

# Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Development Commissions (RDCs)

## [Area Transportation Partnerships \(ATPs\)](#)

## [Metropolitan Planning Organizations](#)

## [Regional Development Commissions \(RDC\)](#)

### **Authority**

[Minnesota Statute 462.381 to 462.398](#) (1969) established Regional Development Commissions to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation and to insure the coordination of state, federal, and local planning efforts in their respective geographic areas. Part of this authority relates to providing Mn/DOT with input on goals, policies, programs, and projects. All state departments and agencies shall make available to the RDC any studies, reports, data, and other informational and technical assistance (within financial and personnel limitations).

In response to ISTEA and a request from the public for a sub state geographic focus on transportation decisions, Mn/DOT proposed the use of Area Transportation Partnerships in the Transportation Investment Process to integrate regional transportation priorities within each region of the state. ATP's were formed in 1993 and have been used in the STIP development process since that time.

The Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) are designated by the provisions of 23 USC 134 to serve as the forum for cooperative transportation decision making for the respective metropolitan planning area. A metropolitan planning area is defined as the urbanized area consisting of a central place(s) and adjacent urban fringe that together have a minimum residential population of at least 50,000 people and generally has an overall population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile of land area. In addition to the urbanized area, the metropolitan planning area includes all adjacent land that is anticipated to become urbanized within the twenty year planning horizon.

## **Agency Role(s)**

ATP boundaries generally follow the Mn/DOT District State Aid boundaries. ATP's are partnerships of traditional and nontraditional transportation professionals and interested parties. The primary role of an ATP is to bring together the federally funded transportation improvement recommendations of the RDCs, MPOs, Mn/DOT, and other transportation partners into an integrated list of transportation investments for its region. This integrated list is called the Area Transportation Improvement Program (ATIP). The ATIPs from each of the 7 districts and the Metro Division are combined to make up a large part of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Once the draft STIP is complete, the ATPs are provided the opportunity to review and comment on it.

Once the STIP has been completed and approved, it must be amended to include any new projects to any already identified within the STIP. These amendments are usually initiated by the respective transportation partner in consultation with the ATP.

Through the MOU with the RDC and MPO, Mn/DOT provides programs (ATIP, STIP, SP&R) and projects to the RDCs and MPOs for review. The RDCs and MPOs submit comments back to Mn/DOT.

## **Agency Areas of Concern**

The ATP has specific interest in the investment of transportation funds, especially federal funds. The RDC and MPO have a general overall interest in transportation in Minnesota and specific interest in projects that affect the transportation systems in their respective regions or urban areas. As coordinating agencies responsible for dissemination of information, public involvement is of specific interest as well.

## **Agreement(s)**

Memorandums of Understandings (MOU) between the RDC and Mn/DOT and the greater Minnesota MPOs and Mn/DOT exist regarding intergovernmental review of transportation programs and projects. The MOUs establish a procedure for evaluation, review, and coordination of highway, transit and airport programs and projects.

In addition to the executed MOUs between Mn/DOT and the greater Minnesota MPOs regarding Intergovernmental Review, Mn/DOT has entered into a tri-party MOU (Mn/DOT-MPO-Transit Operator) which delineates in more detail the cooperative planning process in each metropolitan planning area. These MOUs do not negate or supersede the Intergovernmental Review MOU.

**ATPs, MPOs and RDCs**  
HPDP / MnDOT

In addition, joint FHWA/FTA Planning Regulations are periodically issued to ensure that a viable transportation planning process is carried out in cooperation with the State and the operators of publicly owned transit services.

Each RDC and MPO enters into an agreement with Mn/DOT. The RDCs and MPOs are required to develop an Annual Transportation Work Program. The work program typically includes the following elements:

- Communication/Coordination Activities
- Technical/Professional Assistance
- Plan, Policy, and Project Review (MOU procedures)
- Planning and Administrative Support
- Transportation Plans/Planning