



NASHVILLE AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization



Meeting #1 NOTES

MPO/GNRC Joint Committee on Regional Coordination

Tuesday, October 11, 2016

- Mayor Moore opened the meeting, introducing co-vice chairs Mayor McMillan and Mayor Reed, who each gave brief remarks encouraging Committee members to engage in discussions with an open mind. Attendees introduced themselves.
 - Michael Skipper (GNRC director) and Michelle Lacewell (MPO director) introduced Shelly Hazle (MPO) and Sean Pfalzer (GNRC) as staff that would be supporting the work of the committee.
 - Lacewell described the contents and purpose of the 3-ring binders provided to committee members. The 3-ring binder contained various handouts including the agenda, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the MPO and GNRC, an overview of common types of regional organizations, presentation slides with an overview of the proposed scope of work and peer regions that will be compared during research, and reading material.
 - Skipper provided an overview of MPOs, Development Districts, and Councils of Governments (COG)/Regional Councils (RC). He spoke specifically about the history the Nashville Area MPO, discussing how the idea of closer coordination between the MPO and GNRC is not a new conversation. He described how a 2006 federal certification review of the MPO revealed numerous issues and led to discussions about financing and staffing of the MPO.
 - In 2007, the MPO Executive Committee discussed various options for improving MPO performance, staffing, and funding up to and including 1) the pursuit of enabling legislation to allow the MPO to become a free-standing agency, 2) shifting the MPO program to the GNRC, and 3) establishing a more detailed policy to guide Metro Nashville's role in supporting the MPO. Those discussions concluded with a recommendation to pursue option 3 and led to: 1) the adoption of a MPO Sponsorship Policy to establish roles and responsibilities between the MPO Executive Board, Metro Nashville, and the MPO Executive Director; 2) the implementation of regional dues to offset costs traditionally borne by Metro Nashville in support of the MPO, 3) new branding to improve the MPO identity.
 - Currently the Nashville Area MPO is staffed by Metropolitan Planning Commission of Nashville-Davidson County. This relationship is in no way inappropriate, and is rather common across the U.S. with about half of MPOs across the nation have a similar arrangement with a local government member. However, the MPOs of larger regions tend to be part of or integrated into the regional council.
 - Mayor McMillan stressed the importance of including the Clarksville MPO in this effort since it also resides within the GNRC area. Outreach to the Clarksville MPO has begun and Skipper will be speaking at their next board meeting. Skipper said that the Middle Tennessee RPO also will be included in the discussions.
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- Skipper presented on the peer cities that staff would be reviewing and discussed the four types of MPO/regional council relationships: 1. MPOs that are staffed by local agency, 2. MPOs that are stand alone, 3. MPOs that are embedded in COGs, 4. MPOs fully integrated into COGs.
- Mayor Moore stated that the research needs to focus on legislative issues as well. Skipper and Lacewell agreed and assured that the research will not only explore how these arrangements work in other places, but how to make it work here.
- Mayor McMillan stated that the Committee needs to explore how we deal with areas with overlapping organizations (MPOs, RPOs, etc) and how the organizations can work better together.
- Mayor Norman asked if it would be possible to scale down the number of organizations. Mayor McMillan concurred that it would be good to combine some of these organizations as they are duplicative.
- Lacewell reviewed the Memorandum of Agreement between the MPO and GNRC, highlighting the goals. She asked steering committee members to approach their work on the Steering Committee as advocates for the Middle Tennessee region as opposed to their respective boards.
- Skipper reviewed the scope of work:
 - Phase 1 – fact finding
 - Phase 2 – determining what we want to do
 - Phase 3 – identifying barriers to implementation
 - Phase 4 – developing an implementation strategy
- Mayor Bradley asked about the difference between regional governments and governance and if any of the peer cities to be reviewed were regional governments. Skipper said that Metro in Portland, Oregon and the Met Council in Minneapolis, Minnesota are the two examples in the US of regional governments and while they are in the peer set, that this effort is focused on improving “regional governance,” not on establishing a “regional government.”
- For the purposes of this discussion, “Regional governance” is defined as collaboration/coordination among local communities across the region that results in regional plans, policies, and other jointly decided actions. “Regional government” is a reference to a layer of government that takes on services traditional provided by local or state government agencies. It is often governed by a body that is popularly elected, or appointed by the Governor.
- Lacewell presented staff recommendations for how MPO and GNRC stakeholders and partners would be included in the evaluation. She said that there would be two groups that are consulted throughout the process including one group comprised of agencies that provided funding to the MPO and GNRC, and another group that included representation from non-profits, business groups, and other public organizations that work alongside the MPO and GNRC on a regular basis.
- Skipper stated that the Steering Committee will meet at least four more times to review the research/analysis associated with each phase of work (described in the scope). The next meeting will be on October 25, as there are other meetings on that day that many members will be attending. An email will be sent out to confirm members to confirm the date.
- Skipper and Lacewell offered to have an outside facilitator lead future discussions and provide a non-affiliated voice. Mayor McMillan said she didn’t think that necessary and other Committee members concurred.

- Mayor Burgess asked how regional councils that address numerous different issues manage that in regard to meeting requirements, staffing, etc. Staff confirmed that that is something that will be a part of the research into peer regional councils and that they will collect organizational charts, board and committee structures, and meeting schedules for other regional councils.
- Skipper mentioned that staff also will be providing the Steering Committee with the organizational charts and responsibilities of the relevant Middle Tennessee organizations.
- Anthony Holt stated the importance of looking into State law to ensure that the options the committee considers are in fact legally possible. Skipper and Lacewell confirmed that of the four MPO models discussed, there are only statutory limitations on the MPO as a standalone model.
- Vice Mayor Briley discussed that the committee should use this effort to build consensus at the State Legislature for regional planning, so that even if new legislation is not needed, there is buy-in on this effort.
- Skipper and Lacewell agreed and stated that while there is no plan to hire an outside lobbyist, the committee should be talking with members of the legislature about the importance of better collaboration in the region. It is important for members of the legislature to be informed on the objectives and progress of this committee.
- Sabrina David (Federal Highway Administration) discussed the need to ensure that the federal funds that go to the MPO fund their intended purpose. Skipper and Lacewell ensured that would continue.
- The meeting was adjourned.