



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

# Transportation Management Area Planning Certification Review

Federal Highway  
Administration

Federal Transit  
Administration

## Atlanta Transportation Management Area



**September 29, 2023**

**Summary Report**





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## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are required to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process for each urbanized area over 200,000 in population at least every four years to determine if the process meets the Federal planning requirements.

On May 23-26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the FHWA and FTA in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) conducted the site visit portion for the Certification Review of the transportation planning process for the Atlanta Transportation Management Area.

### 1.1 Previous Findings and Disposition

The first Certification Review for the Atlanta urbanized area was conducted in 2000. The second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth Certification Reviews were conducted in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019, respectively. The 2019 Certification Review findings and disposition are provided in Appendix B and summarized as follows.

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Corrective Actions/ Recommendations</b>	<b>Disposition</b>
TIP Project History.	Recommendation	The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO should have a historical search of all projects that are included in their database. This would allow users to obtain historical data of the project if needed.	Resolved
Transit Planning	Recommendation	The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO continue to support efforts to expand transit options in the metro region through the coordinating the planning processes undertaken by local governments and new agencies (the ATL).	Ongoing



Consultation and Coordination	Recommendation	The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO continue to provide technical support and coordinated planning to ongoing multimodal planning by state and local governments such as the utilization of managed lanes by express transit services.	Resolved
Transit Planning	Recommendation	The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO continue to support the exploration and use of FLEX and other funds to support transit, expand bus shelters, sidewalk/trails, ADA ramps and improve transit accessibility as requested by local governments	Resolved
Transit Planning	Recommendation	The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO explore the use of funding bands in programming out future federal expenditures, particularly for large, complex projects anticipating to utilize discretionary funding such as 5309 Capital Investment Grant Program.	Underway with current MTP update.
Transit Planning	Recommendation	The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO continue the process of evolving transit coordination and cooperation that has occurred since the last review including preparing for potential new local jurisdictions that will join the Atlanta UZA after the 2020 census.	Resolved



Freight Planning	Recommendation	The Federal Review Team recommend that ARC incorporate analysis of Truck Parking into the requirement for both the Freight Cluster Area Plans and Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTP), to assess trucking parking availability in local jurisdictions.	Resolved
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## 1.2 Summary of Current Findings

The current review found that the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted in the Atlanta Urbanized area meets the Federal planning requirements.

As a result of this review, FHWA and FTA are certifying the transportation planning process conducted by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and the Atlanta Transit Link Authority (ATL) and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). There are also recommendations in this report that warrant close attention and follow-up, as well as areas that MPO is performing very well in that are to be commended.

Details of the certification findings for each of the below items are contained in this report.

### **Recommendations:**

#### *Transportation Improvement Program and related activities*

- The Federal Review Team is asking that the TIP and MTP are separated during the current update cycle (CY 2024). In the current state, the TIP and MTP are within one document, which makes it difficult for the public to see how the TIP is implementing the goals of the MTP and locate TIP information.
- The MPO should incorporate the System Performance Report into the MTP and TIP to illustrate how the TIP and MTP achieve the performance measures targets set by the state and implements the goals of the MTP
- During the next TIP development, the MPO should: illustrate the revenue sources by federal funding program versus a total federal lump sum; develop costs to operate and maintain the Federal-aid System, including transit; and ensure that the TIP aligns with State's four-year STIP.

#### *Participation Plan*

- The MPO should update the Participation Plan to include specific procedures for developing the MTP and TIPs and a documented process for when the revised documents are significantly different from what was originally distributed.

#### *Title VI and ADA*

- The MPO should include a Title VI statement on all its public documents.
- ARC should develop an ADA Transition Plan for its offices as it has more than 50 employees.





### *Congestion Management Process*

- The MPO should seek to better integrate the CMP strategies into the overall planning processes.
- The MPO should develop an evaluation process on the before and after impacts of the implementation of strategies along the CMP corridors.

### *MPO Structure and Agreements*

- The MPO needs to establish a process for monitoring and updating its website accordingly to ensure that it is user-friendly and that all transportation related products such as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendments and/or modifications are current and displayed in an easy and accessible manner for the public and oversight agencies.
- The MPO should establish a documented process for updating and voiding existing Agreements.

### **Commendations:**

- ARC's staff continues to demonstrate advance knowledge and understanding of the MPA boundary and working with federal agencies on the 2020 Census Urbanized Area to reflect existing conditions.
- The Federal Review Team commends ARC for its use of data visualization, dashboards, and plan graphics to ensure that elected officials and the public understand the complex planning issues and actions in the Atlanta region.
- The Federal Review Team commends ARC for its efforts in developing the Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act Resource Database to assist communities in identifying opportunities for funding.
- The Federal Review Team commends ARC for continually engaging with the Freight Advisory Task Force in the development of its freight plans and advising ARC as it implements the plan.
- The Federal Review Team commends ARC for developing a safety plan for the MPO and its connection to Georgia's Strategic Highway Safety Plan.
- The Federal Review Team commends ARC and its planning partners for their long-term focus on improving air quality in the Atlanta region, moving the region from nonattainment to maintenance status.



## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 134(k) and 49 U.S.C. 5303(k), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning process in Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) at least every four years. A TMA is an urbanized area, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, with a population of over 200,000. After the 2010 Census, the Secretary of Transportation designated 183 TMAs – 179 urbanized areas over 200,000 in population plus four urbanized areas that received special designation. In general, the reviews consist of three primary activities: a review of planning products (in advance of and during the site visit), a site visit, and preparation of a Certification Review Report that summarizes the review and offers findings. The reviews focus on compliance with Federal regulations, challenges, successes, and experiences of the cooperative relationship between the MPO(s), the State DOT(s), and public transportation operator(s) in the conduct of the metropolitan transportation planning process. The joint FHWA/FTA Certification Review guidelines provide agency field reviewers with latitude and flexibility to tailor the review to reflect regional issues and needs. Consequently, the scope and depth of the Certification Review reports will vary significantly.

The Certification Review process is only one of several methods used to assess the quality of a regional metropolitan transportation planning process, compliance with applicable statutes and regulations, and the level and type of technical assistance needed to enhance the effectiveness of the planning process. Other activities provide opportunities for this type of review and comment, including Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) approval, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), metropolitan and statewide Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) findings, air-quality (AQ) conformity determinations (in nonattainment and maintenance areas), as well as a range of other formal and less formal contact provide both FHWA/FTA an opportunity to comment on the planning process. The results of these other processes are considered in the Certification Review process.

While the Certification Review report itself may not fully document those many intermediate and ongoing checkpoints, the “findings” of Certification Review are, in fact, based upon the cumulative findings of the entire review effort.

The review process is individually tailored to focus on topics of significance in each metropolitan planning area. Federal reviewers prepare Certification Reports to document the results of the review process. The reports and final actions are the joint responsibility of the appropriate FHWA and FTA field offices, and their content will vary to reflect the planning process reviewed whether or not they relate explicitly to formal “findings” of the review.



## **2.2 Purpose and Objective**

Since the enactment of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, the FHWA and FTA, are required to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process in all urbanized areas over 200,000 population to determine if the process meets the Federal planning requirements in 23 U.S.C. 134, 40 U.S.C. 5303, and 23 CFR 450. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), extended the minimum allowable frequency of Certification Reviews to at least every four years.

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is the designated MPO for the Atlanta urbanized area. Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) is the responsible State agency, and The Atlanta Transit Link Authority provides coordinated transit planning and funding for the metro Atlanta region. The study area includes 13 full counties and seven partial counties, with the City of Atlanta as the largest incorporated city.

Certification of the planning process is a prerequisite to the approval of Federal funding for transportation projects in such areas. The Certification Review is also an opportunity to provide assistance on new programs and to enhance the ability of the metropolitan transportation planning process to provide decision makers with the knowledge they need to make well-informed capital and operating investment decisions.

## **3.0 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Review Process**

The initial Certification Review was conducted in 2000. Subsequent Certification Reviews were conducted in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019. A summary of the status of findings from the last review is provided in Appendix B. This report details the 7th review, which consisted of a formal site visit, a public involvement opportunity, and discussion with the MPO Policy Board Members conducted in May 2023.

Participants in the review included representatives of FHWA, FTA, EPA, GDOT, and ARC MPO staff. An invitation was not extended to the providers of public transportation in the ARC region. A full list of participants is included in Appendix A and with the Site Visit Agenda. Transit operators were not asked to participate in the TMA Certification Review as staff alluded



that they were not aware that it was their task to ensure that transit operators are at the table, regardless.

A desk audit of current documents and correspondence was completed prior to the site visit. In addition to the formal review, routine oversight mechanisms provide a major source of information upon which to base the certification findings.

The Certification Review covers the transportation planning process conducted cooperatively by the MPO and the State. Background information, current status, key findings, and recommendations are summarized in the body of the report for the following subject areas selected by FHWA and FTA staff for on-site review:

- Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries
- MPO Structure and Agreements
- Unified Planning Work Program
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Public Participation
- Civil Rights (Title VI, EJ, LEP, ADA)
- Consultation and Coordination
- List of Obligated Projects
- Freight Planning
- Planning Environmental Linkage
- Transportation Safety
- Transportation Security Planning
- Livability and Land Use
- Travel Demand Forecasting
- Air Quality
- Congestion Management Process / Management and Operations

### **3.2 Documents Reviewed**

The following MPO documents were evaluated as part of this planning process review:

- MPO Designation by Governor (September 2014).
- Five Party Memorandum of Agreement
- Transit Operators Agreement
- MPO Limited Membership Agreements
- ARC Personnel Policy Manual



- TPD Organization Chart
- Agreements with Cartersville-Bartow MPO and Gainesville Hall MPO
- Jackson County Agreement
- Agreements with neighboring Regional Commissions
- Interagency Consultation Process
- ARC Bylaws, Committee Structure, and membership
- FY 2023 Unified Planning Work Program for the Atlanta Region MPO
- MPO MTP, 2020
- MPO FY-2020 TIP and Self-Certification
- TIP Conformity Report
- Congestion Management Process
- Regional Resource Plan
- Atlanta Regional Freight Mobility Plan
- Atlanta Regional Truck Parking Assessment Study
- Atlanta Strategic Truck Route Master Plan
- Regional Safety Strategy
- Walk Bike Thrive!
- ATL Regional Transit Plan
- Regional Transportation Community Engagement Plan – Guide to MPO Basics
- Regional Transportation Community Engagement Plan – Residents Guide
- Regional Transportation Community Engagement Plan – Values Techniques and Process
- Policy for Citizen Input (2014)
- MTP Public Engagement Summary
- Virtual Public Engagement Guide
- Policies and Procedures Narrative (DRAFT)
- Title VI Plan
- Limited English Proficiency Plan
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Plan
- Self-Certification (November 2020)
- ARC Continuity of Operations Plan
- Regional ITS Architecture



## 4.0 PROGRAM REVIEW

### 4.1 Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries

#### 4.1.1 Regulatory Basis

23 CFR 450.312 Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries

#### 4.1.2 Current Status

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) MPO (Metropolitan Planning Area) MPA includes 13 full counties and seven partial counties, with the City of Atlanta as the largest incorporated city. Portions of the Atlanta Urbanized Area (UZA) are located within the Gainesville-Hall MPO and the Cartersville-Bartow MPO. The MPO evaluates Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) boundaries after each decennial census update and upon requests from local municipalities. The MPO considers MPA boundary adjustments in accordance with criteria in 23 CFR 450.312, projects population densities over a 20-year horizon, and the interconnectedness of proposed expansion areas with the existing urbanized area in terms of transportation and commuting patterns. The staff also considers development patterns and input from local partners.

The last MPO and governor approvals for the Urban Area Boundaries (UAB) was done in September 2014.

The 2020 Urbanized Areas were released in December 2022, which will require adjustments to the MPA area. ARC is currently working with GDOT and the surrounding MPOs on those adjustments.

#### 4.1.3 Findings

The MPO's boundary process substantially satisfies the federal requirements.

#### **Commendation:**

- ARC's staff continues to demonstrate advance knowledge and understanding of the MPA boundary and working with federal agencies on the 2020 Census Urbanized Area to reflect existing conditions.



## 4.2 MPO Structure and Agreements

### 4.2.1 Regulatory Basis

23 CFR 450.310 TMA structure and representation  
23 CFR 450.314 Metropolitan planning agreements

### 4.2.2 Current Status

The Atlanta Regional Commission, which is the state-designated Metropolitan Area Planning & Development Commission, functions as the Atlanta MPO. ARC has standing Policy and Technical Committees, as well as task forces and subcommittees established to provide input for specific projects and the transportation planning process. For example, the Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC), and the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) are a few committees of the ARC. Furthermore, the ARC staff play an integral role in ensuring delivery of the transportation planning process in the ARC region through their individual technical advisory roles. A brief description of the MPO structure, staffing, and existing Agreements, and MPO website are outlined below:

**Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC):** The thirty-five member TAQC is the transportation and air quality policy committee of the ARC and functions as the MPO Policy Board. The primary function of TAQC is to develop consensus recommendations among ARC (members and limited members) regarding metropolitan or multi- jurisdictional transportation related policy matters. Additionally, the ARC does not have a stand-alone Citizen Advisory Committee, instead, the TAQC consists of elected officials and Citizen Members of the ARC board.

**Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC):** The twenty-nine member TCC is responsible for providing transportation technical advice and recommendations to the TAQC on transportation issues. The TCC membership consists of local and state agency staff.

**ARC Staff:** ARC is the state-designated Metropolitan Area Planning & Development Commission (MAPDC). In its role of the MAPDC, the ARC staff conduct planning and programmatic activities in the areas of transportation and mobility, community development, water resources, aging, workforce development, homeland security and leadership development.

The employees of ARC's Transportation Planning Department are responsible for managing work activities associated with the MPO function. Comments received by both the MPO Policy Board members, and from local government staff reflect the professionalism and skill of the MPO staff. However, the MPO does not have documented processes and procedures, such as a



staff transition plan, operations manual, or an MPO Prospectus in place within a single document.

**Agreements:** With the creation of the ATL Authority in 2018, the existing agreement between MARTA, GRTA, ARC, and GDOT was revised to include the ATL Authority. The agreement documents the role of each agency. This agreement documents the role of GDOT and ARC in the collection of information for Highway Performance Measures but does not identify responsible parties for Transit Performance Measures.

The state-designated Metropolitan Area Planning & Development Commission membership is 11 of the 20 counties within the MPA area. ARC has agreements with the 9 other counties about transportation planning process that were developed when the MPA was expanded in 2015. ARC does not currently have a process to revisit agreements or to cancel agreements.

**MPO Website:** ARC maintains its own website. The MPO documentation is located throughout the Transportation Section under general headings and requires the user to know where to navigate to find the documents. The Federal Review Team highlighted that the current website is not user-friendly.

### **4.2.3 Findings**

The 3-C Process requires Coordination, Cooperation and Continuous Planning for the Atlanta region. The MPO coordination and cooperation process can be improved by documenting the procedures for the planning process within the Atlanta region to ensure all partners know their role and responsibilities.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The MPO needs to establish a process for monitoring and updating its website accordingly to ensure that it is user-friendly and that all transportation related products such as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendments and/or modifications are current and displayed in an easy and accessible manner for the public and oversight agencies.
- The MPO should establish a documented process for updating and voiding existing Agreements.

#### **Commendation:**

- The Federal Review Team commends ARC for its efforts in developing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Resource Database to assist communities in identifying opportunities for funding.





## 4.3 Unified Planning Work Program

### 4.3.1 Regulatory Basis

23 CFR 450.308 Transportation planning and UPWP funding

23 CFR 420 Administration of FHWA Planning and Research Funds

2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards

### 4.3.2 Current Status

The MPO develops their Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) annually for the calendar year. The CY23 UPWP was adopted by the MPO on December 14, 2022 and was approved by FHWA/FTA on December 15, 2022. The initial draft of the UPWP was developed by the MPO staff in coordination with the local transit agencies, GDOT and other planning partners for review. The draft UPWP is included as an agenda item at the MPO's subcommittee meetings to solicit comments from members and the public. The UPWP is posted on the MPO's website for 30 days of review and comment.

The UPWP describes the Federally-assisted transportation planning work by MPO, MARTA, GDOT, local governments and others, as well as other planning studies in the region, as part of the overall MPO effort. It documents the two primary sources of Federal planning funds: FHWA's Metropolitan Planning (PL) funds and FTA's Section 5303 Metropolitan Planning Program (MPP) funds, as well as Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding for ARC'S Livable Centers Initiative, and funding of Georgia Commute Options, the Transportation Management Activities in the Atlanta region.

The CY 2023 UPWP comprehensively discusses and describes the various aspects of the metropolitan transportation planning process and how the MPO coordinates with its various partners. The MPO documents the Increasing Safe and Accessible Transportation Options (Y410) as a separate activity which streamlined tracking and reporting activities for that funding category.

The MPO demonstrates a continuous planning process by forecasting upcoming planning milestones and deliverables in a table in the UPWP. However, there is no clear linkage between the UPWP and the goals and objectives of the MTP. Currently the MPO's CY 23 UPWP activities are formatted around the ARC's Budget and Work Program versus the MPO activities, making it difficult to identify the metropolitan transportation planning activities and associated funding. The MPO is working on a new UPWP format for CY24.



### **4.3.3 Findings**

The MPO's UPWP process satisfies the federal requirements.

## **4.4 Metropolitan Transportation Plan**

### **4.4.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 CFR 450.324 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

### **4.4.2 Current Status**

The current MTP is referred to as The Atlanta Region's Plan (TARP) and was last adopted by the MPO's Board (TAQC) in February 2020 and has had several amendments since. The current multimodal MTP has a horizon year of 2050 and supports the transportation goals outlined in the TARP. This document pulls from TARP Policy Framework for a: "World-Class Infrastructure, a Healthy Livable Communities, and a Competitive Economy." ARC's MTP is organized into seven chapters (Introduction, Assessment, Process, Recommendations, Finances, Performance, and Future).

The Assessment documents the changing population, employment, and the current multimodal transportation system and challenges to project future demands.

The Process outlines the coordinated efforts between the ARC, local and statewide transportation partners, as well as with various advisory task force and plans. This section also highlights the MPO's approval process for key deliverables such as the MTP. The Process notes three approval processes, which are internal to ARC. The TCC confirms that the MTP meets the technical requirements then submits recommendations to the Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC) for consideration. Upon recommendation by the TAQC, ARC's Board takes approval action on the MTP. While the TIP approval has been delegated by the Georgia Governor to Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), final approval of the MTP falls under the ARC Board.

The Process further documents the MPO's system and projection evaluation to include, integrating prioritized projects from project sponsors such as GDOT and MARTA; Integration of unprioritized projects from other project sources such as local Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTPs); Evaluating unprioritized projects using the ARC methodology; Conducting system evaluation of all projects, using the ARC methodology; Comparing system results against performance measures and targets.



As the MPO plans for the region, it further uses a Unified Planning Growth Map (UPGM) and a Development Guide, showing areas and places of future growth in the region. The UPGM and Development Guide were used to evaluate potential projects for the MTP.

The MPO employs a robust public engagement process during this MTP update. As part of the most recent MTP development process, ARC allowed for a 32-days public comment period, from November 11, 2019 – December 13, 2019. To announce its public engagement for the MTP update, ARC uses Fulton County Daily Report, Mundo Hispanico, and ARC's website, transportation listserv, e-newsletters, blogs, and social media as well as press releases through local television, radio, and newspaper outlets. Additionally, ARC uses a variety of techniques and formats during its public engagement for this MTP update.

The MPO uses two equity analyses to determine the impacts of the plan on underserved communities. The Protected Classes Model, which assesses concentration of nine populations protected under Title VI and the Environmental Justice Model, which examines racial minority, ethnic minority, and low-income populations.

The Recommendations chapter draws on a vision of the ARC region for 2050, addressing mobility, access, and safety. This section of the MTP proposes short and long-term investments for the region and are grouped into these three programs, Demand Management, Expansion, and Maintenance and Modernization with eight corresponding subareas (1 walking, bicycling, and LCI; 2 TDM and other programs and initiatives; 3 interchange and highway capacity; 4 managed lanes; 5 transit expansion; 6 transit operations and capital replacement; 7 road system optimization and safety; 8 road and bridge preservation).

The MPO continues to deliver the TDM Program where congestion reduction and demand of SOVs are a focus. The Atlanta region also continues to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian efforts with focus on investments to support walkable communities, safety and equity, connects regional trail system, improves access to transit, and to build complete streets. The MPO is using a Safe System Approach to address safety-related issues in the region. This approach considers all road users, human errors, and assign the responsibility of safety between individual road users and system designs.

ARC Congestion Management Process is included in the current MTP. Transit is another area of focus for this region through the 2018 Concept 3 plan. This plan updates transit planning and the transit project evaluation process, using analytical tools and data driven measures to create an objective and prioritized list of transit-related projects that advance to the MTP. Fifty transit related projects were evaluated against seven measures that reflect the region's priorities. The project evaluation measures look at reliability, connectivity, efficiency, sensitivity, social equity, compatibility, and job accessibility.



The MPO's 2050 MTP is fiscally constrained, with a projected revenue of \$173.5 billion and expenditure equaling \$167.8 billion. Revenue assumptions for this Plan are a collaborative effort, which include federal and state agencies, public transit operators, and other stakeholders. The Plan uses the best estimates to determine project costs, but project costs are updated with each MTP amendment and Plan update. Sources of revenue for this Plan include federal, state motor fuel tax and other fees, local funds from sales tax, transit fares, private sector tax assessment, and other sources. This Plan uses a year of expenditure rate of 2.2% for projects in the six-year TIP while current year dollars are used to estimate costs for project in long-range.

The Performance chapter highlights impact of the transportation system to residents and stakeholders. An observation in this section is that it includes the federally required Transit and Roadway Performance Measures and Targets. As of 2020, ARC has accepted the State's targets for PM 1, 2, and 3. This region also establishes its own Safety Targets. The required System Performance Report is absent for ARC's current MTP.

Lastly, the Future chapter discusses the continuous efforts to address current and future transportation challenges in the region. It documents all amendments with approval dates. It also highlights ARC MPO's 21- Planning area/boundary

Since the MPO is in maintenance for Ozone, they are required to update their MTP every four years. As such, their next Plan is due February 2024. The MPO is currently conducting a MTP update that is scheduled for adoption in early 2024 to meet its conformity deadline and will also be developing a new larger plan in 2025-2026.

The MPO utilizes a performance-based planning process to develop recommended long and short-range strategies. The foundation of the process relies on conducting system-level planning within the framework of planning procedures that reflect regional goals, objectives, and policies. The MPO also conducts a preliminary screening of all proposed transportation projects that will be considered for adoption into the MTP. This process includes an automated geo-spatial analysis that estimates total number of acres of encroachment on discreet environmental resource layers, and analysis of the performance of the MTP projects identified.

The MTP contains information about the Statewide Transportation Plan Goals, however clearer ties on how the MTP supports the Statewide Transportation Planning Goals and other state plans could be developed in future MTPs.

The MPO operates its own activity-based transportation model and is continually improving its transportation model and is a national leader in Transportation Modeling.



### 4.4.3 Findings

23 CFR 450.324(f)(4) requires that the MTP illustrate how the MTP shows progress in the three performance measure targets. While the MTP contains Performance Measures, it is not clear on how the MTP is meeting the three state performance measure targets.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The MPO should incorporate the System Performance Report into the MTP and TIP to illustrate how the TIP and MTP achieve the performance measures targets set by the state and implements the goals of the MTP.

## 4.5 Transportation Improvement Program

### 4.5.1 Regulatory Basis

23 CFR 450.326 Transportation Improvement Program

### 4.5.2 Current Status

The current FY2020-2025 TIP was adopted in February 2020. The Atlanta MPO TIP serves as a six-year financially feasible program of improvements for all modes of travel including sidewalks, transit improvements, bicycle facilities, and transportation enhancement activities to be funded by Title 23 and 49 USC, including all regionally significant transportation projects and programs in the 20- county Atlanta region for which federal action is required. In the Atlanta region, the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) has been delegated the authority to approve the TIP by the Governor.

The MPO and GDOT collaborate extensively in TIP development and amendments. The foundation of this process is based on regularly scheduled monthly project collaboration meetings that emphasize the discussion of TIP projects and is the primary problem-solving forum to address implementation challenges. The MPO develops a six-year TIP to provide funding and project delivery certainty for project sponsors. The two additional years are for informational purposes only. The MPO's TIP is included in the STIP by reference without modification.

The MPO uses Planit, a web-based application that allows users to access the Transportation Improvement Program and Regional Transportation Plan. This tool allows the project sponsor to view, make comments or requests on projects, and provides the public with the history of the project.



In the development of the current TIP, the process happened concurrently with the MTP. The documentation required for the TIP was located throughout the MTP documentation.

### **4.5.3 Findings**

23 CFR 450.326(b) requires that the TIP to be readily available for public review. While ARC posts TIP Project Lists and Amendments, the actual TIP document is throughout the MTP document. This makes it difficult for the reader to determine where the required TIP narrative information is located.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The Federal Review Team is asking that the TIP and MTP are separated during the current update cycle (CY 2024). In the current state, the TIP and MTP are within one document, which makes it difficult for the public to see how the TIP is implementing the goals of the MTP and locate TIP information.

## **4.6 Performance-Based Transportation Planning and Programming**

### **4.6.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 CFR 450.306(d)(e) Performance-based approach and Establishment of performance targets by metropolitan planning organizations

### **4.6.2 Current Status**

The MPO currently incorporates Performance-Based Transportation Planning and Programming (PBPP) within its planning processes including within the MTP and TIP. The MPO has a documented process to evaluate projects being considered for the MTP. Data used focus on mobility and congestion, reliability, network connectivity, multi-modal, safety, air quality and climate change, cultural and environmental resources, social equity, goods movement, and employment accessibility.

Furthermore, this MPO uses a TIP Evaluation Framework, a performance-driven process based on quantifiable metrics and data to score and rank projects that apply for discretionary federal dollars to improve how projects are considered and funded (or not funded in some cases). The TIP Evaluation Framework is published online for stakeholders to review, and the process largely uses publicly available data and analyses from either the federal government or data ARC publishes. This gives project sponsors the ability to understand how their projects may score even before submitting them.



### **4.6.3 Findings**

The MPO adopts GDOT's Performance Measure Targets for both highway and transit with these targets located within the MTP as well as the Transit Performance Measures. With the TIP documentation located within the MTP, there is no clear description of the anticipated effect of the TIP toward achieving the performance targets and linking investment priorities to those performance targets. In addition, The TIP evaluation framework is loosely tied to the MTP goals and objectives and the GDOT Performance Measure Targets.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The MPO should incorporate the System Performance Report into the MTP and TIP to illustrate how the TIP and MTP achieve the performance measures targets set by the state and implements the goals of the MTP

## **4.7 Financial Planning**

### **4.7.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 CFR 450.324(f)(11), and 23 CFR 450.326(j)

### **4.7.2 Current Status**

The MPO has a revenue forecasting database, detailing historic data on major federal, state, local and private funds dedicated to transportation in the region. This database highlights funds for capital improvements, as well as maintaining and operating existing facilities and services. It even includes administrative costs for agencies charged with planning and implementation responsibilities. The tool uses historic data to establish baselines and trendlines, then projects annual revenues out through the life of the plan using a variety of assumptions.

All key assumptions used in fiscally constraining the MTP/TIP are vetted through the Interagency consultation process. For federal funds, these include baseline formula funding and the annual rate of increase, share of statewide formula funding which will be used in the region, transit discretionary funding, and inflation rate. For state and local funds, growth trends for motor fuels tax, hotel lodging fees, vehicle impact fees, SPLOSTs, TSPLOSTs, transit farebox revenues, the MARTA sales tax, other transit general fund revenues, and CID collections are all tracked continuously.



### **4.7.3 Findings**

The MPO develops funding levels for long range M&O lump sums based on a goal of maintaining conditions at or near current levels.

The MPO tracks expenditures per federal funding program but consolidates federal revenue to one single category. With the passage of BIL, new suballocated MPO programs were developed. Tracking of balances within the different funding programs will help ensure that unexpended balances will not become a future issue.

#### **Recommendation:**

- During the next TIP development, the MPO should: illustrate the revenue sources by federal funding program versus a total federal lump sum; develop costs to operate and maintain the Federal-aid System, including transit; and ensure that the TIP aligns with State's four-year STIP.

## **4.8 Public Participation and Visualization Techniques**

### **4.8.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 CFR 450.316 Interested Parties, Participation, and Consultation

### **4.8.2 Current Status**

The MPO's current Participation Plan, call the Regional Community Engagement Plan was adopted in June of 2019. The plan has been redesigned into a series of modules with simplified, visually appealing graphics to illustrate the transportation planning process. The three modules are: A Residents Guide to Regional Transportation Planning; A Guide to MPO Basics; and Community Engagement Values, Techniques and Process. The Community Engagement Values, Techniques, and Process module contain the information about the MPO's required elements in the participation plan under 23 CFR 450.316.

### **4.8.3 Findings**

The Participation Plan while very graphical and easy to understand, does not detail procedures for the development of the MTP and TIP or when comments received on the draft documents are





significant. This plan lacks documented procedures for when the final MTP or TIP differ significantly from the version that was made available during the public comment period.

The MPO does produce a summary report of comments received during the MTP development process and used creative engaging engagement strategies to receive public input, however, it is unclear on how the engagement led to MTP planning decisions, and the effectiveness of that engagement.

The Community Engagement Values, Techniques, and Process module also document the MPO's procedures and processes for TIP amendments and administrative modifications. In addition, terminology changes throughout the process about funding amounts from federal share to cost.

The Federal Review Team received comments on the data analysis produced by the MPO staff. The data visualization, dashboards, and plan graphics produced by the MPO staff, take complex information, and make it easy for the public to understand.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The MPO should update the Participation Plan to include specific procedures for developing the MTP and TIPs and a documented process for when the revised documents are significantly different from what was originally distributed.

#### **Commendation:**

- The Federal Review Team commends ARC for its use of data visualization, dashboards, and plan graphics to ensure that elected officials and the public understand the complex planning issues and actions in the Atlanta region.

## **4.9 Civil Rights (Title VI, EJ, LEP, ADA)**

### **4.9.1 Regulatory Basis**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, (23 U.S.C. 324), Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973/Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Executive Order #12898, 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(vi), and Executive Order # 13166 (Limited-English-Proficiency)



## 4.9.2 Current Status

The MPO is housed under the ARC in which they share a Title VI officer. ARC Title VI Officer is Brittany Zwald, ARC's General Counsel. The Title VI Officer is responsible for enforcing, reviewing, and updating MPO's Title VI policies. Since the last Certification Review, the MPO has no documented discrimination complaints.

## 4.9.3 Findings

The MPO last updated their Title VI plan in September 2022. The MPO's Plan includes complaint procedures for FTA but not for FHWA as another of their funding agency. As such, there are no documented procedures for someone to submit a complaint on Federal-aid Highway projects. While the MPO has a Title VI statement on the ARC website, this statement should be included on all public documents.

Under 28 CFR 35.150(d), ARC as a public entity, should have a transition plan for its offices as ARC has over 50 employees. This plan should identify physical obstacles in the public entity's facilities that limit the accessibility of its programs or activities to individuals with disabilities and describe in detail the methods that will be used to make the facilities accessible.

The MPO's satisfies the federal requirements as outlined in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, (23 U.S.C. 324), Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973/Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Executive Order #12898, 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(vi), and Executive Order # 13166 (Limited-English-Proficiency), with the following recommendations.

### **Recommendations:**

- The MPO should include a Title VI statement on all of its public documents.
- ARC should develop an ADA Transition Plan for its offices as it has more than 50 employees.

## 4.10 Consultation and Coordination

### 4.9.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(g) & (i)(5)-(6) and 23 CFR 450.316(b-e)



## **4.9.2 Current Status**

The MPO regularly meets with impacted officials on other planning activities through its role as the Regional Commission. ARC has numerous formal and informal planning committees to coordinate planning around growth, economic development, airport area planning. The MPO also conducts a preliminary screening of all proposed transportation projects that will be considered for adoption into the MTP. This process includes an automated geo-spatial analysis that estimates total number of acres of encroachment on discreet environmental resource layers, and analysis of the performance of the MTP projects identified. This screening is discussed with resource agencies.

## **4.9.3 Findings**

The MPO's Consultation and Coordination process substantially satisfies the federal requirements.

## **4.11 List of Obligated Projects**

### **4.10.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 CFR 450.334 List of Obligated Projects

### **4.10.2 Current Status**

The MPO publishes their List of Obligated Projects each Fiscal Year on the website as well as a TIP Program Delivery Dashboard which shows project authorization rate of projects within the TIP.

### **4.10.3 Findings**

The MPO's process substantially satisfies the federal requirements.

## **4.12 Freight Planning**

### **4.12.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 U.S.C. 167, 23 U.S.C. 134 and 23 CFR 450.306



## 4.12.2 Current Status

Freight and goods movement is one of the seven (7) goals established for the region during the MTP development. The MPO is one of a few MPO's within Georgia that have established a freight committee and/or task force. The ARC Freight Advisory Task Force provides a forum for the freight community to participate in the MPO process. The task force meets regularly throughout the year to discuss updates to the regional freight plan and planning process, legislative and funding updates, and regional freight activities. Membership of the ARC Freight Advisory Task Force is comprised of the freight community and the public sector, including representatives from CSX and Norfolk Southern railroads, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, UPS, community improvement districts, chambers of commerce, Georgia Tech, FHWA, and GDOT. Private sector participants include those from the supply chain industry including shippers, carriers, third-party logistics provider (3PLs), and land brokers.

ARC freight planning efforts also includes facilitating the development of a Freight Cluster Area Planning Program. This program assists local jurisdictions with developing subarea plans in locations with significant freight activity in an effort to identify first mile and last mile projects that may improve mobility.

The MPO currently has a fulltime staff member dedicated to freight planning and is currently updating their Regional Freight Plan. The plan update tasks include an updated regional truck parking assessment from 2019, and the examination of freight activity clusters.

## 4.12.3 Findings

The MPO's freight planning activities substantially satisfies the federal requirements.

### **Commendation:**

- The Federal Review Team commends ARC for continually engaging with the Freight Advisory Task Force in the development of its freight plans and advising ARC as it implements the plan.

## 4.13 Planning Environmental Linkage

### 4.13.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 168 and Appendix A to 23 CFR Part 450



### **4.13.2 Current Status**

The MPO currently funds transportation studies to develop project concepts that improve safety, mobility, and access to all roadway users, while also preparing them for advancement to Scoping and/or PE phases (in future TIP project solicitations). These project development activities may be consistent with PEL.

The MPO selects these studies through TIP Funding Solicitation. Studies are awarded funding based on the goals within The Atlanta Region's Plan, as well as other factors related to performance, study need, and equity. GDOT is currently underway with one PEL study along I-85, and the MPO has an opportunity to continue to develop and implement PEL in the future funded transportation studies to improve project delivery.

### **4.13.3 Findings**

There are opportunities for this MPO to explore with GDOT and the resource agencies incorporating PEL into planning studies that may have environmental impacts where the PEL process could improve project delivery.

## **4.14 Transportation Safety**

### **4.14.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 U.S.C. 134(h)(1)(B), 23 CFR 450.306

### **4.14.2 Current Status**

To address rising crash rates, the MPO developed the Regional Safety Strategy (RSS) as a regional safety action plan to help the MPO and its partners proactively achieve safety goals and build a safe transportation system for all users in the Atlanta region. The RSS advances safety in the MPO plans and processes, building upon strategies from previous MPO Plans. These plans introduced important safety concepts, such as the Safe System Approach, the goal of zero traffic deaths and serious injuries across the region (Vision Zero), and employing a proactive, data-informed approach to safety. Each of these concepts are furthered in the RSS. The RSS provides the transportation safety action plan for the Atlanta region and will inform future updates to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and other MPO-led plans and programs.

Based on a data-informed analysis, the RSS identifies safety issues and specific planning actions and engineering guidance for local agencies to proactively improve safety. Building on the 2022 update of Georgia's SHSP, the RSS integrates ten emphasis areas for improving safety within the



“top contributing factors of crashes, serious injuries, and fatalities in Georgia.” The RSS further defines key emphasis areas for the Atlanta region through a systemic safety approach which focuses on potential risk, rather than strictly on historic crashes which fluctuate over time.

To assess crash risk factors unique to the MPO and its constituent jurisdictions, the MPO used the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA’s) Crash Data Summary Template to assess over-represented crash characteristics. This tool compares crashes in a subject jurisdiction (e.g., a county) to crashes in a reference group (e.g., the MPO as a whole).

#### **4.14.3 Findings**

The MPO’s transportation safety planning activities substantially satisfies the federal requirements.

#### **Commendation:**

The Federal Review Team commends ARC for developing a safety plan for the MPO and its connection to the State Highway Safety Plan.

### **4.15 Transportation Security Planning**

#### **4.15.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 U.S.C. 134(h)(1)(C) requires MPOs to consider security as one of ten planning factors. As stated in 23 CFR 450.306(b)(3), the Metropolitan Transportation Planning process provides for consideration and implementation of projects, strategies, and services that will increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

#### **4.15.2 Current Status**

ARC in its regional role, is the operational manager of the Atlanta Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI). While most cities, counties, and transit operators have their own security plans and programs which focus directly on public safety, UASI provides a regional context for ensuring those focused efforts are coordinated and can leverage each other in the event of a large-scale emergency. Of particular relevance to the Atlanta MPO process, the UASI partnered with its member jurisdictions to rewrite the Regional Evacuation Plan (REP). The purpose of this RECP is to assist elected officials, emergency managers, and external partners in understanding their evacuation roles and responsibilities during the first hours of any event which requires sheltering in place and/or evacuation. It documents communication methods and refers to existing transportation and shelter resources in the various jurisdictions. The plan contains initial messaging related to a variety of threats, such as toxic chemical releases, bombs, natural



disasters, etc. It also includes templates for statements related to the operational status and condition of various transportation facilities and services.

Each county generally has their own Emergency Operations Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan. REP defers to these and focuses on regionally consistent messaging and communication protocols in the event that a situation impacts multiple jurisdictions.

The MTP and TIP are informed by the work conducted by UASI. But most threats to the transportation system are not likely to be due to terrorism. What more commonly disrupts the system are events such as floods, tornadoes, snow/ice storms, and fires. These threats are generally addressed as part of a maintenance schedule or, in the event of a construction project, a design process which emphasizes resilience.

### **4.15.3 Findings**

The MPO's transportation security planning activities substantially satisfies the federal requirement.

## **4.16 Livability and Bicycle and Pedestrian**

### **4.16.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 CFR 450.306 sets forth the requirement that the scope of the metropolitan planning process "will increase the safety for motorized and non-motorized users; increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users; and protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life."

### **4.16.2 Current Status**

The MPO for the past two decades has funded the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI). This program has funded livability studies and infrastructure throughout the MPO with 300 studies and 143 transportation projects using \$368 million of federal funds. Sample projects include, road diets, Transit station improvements, improved street connections, and safety projects such as roundabouts. Funding for the program is identified in the MTP and TIP and is programmed to 2050.

The MPO has branded its Bike and Pedestrian planning work as Walk, Bike, Thrive! These plans include a regional overview of Bike and Pedestrian issues within the MPO and



supplemental plans that focus on Complete Streets, Implementation, Bike Access to Transit, and a Regional Trail Network. These plans then informed the MTP.

### **4.16.3 Findings**

The MPO's Bike and Pedestrian planning activities substantially satisfies the federal requirements.

## **4.18 Air Quality and Conformity**

### **4.18.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 CFR 450.324(m) and 23 CFR 450.326(a)

### **4.18.2 Current Status**

The Atlanta MPO is currently designated as a maintenance area for National Ambient Air Quality Standards for six counties in the Atlanta Region (Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, Gwinnett, and Henry), plus the adjacent Bartow County, for the 2015 eight-hour ozone standard. Fifteen counties have met the previous 2008 eight-hour ozone standard, are also classified as a maintenance area, meaning that air quality analyses must continue to demonstrate conformity to that standard. All standards related to fine particulate matter standard PM<sub>2.5</sub> have been met and subsequently revoked by EPA, meaning no additional air quality analysis is required for the Atlanta Region for PM 2.5.

Twenty counties in the Atlanta region were designated as marginal nonattainment in 2004 under the 1997 ozone standard: Barrow, Bartow, Carroll, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Hall, Henry, Newton, Paulding, Rockdale, Spalding, and Walton. The Atlanta ozone nonattainment area was redesignated to attainment with a maintenance plan effective January 2014.

The 1997 standard was then subject to litigation (*South Coast v. EPA*) regarding maintenance area conformity requirements. It was held that transportation conformity determinations must be made in areas that were either nonattainment or maintenance for the 1997 ozone national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS) and attainment for the 2008 ozone NAAQS when the 1997 ozone NAAQS was revoked. These 20 counties need to conduct a conformity process but do not need to conduct emission analysis.

The MPO hosts the Interagency Meetings for the Atlanta nonattainment/maintenance area and uses those meetings to coordinate with the Gainesville-Hall MPO, Cartersville-Bartow MPO, the Floyd-Rome MPO, Georgia EPD and GDOT along with the federal partners on air quality issues.





The MPO coordinates the development of the CMAQ Performance Measures Reporting with GDOT and the Cartersville-Bartow MPO and has adopted the state targets and submitted the required reporting documentation.

### **4.18.3 Findings**

The MPO's Air Quality planning activities substantially satisfies the federal requirements.

#### **Commendation:**

- The Federal Review Team commends ARC and its planning partners for their long-term focus on improving air quality in the Atlanta region, moving the region from nonattainment status to maintenance.

## **4.19 Congestion Management Process / Management and Operations/ITS**

### **4.19.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 CFR 450.322 Congestion Management Process (CMP), 23 CFR 450.324(f)(5) requires the MTP include Management and Operations (M&O) of the transportation network and 23 CFR 940.9(a) Regional ITS Architecture

### **4.19.2 Current Status**

Rather than producing a singular stand-alone CMP document, the MPO incorporates the actions in all aspects of its planning and technical work program. The specific techniques and deliverables associated with each action are documented on the CMP page of the website.

The MPO monitors corridors using the RITIS Probe Data Analytics Suite as a means of determining the extent and severity of recurring congestion and develops corridor performance reports.

The MTP includes significant investments in both travel demand and operational strategies. The MPO also encourages planning partners to implement lower-cost solutions before pursuing large-scale capital programs, particularly transportation demand management strategies. The MPO has developed a regional transportation demand management plan that identifies strategies to driving alone.



The MPO developed a regional Transportation System Management and Operations (TSMO) plan in 2020, which contains TSMO Strategic Initiatives to be advanced over a ten-year period by transportation agencies and partners within the region. ARC hosts a Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) Subcommittee, which meets approximately every two to three months.

As a part of the TSMO plan update in 2020, the MPO updated its Regional ITS Architecture to include current technologies, and also emerging technologies not yet being implemented. Including emerging technologies ensures that innovative projects are not rejected due to inconsistency with the architecture. The plan update has included four workshops which consisted of a wide range of participants such as local government staff, state and federal planning partners, university researchers, private industry representatives, and technology start-ups.

The Regional ITS Architecture is available online through an easily searchable website, making it more accessible and easier to use. Both the MPO and its planning partners will be able to quickly ensure proposed projects are consistent with the architecture.

#### **4.19.3 Findings**

The MPO has identified strategies within its CMP, however the MPO does not evaluate the impact or effectiveness of its strategies or implemented actions, and the connections between the CMP and the MTP strategies could be stronger.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The MPO should seek opportunities to better integrate the CMP strategies into the overall transportation planning processes.
- The MPO should develop an evaluation process on the before and after impacts of the implementation of strategies along the CMP corridors.



## 5.0 CONCLUSION and FINDINGS

The current review found that the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted in the Atlanta Urbanized area meets the Federal planning requirements.

As a result of this review, FHWA and FTA are certifying the transportation planning process conducted by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and the Atlanta Transit Link Authority (ATL) and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). There are also recommendations in this report that warrant close attention and follow-up, as well as areas that MPO is performing very well in that are to be commended.

### 5.1 Commendations

The following are noteworthy practices, highlighting areas where this MPO has gone above the Federal requirements to carry out the transportation planning process over the last four years:

- ARC's staff continues to demonstrate advance knowledge and understanding of the MPA boundary and working with federal agencies on the 2020 Census Urbanized Area to reflect existing conditions.
- The Federal Review Team commends ARC for its use of data visualization, dashboards, and plan graphics to ensure that elected officials and the public understand the complex planning issues and actions in the Atlanta region.
- The Federal Review Team commends ARC for its efforts in developing the Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act Resource Database to assist communities in identifying opportunities for funding.
- The Federal Review Team commends ARC for continually engaging with the Freight Advisory Task Force in the development of its freight plans and advising ARC as it implements the plan.
- The Federal Review Team commends ARC for developing a safety plan for the MPO and its connection to Georgia's Strategic Highway Safety Plan.
- The Federal Review Team commends ARC and its planning partners for their long-term focus on improving air quality in the Atlanta region, moving the region from nonattainment to maintenance status.

### 5.2 Recommendations

The following are recommendations that would improve the transportation planning process:

- The MPO needs to establish a process for monitoring and updating its website accordingly to ensure that it is user-friendly and that all transportation related products



such as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendments and/or modifications are current and displayed in an easy and accessible manner for the public and oversight agencies.

- The MPO should establish a documented process for updating and voiding existing Agreements.
- The MPO should incorporate the System Performance Report into the MTP and TIP to illustrate how the TIP and MTP achieve the performance measures targets set by the state and implements the goals of the MTP.
- The Federal Review Team is asking that the TIP and MTP are separated during the current update cycle (CY 2024). In the current state, the TIP and MTP are within one document, which makes it difficult for the public to see how the TIP is implementing the goals of the MTP and locate TIP information.
- The MPO should update the Participation Plan to include specific procedures for developing the MTP and TIPs and a documented process for when the revised documents are significantly different from what was originally distributed.
- During the next TIP development, the MPO should: illustrate the revenue sources by federal funding program versus a total federal lump sum; develop costs to operate and maintain the Federal-aid System, including transit; and ensure that the TIP aligns with State's four-year STIP.
- The MPO should include a Title VI statement on all its public documents.
- ARC should develop an ADA Transition Plan for its offices as it has more than 50 employees.
- The MPO should seek to better integrate the CMP strategies into the overall planning processes.
- The MPO should develop an evaluation process on the before and after impacts of the implementation of strategies along the CMP corridors.

### **5.3 Training/Technical Assistance**

- ARC is an ideal candidate to host a Peer Exchange in the region on the PEL Process and how to incorporate it into Project Studies that the MPO funds.



## APPENDIX A – PARTICIPANTS and AGENDA

The following individuals were involved in the Atlanta Regional urbanized area on-site review:

### Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

- Ann Marie Day, FHWA Georgia Division
- Olivia Lewis, FHWA Georgia Division
- Jared Lombard, FHWA Georgia Division
- Joseph Longo, FHWA Georgia Division
- Greg Morris, FHWA Georgia Division
- Vanessa Ross, FHWA Georgia Division

### Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

- John Crocker

### Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

- Dianna Myers

### Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)

- Habte Kassa
- Megan Weiss
- Kathy Zahul

### Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)- Atlanta MPO

- Anna Roach, Executive Director
- John Orr, MPO Director
- David Haynes
- Jim Skinner
- Daniel Studdard
- Kofi Wakhisi
- Cheryl Mayerik
- James Husserl
- Haley Berry
- Malika Wilkins
- Bernard Coxton
- Mike Carnathan
- Lauren Blazyck
- Rosalind Tucker
- Brittany Zwald
- Kyung-Hwa Kim
- Guy Rousseau
- David Dudley
- Amy Goodwin
- Jean Hee Barrett
- Patrick Bradshaw
- Paul Digirolamo



- Elizabeth Stanford
- Wei Wang
- Nasim Rezvanpour
- Sheila Bennefield
- Tejas Kotak

## **APPENDIX B - STATUS OF FINDINGS FROM LAST REVIEW**

One of the priorities of each Certification Review is assessing how well the planning partners in the area have addressed corrective actions and recommendations from the previous Certification Review. This section identifies the corrective actions and recommendations from the previous certification and summarizes discussions of how they have been addressed.

**Recommendation 1: The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO should have a historical search of all projects that are included in their database. This would allow users to obtain historical data of the project if needed.**

Disposition: ARC’s current PlanIt project database allows users to pull historical data for a specific project. A “View Project History” link is readily available at the top of the individual project listing. When the user clicks on the “View Project History” link, a PDF is generated that outlines the full programming history of a project. ARC will be undergoing an update to the project database with the hope advanced search features are improved to allow easy navigation to view previous project information.

**Recommendation 2: The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO continue to support efforts to expand transit options in the metro region through the coordinating the planning processes undertaken by local governments and new agencies (the ATL).**

Disposition: ARC has continued to support the expansion of transit operations in metro Atlanta through a variety of activities, including:

- Co-hosting regular meetings of the Transit Operators Group (TOG) with the ATL Authority. This is a working group comprised of key staff of all transit operators and other agencies with a role in transit funding and implementation.
- Participating in monthly coordination meetings with staff of the ATL Authority.
- Participating in quarterly coordination meetings with the executive and policy officers of regional and state transportation agencies, including MARTA, GDOT and GRATA/SRTA/ATL.
- Serving as the contracting lead for local transit studies in Fulton County, Spalding County and Newton County.



- Partnering with ATL Authority to fund a transit feasibility study in Rockdale County, as the first phase of an overall county transportation plan update.

In addition, transit operators are involved in a wide range of ARC's regular engagement and coordination activities (including the Interagency consultation process, TCC and TAQC meetings, UPWP development, travel demand modeling, etc.).

**Recommendation 3: The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO continue to support the exploration and use of FLEX and other funds to support transit, expand bus shelters, sidewalk/trails, ADA ramps and improve transit accessibility as requested by local governments.**

Disposition: ARC continues to flex FHWA funds to FTA for a variety of transit projects. From FY 2020 to FY 2023, a total of nearly \$152 million was flexed from the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ), Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding sources. The list below is a sample of the 49 projects which received flexed funds.

- Douglas County Fixed Route Public Bus Service (Operating Assistance) – we provided 3 years of operating assistance from FY 2019 to FY 2021
- Gwinnett County Transit Service Enhancement (Operating Assistance) – Phase 1 – 3 years of operating assistance from FY 2019 to FY 2021
- Metropolitan Parkway Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) from West End MARTA Station to City of Hapeville – 3 years of operating assistance from FY 2021 to FY 2023
- Cobb County ADA Compliant Sidewalks (FY 2022)
- DeKalb County Transit Hubs (FY 2023)
- Regional Breeze Mobile Deployment at 12-County Xpress Service Area (FY 2023)

In addition, another \$30.2 million of funding has been committed to another 11 projects from FY 2024 to FY 2026. These transfers are in still in process at the time of this submittal.

**Recommendation 4: The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO explore the use of funding bands in programming out future federal expenditures, particularly for large, complex projects anticipating to utilize discretionary funding such as 5309 Capital Investment Grant Program.**

Disposition: Forecasting revenues over an extended period, such as the timeframe of an MTP, is a challenging exercise for a number of reasons. Economic cycles of growth and recession will certainly occur between now and 2050, but the duration and magnitude of these are impossible to predict. Federal programs are subject to shifts in political priorities, affecting the overall amount of funding available and how it should be spent. Disruptors, such as the gradual conversion of



the transportation fleet from internal combustion engines to electric or another clean energy source, will also cause fundamental changes in how fuel taxes and user fees are levied. For all these reasons, as well as others, the concept of revenue bands is certainly worth consideration.

At the time of the last certification in the 3rd quarter of 2019, ARC was finalizing its 2020 MTP/TIP update and had already completed the fiscal constraint analysis. In the amendments conducted since then, the revenue forecasting methodology has remained consistent. At the time of this submittal, ARC is reconsidering its revenue and cost assumptions for an MTP/TIP update due for adoption in January 2024. Revenue bands will be considered in that process to account for uncertainties such as those outlined above. In the event that the methodology of defining a single forecast for fiscal constraint purposes is retained for this cycle, ARC will ensure that the financial section of the plan documentation includes a discussion of the banding concept and its advantages/challenges for consideration in future planning cycles.

**Recommendation 5: The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO continue the process of evolving transit coordination and cooperation that has occurred since the last review including preparing for potential new local jurisdictions that will join the Atlanta UZA after the 2020 census.**

Disposition: Please see previous responses for information on the various facets of transit coordination ARC has either led or participated in recent years. Related specifically to the Atlanta UZA and the 2020 census, the new boundary was just released in the past few weeks and staff are in the early stages of reviewing and understanding its implications. It does not appear that new jurisdictions will need to be added to the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) boundary as a result of the new census, but ARC does recognize the need to revisit and update all of its planning memoranda of agreement (MOAs) as part of the process over the next 18 to 24 months. This includes all transit operators and local governments which provide transit services.

**Recommendation 6: The Federal Review Team recommend that ARC incorporate analysis of Truck Parking into the requirement for both the Freight Cluster Area Plans and Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTP), to assess trucking parking availability in local jurisdictions.**

Disposition: Freight cluster plans are required to analyze authorized and unauthorized truck parking locations for overnight and staging needs in their study area. This is intended to identify locations where trucks can potentially park in the study area, as well as locations where a lack of truck parking may be creating problems. Identifying locations where unauthorized truck parking takes place may show a lack of local supply for truck parking. In some study areas, this analysis has also helped identify roadway/traffic operations issues related to access to existing truck parking facilities.





CTPs address a wide variety of transportation topics, and the work scopes are tailored to permit local governments to place emphasis on those of highest priority within their study area. In jurisdictions with a high volume of freight related economic activity, such as industrial, manufacturing, warehousing and distribution facilities, truck parking is often identified as an emphasis area. Henry County and DeKalb County are examples of recent CTPs in which truck parking was considered in the technical analysis and development of recommendations.

## APPENDIX C – PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Federal Review Team hosted a hybrid public meeting on Tuesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 to hear comments on the MPO Planning Process. Three citizens participated virtually and gave positive feedback on the quality of the MPO staff and their work. The Federal Review Team also did a virtual survey with the attendees on their familiarity with the products.

PRODUCTS OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

### How familiar are you with the products?



The Federal Review Team also received one written comment below:

**Do you have adequate opportunity to participate in the ARC Transportation Planning Process?**

Yes. ARC staff are very open and communicative about the different ways to participate in the process and are more than willing to answer questions.

**How have you been involved in the ARC Transportation Planning Process?**

Through the TCC, meetings involving the TIP and MTP, and individual conversations with ARC staff.

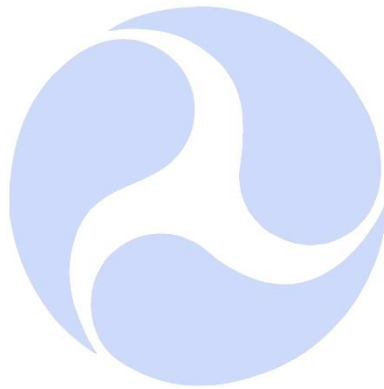
**What are your views on the process?**

Like many state processes, it can seem opaque and unnecessarily complex at first blush, and often still is. However, ARC staff have gotten much better with communication on what the process is and how to get involved.



## APPENDIX D - LIST OF ACRONYMS

**ADA:** Americans with Disabilities Act  
**AMPO:** Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations  
**BIL:** Bipartisan Infrastructure Law  
**CAA:** Clean Air Act  
**CFR:** Code of Federal Regulations  
**CMP:** Congestion Management Process  
**CO:** Carbon Monoxide  
**DOT:** Department of Transportation  
**EJ:** Environmental Justice  
**EPA:** Environmental Protection Agency  
**FAST:** Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act  
**FHWA:** Federal Highway Administration  
**FTA:** Federal Transit Administration  
**FY:** Fiscal Year  
**HSIP:** Highway Safety Improvement Program  
**IJA:** Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act  
**ITS:** Intelligent Transportation Systems  
**LEP:** Limited-English-Proficiency  
**M&O:** Management and Operations  
**MAP-21:** Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
**MPA:** Metropolitan Planning Area  
**MPO:** Metropolitan Planning Organization  
**MTP:** Metropolitan Transportation Plan  
**NAAQS:** National Ambient Air Quality Standards  
**NO<sub>2</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide  
**O<sub>3</sub>:** Ozone  
**PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>:** Particulate Matter  
**SHSP:** Strategic Highway Safety Plan  
**STIP:** State Transportation Improvement Program  
**TDM:** Travel Demand Management  
**TIP:** Transportation Improvement Program  
**TMA:** Transportation Management Area  
**U.S.C.:** United States Code  
**UPWP:** Unified Planning Work Program  
**USDOT:** United States Department of Transportation



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