage in collaboration when the benefit they derive is greater than the time and effort it takes to collaborate.
- Collaborative networks are fit for purpose. The purpose determines how the network is structured.
- Every network has a choreographer, the individual or entity that organizes the network and is responsible for achieving the purpose of the network.
- Governance is the system for managing the joint and individual work of the collaboration. Governance principles have both structural and [behavioral] components.
- Innovation in organization design requires innovation in management.

Collaborative organizations typically provide opportunities for both formal and informal collaboration (Terman et al., 2020). More specifically, Imperial (2005) describes collaborative organizations as “conveners, catalysts for action, conduits for information and advocacy, organizers, funders, technical assistance providers, capacity builders, partners, dispute resolvers, or facilitators” (p. 301). These organizations are formed through collaborative processes and decision-making, and function as a single, unified organization (Imperial, 2005).

Similarly, network organizations are between two or more “autonomous and independent” participants connected through recurring and continuing interactions within the organization (Moretti, 2017). The relationships between the participants and the resulting networks are evaluated based on the coordination mechanisms, processes, and practices put in place by the participants. According to Moretti, network organizations are defined in a variety of ways, but the consistent components in each definition are social interactions, relationships, connectedness, collaboration, collective action, trust, and cooperation.

Interorganizational networks may be either formal or informal (Moretti, 2017). These network structures are informed by the relationship structures established between partners and the mechanisms used to establish and sustain the relationship. Formal networks are established through formal agreements that define the goals of the organization and the roles and responsibilities of its

members. Informal networks are established through social relationships and coordination efforts that are solely dependent on the willingness of participants to engage in the network relationship.

The literature identifies two explanations for the selection of partners in interorganizational networks (Moretti, 2017). The first explanation relates to external factors, often propelled by the ability of participants to exchange resources. The second explanation is related to the participating organizations' traits, characterized as either homophily or heterophily. Generally, the homophily principle states that similarly structured and/or resourced organizations will build relationships. Alternatively, the heterophily principle states that participants may build relationships with partners that have dissimilar, but complementary structures and/or resources.

At the regional level, Markiewicz et al. (2016) identified forums for communicating and idea sharing as a category for successful regional cooperation practices. These forums involve agencies communicating about goals, challenges, and opportunities. The implementation of these forums includes regular communication, such as monthly or quarterly meetings, as well as the following activities (p. 20):

- Clearly identifying topics, issues, and projects that could benefit from collaborative planning.
- Establishing a regular meeting time and location.
- Understanding partners' and stakeholders' needs.
- Establishing a clear organizational structure.
- Establishing subgroups or subcommittees to tackle specific issues outside of regular meetings.
- Opening both formal and informal lines of communication.

However, Markiewicz et al. (2016) also describe the challenges to regional forums as follows (p. 27):

- Difficulty reconciling differing missions and goals.
- Lack of staff and administrative support.
- Lack of time, resources, and motivation to keep an effort moving forward.

## Statewide Associations

As discussed earlier in this chapter, MPOs are required to work with a variety of partners at both horizontal and vertical levels (Lubin, 2020). As a result, statewide associations of MPOs facilitate collaboration and fall within the frame of a collaborative organization. Unfortunately, the existing literature is limited in its discussion of statewide associations of MPOs.

23 U.S.C. § 134 and 49 U.S.C. § 5304, Metropolitan Transportation Planning, requires consultation and/or coordination where more than one MPO is designated within an urbanized area, where multistate MPOs exist, and where transportation facilities are located within the boundary of more than one MPO. The code does not require coordination between MPOs at a statewide level, making statewide associations of MPOs a voluntary endeavor, unless required by the state. Some of the literature on collaborative networks addresses statewide associations as a mechanism for collaboration between regional entities. According to Markiewicz et al. (2016), regional and statewide forums are forms of regional cooperation that bring planning agencies together for a variety of purposes. Specifically related to statewide associations of MPOs, Kramer et al. (2017) state, “Associations serve as a forum for MPOs to share information, jointly purchase goods and services, or advocate for state and federal policy” (p. 2-13). While not required by Federal law, these associations are described as effective mechanisms for supporting MPOs in the 3C transportation planning process.

In a 2016 survey of 279 MPOs, Kramer et al. (2017) found that 72% of respondents joined together to form statewide associations. At that time, it was identified that there were thirty-seven states with statewide associations of MPOs or similar membership compositions. As statewide associations were not the primary focus of that study, the survey did not further inquire on the details of the statewide associations in each state. As a result, the criteria for defining statewide associations of MPOs may vary between agencies. It is important to keep in mind that in the survey responses collected by Kramer et al., respondents may have identified statewide associations of MPOs as both formal and informal gatherings of MPOs across the state that may also include councils of governments (COGs), regional planning commissions (RPCs), rural planning organizations (RPOs), other regional agencies, or agencies that host MPOs. More specifically, these selections may have included informal, regularly occurring communication (i.e., meetings) between MPOs and the DOT that did not include the formation of a separate entity for this purpose. To further distinguish between statewide associations of MPOs and other statewide associations or gatherings that may also include MPOs, this section of the report will identify criteria for developing a concise definition of statewide associations of MPOs that will be applied in this study.

Depending on the format, statewide associations can cover the full continuum of integration described in *Multi-MPO Planning: A Transportation Practitioner’s Guide* (U.S. DOT, n.d.). Member organizations may have the opportunity to notify their peers of what they are doing; get feedback and advice on a particular project; share ideas, best practices, and lessons learned; exchange resources such as data and tools; and create products as a joint effort. Future research can explore the continuum of networked relationships between MPOs for specific activities not described in the existing literature.

In 2018, Oden & Sciara (2020) surveyed 382 MPOs across the U.S. Among several other notable findings, this survey identified six key collaborative activities between MPOs and their partners at the mega-regional scale and assigned levels of collaborative intensity for each activity. From the highest to lowest intensity of collaboration needed, these activities included (1) adding projects identified through collaboration into the TIP, (2) working with partners to propose joint investments in the LRTP, (3) adopting MOUs with partners, (4) collaborating on studies about common issues or projects, (5) jointly identifying challenges, strategies, and problems, and (6) meeting with staff and leadership to exchange information and discuss issues. MPOs in this study reported that all of these collaborative activities occurred most frequently between MPOs within the state (42% or more). Less frequently, these collaborations occurred between other MPOs in adjacent states, other MPOs in non-adjacent states, other partners, and planning organizations in other countries. Oden & Sciara queried the survey respondents on topical areas for collaboration between MPOs and their partners. The following is the list presented in that paper from most to least frequently selected (p. 7):

- Multi-modal freight and services
- Major transportation corridors
- Economic development
- Intercity passenger rail service
- Intercity high speed rail service
- Air quality
- Coordination of transportation and land use planning
- Congestion management
- Intelligent transportation systems/operations
- Intercity passenger bus service
- Planning for potential future growth in driverless vehicles
- Other environmental issues
- International border transit and crossing issues

As mentioned earlier in this section, statewide associations may look different from state to state. For example, the Florida Metropolitan Advisory Council's (MPOAC) membership only includes the 27 MPOs in Florida (Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council, n.d.). On the other hand, the Ohio Association of Regional Councils' (OARCs) membership is comprised of 24 regional agencies including MPOs and other organizations such as regional planning commissions, councils of government, and rural transportation planning organizations (Ohio Association of Regional Councils, n.d.). Therefore, to develop a uniform definition of statewide associations of MPOs for this project, we use the multi-dimensional approach for network organization



analysis described by Moretti (2017). The dimensions for this analysis include the level of analysis, network relationship type (formal or informal), the direction of the relationship (vertical or horizontal), members' selection criteria, and network function. Table 1 describes the criteria as applied for this project when developing a definition of statewide associations of MPOs.

The next chapter of this report will describe the statewide associations of MPOs identified through a website review using these criteria. This research serves as a comprehensive documentation of statewide associations in existence at the time of its completion. Future research would evaluate the strength and effectiveness of the networks established through statewide associations of MPOs.

TABLE 1. *Criteria for Defining a Statewide Association of MPOs.*

Criteria	Selected measure	Description
Level of analysis	Macro or organizational	The project will consider the associations without evaluating the individual systems within the network. The analysis of the MPOs' systems and internal networks would be beyond the scope of this project.
Network relationship	Formalized associations	The project will only consider groupings of MPOs across a state that have a formal agreement or formal documents of creation.
Direction of the relationship	Horizontal	The project will evaluate associations with horizontal relationships between MPOs and other similar agencies within its membership. To distinguish between the different compositions of memberships throughout the U.S., a membership continuum was developed ranging from associations that only include MPOs as members to associations with MPOs and one or more other types of organization. This continuum is further complicated by the administrative structures of MPOs which fall on a spectrum of independent and hosted (see Chapter 3 of Kramer et al., 2017).
Member selection	Homophily	This project focuses on statewide associations that include MPOs as members and may also include other similar transportation planning organizations, such as RPOs.
Network function	The primary areas of focus for the association	For this criterion, the associations' websites were evaluated to identify the extent to which the association focuses on MPOs and MPO-related topics. Association focus areas were sorted into two categories (1) MPO-related topics, and (2) other topics.



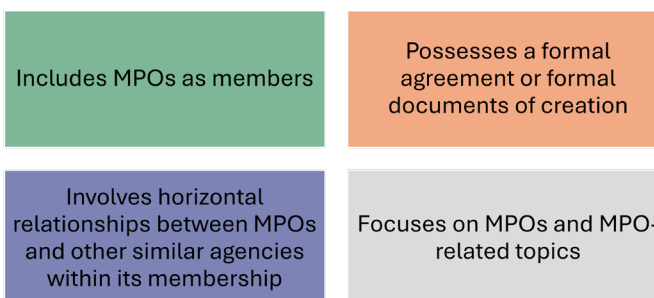
## Overview of Statewide MPO Associations

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of all existing statewide metropolitan planning organization (MPO) associations that have an online presence. Information present in this chapter was gathered through a systematic manual web search of statewide MPO associations' websites and direct communication with key representatives and members of statewide MPO associations.

The creation of a definition for statewide associations of MPOs was necessary to provide clarity and consistency in understanding these entities across different states. As mentioned in Chapter 2 of this report, statewide associations may vary significantly in their composition and structure from state to state. To ensure uniformity in defining statewide associations of MPOs for this project, we adopted a multi-dimensional approach for network organization analysis proposed by Moretti (2017). This approach considers several defining factors, including network relationship type, direction of the relationship, member selection criteria, and network function. Table 1 outlines the criteria used in developing the definition of statewide associations of MPOs for this project.

The exclusion of certain organizations from the list of statewide associations of MPOs was a deliberate decision based on the established criteria to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the research findings. These criteria were designed to capture the distinctive characteristics of statewide associations of MPOs and differentiate them from other associations with similar organizations, such as Councils of Governments (COGs), Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs), and other entities within the transportation planning field. However, it's important to note that associations that included COGs, RPOs, and other entities were included in the list if they adequately met the established criteria, particularly in terms of formal agreements or creation documents, the inclusion of MPOs as members, horizontal relationships between MPOs and other similar agencies within its membership, and a clear focus on MPO-related topics like transportation planning (Figure 2).

■ **FIGURE 2.**  
*Criteria for  
associations  
of MPOs*



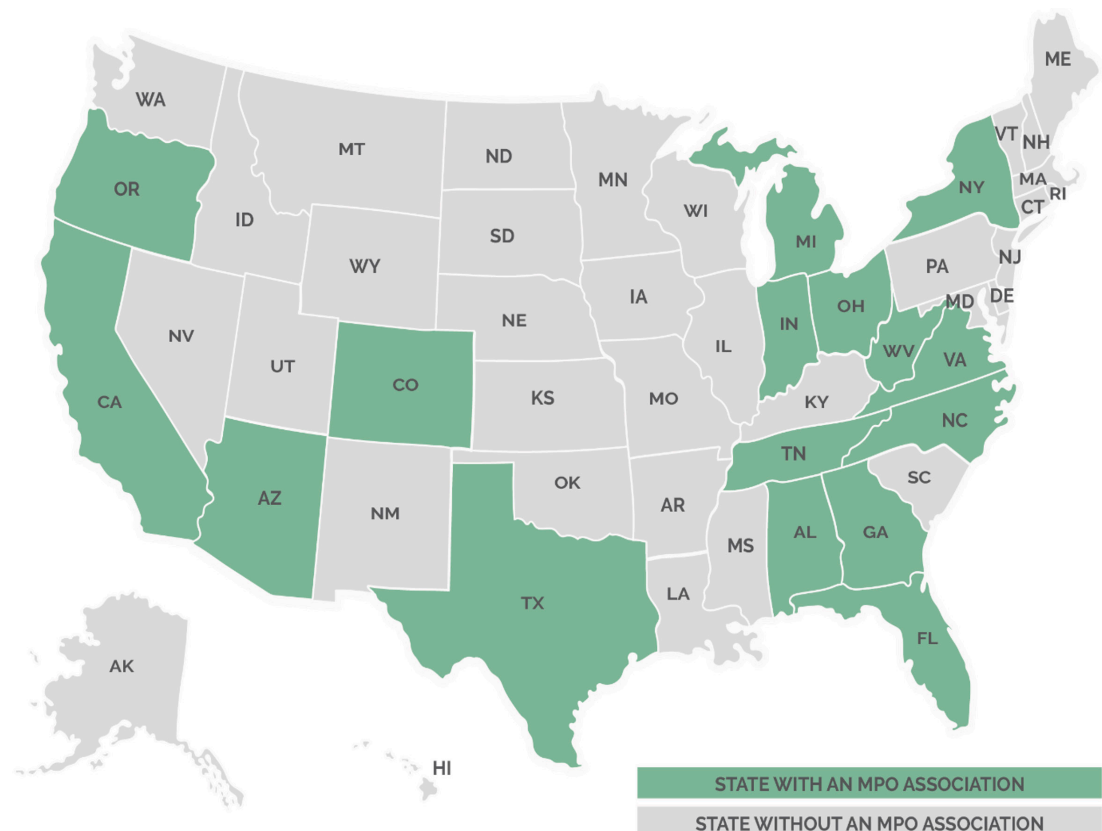
## Which States Have a Statewide MPO Association?

After applying these defining criteria, 16 statewide associations of MPOs were identified. These associations span various regions in the U.S. and exhibit diverse organizational structures and membership compositions (Figure 3):

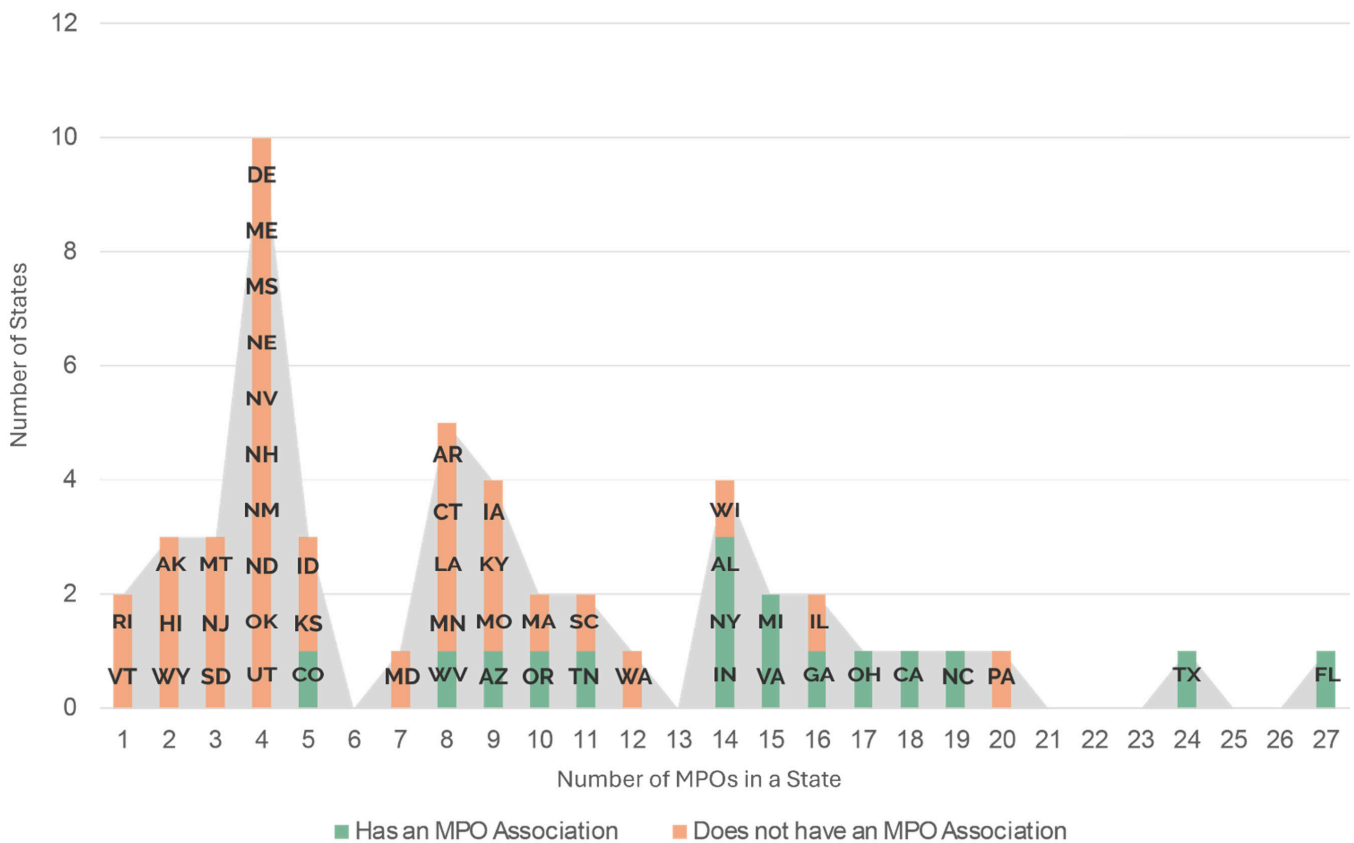
- Alabama Transportation Planners Association (ATPA)
- Arizona COG/MPO Directors Association
- California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG)
- Colorado Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC)
- Florida MPO Advisory Council (MPOAC)
- Georgia Association of MPOs (GAMPO)
- Indiana MPO Council
- Michigan Transportation Planning Association (MTPA)
- New York State Association of MPOs (NYSAMPO)
- North Carolina Association of MPOs (NCAMPO)
- Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) Transportation Committee
- Oregon Metropolitan Planning Organization Consortium (OMPOC)
- Tennessee MPO Association
- Texas Association of MPOs (TEMPO)
- Virginia Association of MPOs (VAMPO)
- West Virginia Association of MPOs (WVAMPO)

**FIGURE 3.**  
Geographical  
distribution of  
existing MPO  
Associations

*Note: The data shown in this figure reflects the information that is available online and does not account for information available through other sources.*



The likelihood of forming a statewide association of MPOs increases as the number of MPOs within a state grows beyond a certain threshold, around five MPOs. States such as Vermont, Hawaii, South Dakota, and Maine, each with fewer than five MPOs, do not have established associations representing MPO interests at the state level. This could be attributed to the fact that in states with fewer than five MPOs, establishing an association may pose greater challenges due to resource constraints, limitations in organizational capacity, and a perception that state-level coordination may not be necessary. States with a larger number of MPOs—such as Florida, Texas, North Carolina, and California—tend to have established statewide associations to facilitate coordination, collaboration, and advocacy efforts among MPOs and other transportation stakeholders at the regional and state level (Figure 4).



**FIGURE 4.** MPO association existence based on number of MPOs per state

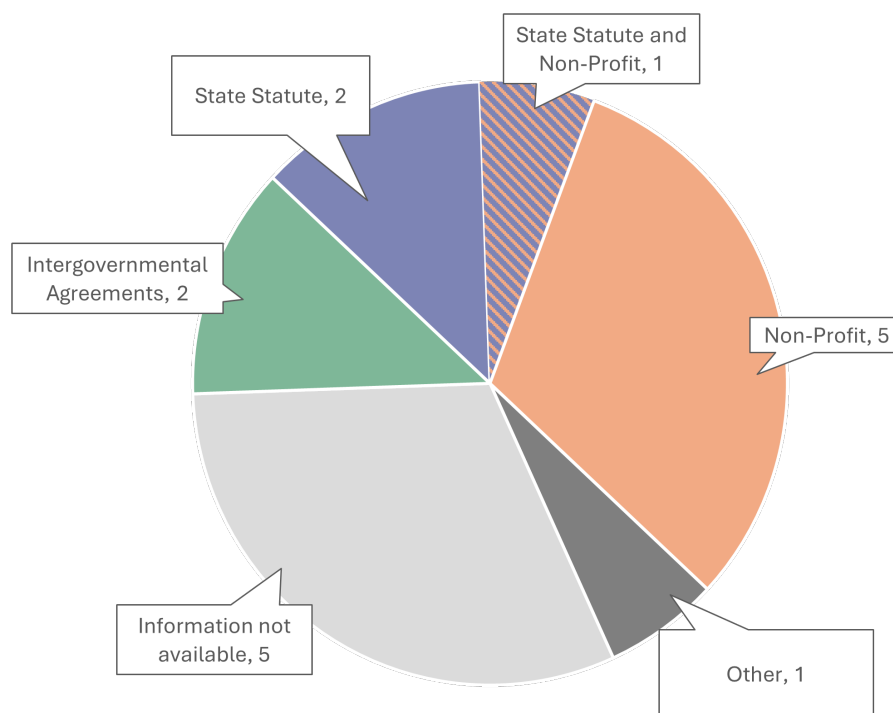
Note: The data shown in this figure reflects the information that is available online and does not account for information available through other sources.

## Organizational Structures of Statewide Association of MPOs

The formation methods of statewide associations of MPOs vary, reflecting diverse approaches to fostering collaboration and advocacy among MPOs at the state level (Figure 5). Some associations are established through state statute, providing a formal legal framework for their operation and governance. Other associations form through the establishment of a nonprofit entity under IRS tax codes. Still, others use some form of intergovernmental agreements to formalize collaboration among participating entities. One association functions under an informal arrangement discussed later in this section. The information about five of these associations could not be ascertained. Understanding the implications of different formation methods is helpful when considering the specific needs, opportunities, and challenges of their member organizations.

**FIGURE 5.**  
*Formation methods  
of statewide  
associations  
of MPOs*

Note: The data shown in this figure reflects the information that is available online and does not account for information available through other sources.



### Intergovernmental Agreements

- *Arizona COG/MPO Directors Association*
- *Indiana MPO Council*

Two of the associations of MPOs use intergovernmental agreements to establish their organization: the Arizona COG/MPO Directors Association and the Indiana MPO Council. Intergovernmental agreements serve as foundational documents that formalize collaboration and cooperation among multiple governmental entities, including MPOs. These agreements outline the roles, responsibilities,

and mutual commitments of the participating organizations, providing a framework for joint decision-making and resource sharing. The Indiana MPO Council's "Letter of Adoption" establishes a set of planning procedures and operational guidelines endorsed by the involved parties. Similarly, the Arizona COG/MPO Directors Association's "Partnering Charter" communicates shared objectives, principles, and performance expectations for transportation planning and project implementation efforts. These documents can help clarify jurisdictional boundaries, streamline coordination processes, and enhance communication channels, thereby facilitating effective intergovernmental cooperation. However, intergovernmental agreements also present challenges, such as the need for extensive negotiation and consensus-building among diverse stakeholders. Ensuring compliance with legal requirements, accommodating varying organizational cultures and priorities, and addressing potential conflicts of interest are additional considerations. Despite these complexities, leveraging intergovernmental agreements can empower statewide associations of MPOs to overcome jurisdictional barriers, leverage collective resources, and pursue shared objectives in advancing transportation planning initiatives.

### **State Statute**

- Colorado's Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC)
- Florida MPO Advisory Council (MPOAC)
- Virginia Association of MPOs (VAMPO) \*also a non-profit organization

Three associations of MPOs are established through legislative action: Colorado's Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC), Florida MPO Advisory Council (MPOAC), and the Virginia Association of MPOs (VAMPO). Some of the benefits of forming an MPO association through state statute include the legal recognition and authority conferred by legislative action, which can lend credibility and legitimacy to the association's activities. Also, statutory provisions may provide a clear framework for governance, decision-making processes, and resource allocation, thereby promoting consistency and stability in association operations and funding. For example, the MPOAC receives federal planning funds as part of the statewide distribution formula. However, as a result of the funds passing through the state transportation trust fund, state rules for how to spend those funds are attached, constraining how the MPOAC can manage their budget.

There are other potential drawbacks to this approach. Legislative processes can be time-consuming and subject to political considerations, which may delay the establishment or amendment of statutory provisions governing MPO associations. Additionally, the inflexibility of statutory frameworks may hinder the ability of associations to adapt to evolving transportation planning challenges

and priorities. There is also a potential for politics to disrupt the activities of the association.

### **Non-Profit Designation**

- *Tennessee MPO Association (TN MPOs) – 501(c)(3)*
- *Alabama Transportation Planners Association (ATPA) – 501(c)(3)*
- *California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG) – 501(c)(4)*
- *Georgia Association of MPOs (GAMPO) – 501(c)(6)*
- *North Carolina Association of MPOs (NCAMPO) – 501(c)(6)*
- *Virginia Association of MPOs (VAMPO) – 501(c)(6) \*also formed through state statute*

Forming non-profit organizations offers several benefits compared to other methods of organization, such as consolidating under intergovernmental agreements or associations formed through state statute. First, non-profit organizations provide a formal legal structure that enhances credibility, accountability, and transparency in their operation. This is advantageous compared to associations formed through MOUs or intergovernmental agreements, which may lack the legal recognition and clear governance structures provided by non-profit status. Second, some non-profit organizations can solicit tax-deductible donations and apply for grants, which can provide additional financial resources for their activities. This financial flexibility is particularly beneficial when compared to associations formed through state statute, which may rely on funding sources that carry constraints or rely heavily on government appropriations.

Non-profit organizations may also have greater autonomy and flexibility in governance and decision-making compared to associations formed through state statute, which may be subject to more stringent regulatory requirements and government oversight. This autonomy allows non-profit associations to establish their own bylaws, organizational structures, and operating procedures tailored to their specific needs and objectives.

The six associations of MPOs which formed as non-profits chose three different designations which support different activities, goals, and legal obligations: 501(c)3, 501(c)(4), and 501(c)(6). The 501(c)(3) designation, chosen by TN MPO and ATPA, is reserved for organizations exclusively dedicated to charitable, educational, or scientific purposes. This designation allows associations to receive tax-deductible donations and grants, particularly beneficial for initiatives focused on public education and community outreach. However, this designation carries lobbying restrictions and prohibits the organization from engaging in partisan political activities or endorsing candidates.



The 501(c)(4) designation, chosen by CALCOG, is reserved for social welfare organizations whose purpose is to promote social welfare and community well-being through advocacy, lobbying, and civic engagement. Unlike 501(c)(3)s, donations are not tax-deductible for donors, but the organization may engage in lobbying activities and some political activities.

The 501(c)(6) designation, chosen by GAMPO, NCAMPO, and VAMPO, establishes those organizations as business leagues whose purpose is to promote the common business interests of its members, such as industry promotion, education, and networking. Similar to 501(c)(4)s, dues and contributions are generally not tax-deductible for members, but this designation offers flexibility in engaging in lobbying, advocacy, and industry promotion efforts.

### Other

- *New York State Association of MPOs (NYSAMPO)*

NYSAMPO does not have bylaws, an enabling statute, or any formal legal structure. Historically, the association functioned as an informal gathering of MPO directors who met periodically without any dedicated staff or consultants. Over time, this evolved into a more organized structure with working groups and the involvement of a consultant—driven primarily by the need to address air quality conformity issues. Currently, the Albany MPO (the Capital Region Transportation Council) administers contracts and handles procurement processes on behalf of NYSAMPO. Although they do not have a formal creation document, MPOs in New York and the New York State DOT have agreed to fund and support the statewide MPO association through the formal Federal Transportation Planning (PL) distribution formula and the allocation of Federal State Planning and Research (SP&R) funds. This approach establishes a financial commitment from the MPOs in New York for the continuing existence of NYSAMPO.

### Bylaws

Ten of the 16 statewide associations have bylaws that were available online or sent to the project team by association personnel. Two of the associations do not have bylaws as confirmed by association personnel. The remaining bylaws could not be located by the project team.

The most common elements or sections within the bylaw documents include (1) definitions of key terms or concepts relevant to the association, (2) the name and purpose of the association, (3) membership, officers, and governance, (4) meeting rules and guidelines, (5) committee rules and guidelines, (6) information about dues and other financial considerations, (7) guidelines for record keeping, (8) general rules and procedures for the association, and (9) procedures for amending the bylaws. Some bylaws also include a list of members, provisions for regular review or audit of the association, or a statement regarding the authority to form an association.

### **Hosted vs. Independent Associations**

An additional component of the organizational structure of statewide associations of MPOs is their hosting arrangement. Four of the associations are hosted by another organization: CALCOG, STAC, MPOAC, and the Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) Transportation Committee. These associations benefit from the administrative support and fiscal management provided by their host organizations. A hosting arrangement may mean that another organization acts as the fiscal agent, often holding the power to hire and fire employees, and providing a variety of necessary goods and services, such as office space, shared administrative staff, and benefits. Hosted arrangements can offer significant advantages, including lower operational costs, fiscal stability, and opportunities for cross-disciplinary cooperation.

Seven of the 16 associations are independent, meaning they operate without a hosting arrangement: the Indiana MPO Council, NYSAMPO (administered by the Albany MPO), NCAMPO, TN MPOs, TEMPO, VAMPO, and WVAMPO. Independent associations manage their own administrative and fiscal responsibilities, providing greater autonomy and flexibility. This independence allows them to tailor their operations and policies to better fit their specific needs and objectives, but it also requires them to secure their own funding and resources, which can be challenging.

The hosting status of some associations, such as the Arizona COG/MPO Directors Association, MTPA, ATPA, and GAMPO, is not available online and could not be otherwise ascertained for use in this report.

### **Purpose of the Association**

The stated purpose within each associations' bylaws or on their websites generally revolves around enhancing transportation planning, facilitating information exchange, providing forums for discussion, and advocating for policy and funding improvements.

### **Platform for Information Sharing**

Many of these organizations aim to provide a platform or point of exchange for sharing information and experiences related to transportation planning (WVAMPO, ATPA, GAMPO, TEMPO, VAMPO, MPOAC). This often includes discussing technical methods, procedures, and standards (WVAMPO, TN MPOs), emerging trends (OMPOC), as well as addressing air quality and environmental issues related to transportation projects (WVAMPO, TN MPOs).

### **Advocacy and Capacity Building**

Some associations frequently serve as advocacy groups to influence state and federal policies and funding allocations for transportation initiatives (OARC, OMPOC). They engage in activities that aim to shape legislation and secure resources for regional transportation projects.



Some associations focus on capacity building by strengthening the capabilities of local officials and ensuring their central role as advocates for regional development (OARC, MPOAC, TN MPOs). This involves providing training, resources, and support to enhance the effectiveness of MPOs without necessarily engaging in lobbying activities.

### **Support and Assistance**

Providing support and assistance to state departments of transportation on transportation-related activities is also a common goal, with several associations providing recommendations to state and federal agencies to enhance transportation planning and policy implementation (WVAMPO, TN MPOs, OMPOC, VAMPO, STAC).

### **Education and Professional Development**

Many of these associations focus on enhancing the practice of metropolitan and rural planning through various educational opportunities. These efforts include promoting professional development and continuing education for transportation planning professionals (ATPA, GAMPO, TEMPO, OARC, VAMPO, MPOAC). Some primarily focus on educating MPO staff, while others, like the MPOAC, provide specialized training for MPO Board members.

### **Innovative Approaches and Efficient Use of Resources**

Two associations include developing innovative transportation approaches to utilize financial resources more effectively as part of their purpose or overall objectives (WVAMPO, TN MPOs).

### **Consensus Building and Common Voice**

While many of these associations serve as consensus-building organizations, aiming to present a unified voice on transportation issues and foster collaboration among different stakeholders, two specifically express this within their purpose statements (WVAMPO, TN MPOs).

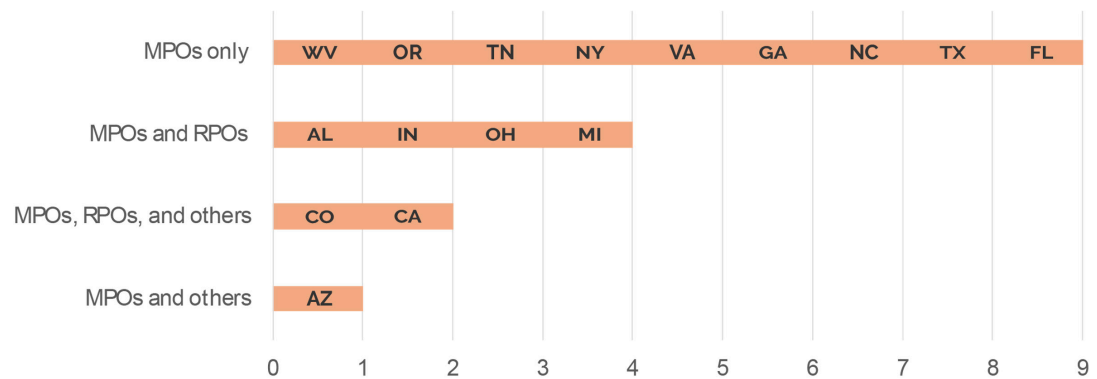
### **Membership of Statewide Associations of MPOs**

Some statewide associations of MPOs are comprised solely of MPOs, while others include Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs) and various other agencies. The composition of these associations often depends on the state's unique transportation planning needs and the way in which states have formed MPOs, RPOs, and other similar agencies. Additionally, some statewide associations are created and led by MPOs as primary members, whereas others are established by broader regional or state agencies that include MPOs as members. In some instances, MPOs operate within or are hosted by larger planning entities such as Councils of Governments (COGs) or RPOs, which

can also play a role in determining which entities are included in a statewide association of MPOs.

Of the 16 statewide associations of MPOs, nine consist solely of MPOs as members, four associations include both MPOs and RPOs, two associations incorporate MPOs, RPOs, and other agencies, and one association includes MPOs and other agencies but does not have an RPO among their membership (Figure 6).

**FIGURE 6.**  
*Membership composition of statewide associations of MPOs*



*Note: The data shown in this figure reflects the information that is available online and does not account for information available through other sources.*

Associations with membership including organizations other than MPOs and RPOs include:

- The Arizona COG/MPO Directors Association—comprised of eight MPOs, six Councils of Governments (COGs), and the Arizona Department of Transportation.
- The Colorado Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC)—membership includes Colorado's MPOs, 10 rural Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) plus the Southern Ute and the Ute Mountain Indian Tribes in southwest Colorado.
- The California Association of Councils of Governments (CALCOG)—consists of 49 members, many with overlapping functions. All 18 of the state's MPOs are members, 12 of which are COGs. 12 additional non-MPO COGs are members along with nine County Transportation Committees (one of which is also an MPO and one which is also a COG), 27 Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (14 of which are also MPOs and three of which are also COGs), and 21 Congestion Management Agencies (seven of which are also MPOs, two which are also COGs, one of which is also a County transportation Commission, and three which are also Regional Transportation Planning Agencies).

## Leadership and Staffing of Statewide Association of MPOs

### Leadership

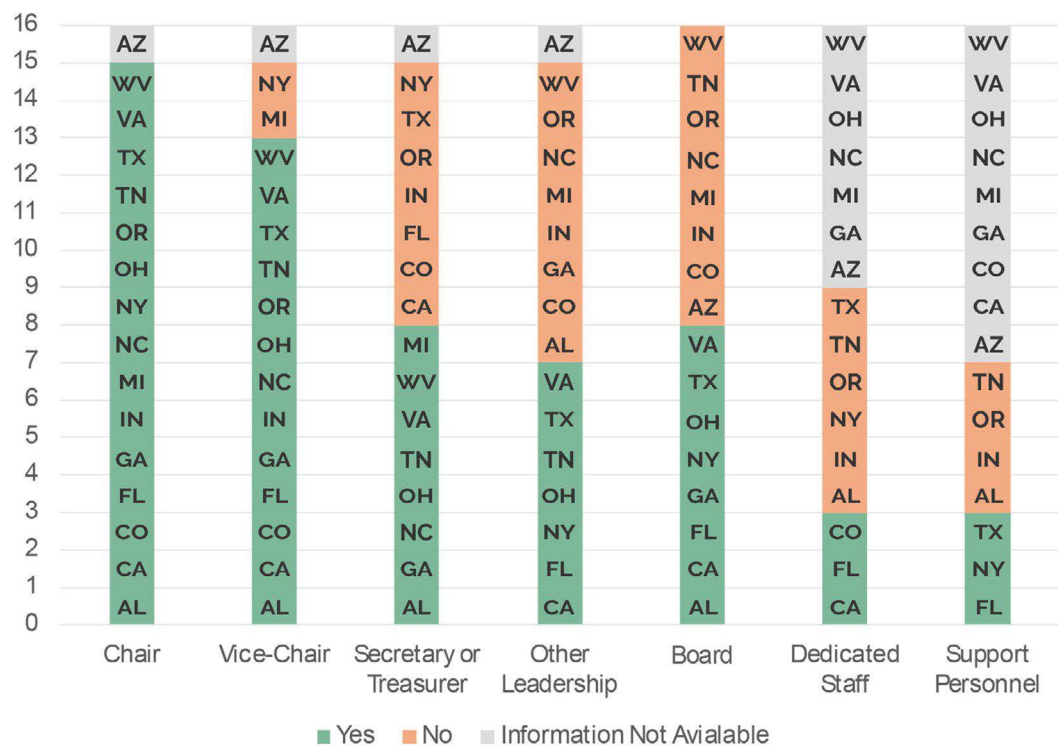
Leadership within the 16 statewide associations of MPOs typically includes a Chair (also referred to as “President”) who oversees day-to-day operations, strategic planning, and/or overall management of the association. Most (75%) also have a Vice Chair. Half of the organizations reviewed have an officer that fills the role of Treasurer and/or Secretary, and half have formed a Governing Board and/or Executive Committee (Figure 7). This board provides governance, sets policy directions, and ensures that the association’s activities align with the collective goals of the member organizations. Seven of the 16 associations have some additional leadership position. This “other” position is often a second Vice-Chair—although VAMPO’s leadership includes a Program Chair and CALCOG includes a Director of Education and Director of Government Affairs.

### Staffing

Staffing within a statewide association of MPOs may include dedicated staff (direct hires of the association or host agency) and/or support staff (procured through contractual agreement with a third party). Staff supports the association in a variety of ways, they may provide technical assistance, conduct research, facilitate inter-agency coordination, plan events, provide legal advice, and serve many other roles. Either of these staffing categories may be filled either in house, through a hosting agency, or through external consultants or contractors. Staffing for the statewide associations of MPOs was more difficult to glean from website scans, however the following information was obtained: only three of the statewide associations of MPOs appeared to have dedicated staff and only three appeared to have support staff (Figure 7).

**FIGURE 7.**  
Leadership and  
staff of statewide  
associations  
of MPOs

Note: The data shown  
in this figure reflects  
the information that  
is available online and  
does not account for  
information available  
through other sources.



## Activities of Statewide Association of MPOs

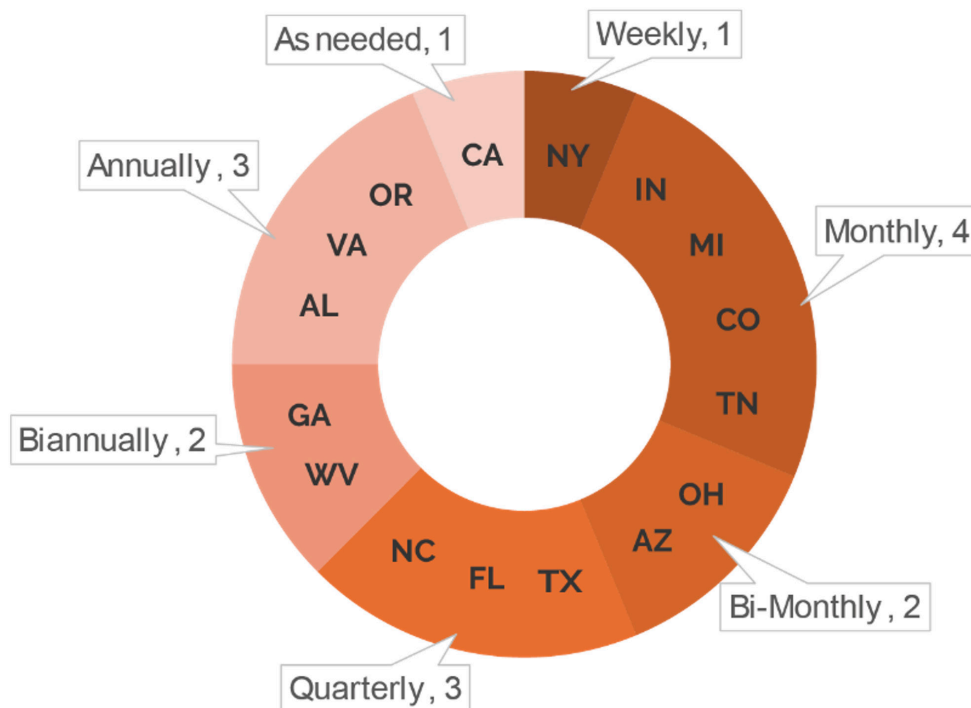
The activities of the 16 statewide associations of MPOs share several similarities, as they all focus on enhancing transportation planning through collaboration, training, and advocacy. Common activities include hosting annual conferences, providing professional development workshops, and facilitating the exchange of best practices and information among member organizations. For instance, ATPA and MPOAC both host regular meetings and training sessions. However, there are also differences in their specific focuses and methods. CALCOG in California emphasizes policy advocacy and legislative efforts, while the Colorado STAC prioritizes statewide transportation advisory functions. The New York State Association of MPOs (NYSAMPO) and the Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) Transportation Committee often engage in more extensive data sharing and technical assistance programs.

### Meetings

The meeting frequency among the 16 statewide associations of MPOs varies significantly, reflecting diverse organizational needs and regional priorities. Some associations, such as the Indiana MPO Council and MTPA, meet monthly to address ongoing issues and coordinate regional planning efforts. Others convene bi-monthly or quarterly, emphasizing more frequent updates and collaboration among members providing regular opportunities for strategic planning and policy discussions. Some associations opt for less frequent gatherings, such as annual or biannual meetings (Figure 8).

■ FIGURE 8.  
Meeting Frequency

Note: The data shown in this figure reflects the information that is available online and does not account for information available through other sources.



Several of the statewide associations of MPOs hold conference-like annual meetings where members gather to discuss important issues, share knowledge, and collaborate on strategic initiatives. Specifically, the Alabama Transportation Planners Association (ATPA), Georgia Association of MPOs (GAMPO), OARC Transportation Committee, Virginia Association of MPOs (VAMPO), Indiana MPO Council, North Carolina Association of MPOs (NCAMPO), Michigan Transportation Planning Association (MTPA), West Virginia Association of MPOs (WVAMPO), Tennessee MPO Association (TN MPOs), and Texas Association of MPOs (TEMPO) host these annual events (Figure 9). These meetings may feature keynote speakers, workshops, and panel discussions on topics such as transportation policy, funding opportunities, innovative planning practices, and emerging technologies. They also provide a platform for networking, enabling members to exchange ideas and best practices, and to form partnerships that enhance regional and statewide transportation planning efforts. Additionally, these conference-like meetings may include presentations on current projects, updates on federal and state transportation initiatives, and opportunities for professional development through training sessions and educational seminars.

**FIGURE 9.**  
*Number of  
 Associations  
 that host  
 Annual Meetings*



*Note: The data shown in this figure reflects the information that is available online and does not account for information available through other sources.*

In Florida, the Florida Metropolitan Planning Partnership (FMPP) facilitates collaboration among the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and Florida's 27 MPOs. Although not hosted by individual MPOs, FMPP meetings serve a similar function as the annual meetings hosted by other statewide associations.

### Committees

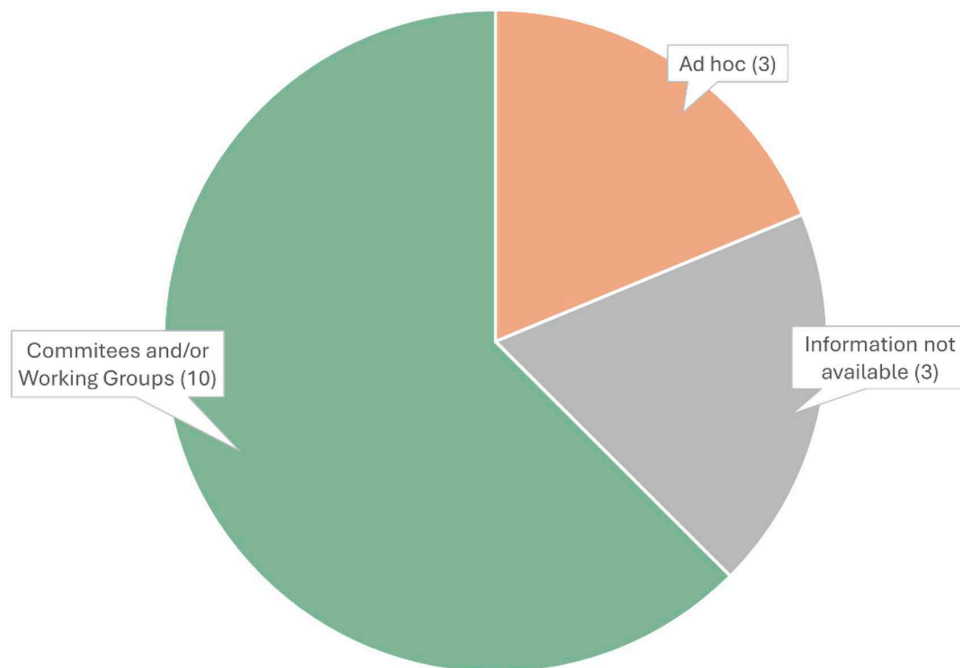
Most (62%) statewide associations of MPOs have established committees or working groups with a provision to create ad hoc or special committees as needed. Three additional associations had provisions to create ad hoc or special committees, but do not have standing committees (Figure 10). Specific committee/working group types vary widely among associations and include:

- Executive
- Policy
- Bylaw update and review
- Legislative
- Public engagement or public participation
- Education
- Finance (UPWP, PL fund, TIP, & STIP)
- Technical
- Freight and Rail
- Transit
- Safety
- Bicycle / Pedestrian
- Travel Demand Modeling
- Climate Change
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Management and Operation
- Strategic Plan
- Noteworthy Practices

- Annual meeting planning
- Audit
- Livability & sustainability

**FIGURE 10.**  
*Committees and Working Groups*

*Note: The data shown in this figure reflects the information that is available online and does not account for information available through other sources.*



### Research

Statewide associations of MPOs may also engage in research to advance transportation planning and policy. The Florida MPO Advisory Council (MPOAC), for instance, undertakes extensive research to support Florida's 27 MPOs, focusing on transportation policy and best practices. This research is facilitated through contracts with consultants and support agreements with entities such as the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR). The Virginia Association of MPOs (VAMPO), New York State Association of MPOs (NYSAMPO), and the North Carolina Association of MPOs (NCAMPO) also conduct research aimed at supporting transportation planning efforts, including legislative analysis and policy development.



## Conclusion

This report provides a comprehensive overview of statewide associations of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and their significance in promoting collaboration, coordination, and advocacy efforts among MPOs within a state. The findings of this report shed light on the organizational structures, membership compositions, leadership, activities, and formation methods of these associations, as well as the criteria used to define statewide associations of MPOs. Statewide associations of MPOs play a crucial role in facilitating communication and information exchange among MPOs, state DOTs, and other transportation stakeholders. By providing a platform for dialogue and collaboration, these associations enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of transportation planning processes at the regional and state level. They also support MPOs in meeting federal guidelines for coordination and cooperation.

The report contains detailed examples of how statewide associations of MPOs are formed, governed, and operate across different states. This report can serve as a valuable guide for MPOs interested in establishing a similar association in their state, offering models for intergovernmental agreements, state statutes, and non-profit designations. By highlighting the roles and advantages of existing statewide MPO associations, such as enhanced coordination, advocacy for policy and funding improvements, and professional development opportunities, this study can help MPO leadership and staff understand the potential benefits of forming such an association in their own state. Additionally, best practices for regional cooperation and statewide association activities are presented. MPO members and other relevant stakeholders can adopt these practices to improve their local and regional collaboration efforts even in the absence of a formal statewide association.

For states that already have a statewide association of MPOs, understanding the diverse membership structures and the roles of committees and working groups taking place within other associations can help their associations develop strategies to increase member engagement. By adopting practices that encourage active participation, such as regular meetings, professional development workshops, and best practice exchanges, the associations can foster a more collaborative and engaged membership. This report also outlines various activities undertaken by statewide associations, providing members of existing associations with ideas on possible areas to expand their association's offerings by incorporating similar activities, ensuring that they address the specific needs and interests of their members. Furthermore, these associations

may consider adjustments in organizational structures, funding mechanisms, and staff support, drawing inspiration from their peers to enhance desired outcomes.

Future research should continue to explore the impact of these associations on MPO performance and regional planning outcomes, contributing to the broader understanding of collaborative network dynamics. This includes (1) investigating the effectiveness of different collaborative structures and governance models among MPOs and their stakeholders, (2) exploring barriers to inter-MPO collaboration that these differing collaborative structures can address, (3) investigating how technology and innovative practices are being used by MPOs to improve collaboration, data sharing, and decision-making processes with other MPOs and their stakeholders, and (4) assessing the impact of training and professional development programs offered by associations of MPO to meet the evolving needs of transportation planners and transportation decision-makers.

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## List of Abbreviations

AMPO	Association of MPOs
ATPA	Alabama Transportation Planners Association
CALCOG	California Association of Councils of Governments
CMP	congestion management process
COG	Council of Governments
DOT	Department of Transportation
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
GAMPO	Georgia Association of MPOs
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
IJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act
L RTP	long range transportation plan
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MPOAC	Florida Metropolitan Advisory Council
MTP	metropolitan transportation plan
MTPA	Michigan Transportation Planning Association
NCAMPO	North Carolina Association of MPOs
NYSAMPO	New York State Association of MPOs
OARC	Ohio Association of Regional Councils
OMPOC	Oregon Metropolitan Planning Organization Consortium
PL	Planning Funds
PPP	public participation plan
RPC	Regional Planning Commissions
RPO	Regional Planning Organizations
STAC	Colorado Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee
STIP	State Transportation Improvement Program
TEMPO	Texas Association of MPOs
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TMA	Transportation Management Area
TN MPOs	Tennessee MPO Association
UPWP	unified planning work program
UZA	urbanized areas
VAMPO	Virginia Association of MPOs
WVAMPO	West Virginia Association of MPOs



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Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR)  
University of South Florida  
4202 E. Fowler Ave., CUT100, Tampa, FL 33620  
<https://www.cutr.usf.edu>