

To: Transportation Committee
From: Jennifer Carrier, CRCOG Director of Transportation
Date: April 13, 2017
Subject: CTDOT RPO Coordination Unit Roles and Tasks

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), in an effort to improve their services and responsiveness, has been meeting to identify and discuss the roles and responsibilities of their Regional Planning Organization (RPO) Coordination Unit. As you may know, Mr. Grayson Wright from CTDOT is CRCOG's RPO Coordinator.

CTDOT has prepared a draft document that outlines the current roles and responsibilities of the Unit – falling into three categories: Administrative, Liaison, and Educational. Attached is the CTDOT draft document and the below generally summarizes these categories.

Administrative Roles

- Administration of federal transportation rules and regulations pertaining to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Council of Governments (COGs)
- Administration of State statutes, regulations, policies and directives pertaining to MPOs and COGs (includes Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) coordination and invoice processing, Long-Range Regional Transportation Plans, Public Involvement, Corridor Studies, and Funding Programs).

Liaison Roles

- COG liaison
- Attendance at CRCOG Transportation and Policy Board meetings
- Attendance at other regional meetings (e.g. studies, technical advisory committee meeting)
- Respond or obtain responses to COG's questions on studies, projects and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendments
- Request meetings with CTDOT staff or the Commissioner's office if requested by a COG or municipal official
- Facilitate responses to COG or municipal officials regarding questions on various programs and topics (e.g. Federal and state earmarks, TIGER grants)
- Function as CTDOT liaison to OPM for coordinating CTDOT's review of Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) Strategic Plans
- TIP / STIP Coordination
- Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STP) Coordination
- CTDOT Capital Plan Coordination

Educational Roles

- Provide monthly forums, to brief COG directors and staff on various transportation-related programs, processes, procedures, requirements and resources and to provide a forum for discussion of topics of interest or concern to COGs.
- Forward to COG staff announcements of relevant webinars, various funding opportunities, and topics of interest.
- Coordinate opportunities to participate in various courses and workshops on transportation topics.

CTDOT is seeking input to determine how they can better meet our needs in these three categories. They are specifically looking for us to identify activities that are most beneficial and activities that they are not performing but feel it would be beneficial to our RPO if they performed. We will be looking for any input you may have at the upcoming April 24 Transportation Committee meeting.

ROLES & TASKS OF RPO COORDINATION UNIT

DRAFT (as of 4-10-2017)

ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES

Administration of federal transportation rules and regulations pertaining to MPOs and COGs:

- Ensure that the federal transportation planning process and the federal planning laws, rules, regulations and executive orders are being followed by the COGs.
- On-demand, respond to requests from FHWA Division staff for copies of and information on COGs invoices, UPWPs, regional LRTPs, quarterly reports, etc.

Administration of State statutes, regulations, policies and directives pertaining to MPOs and COGs:

- Ensure that State statutes, regulations and policies such as State travel policies, (including reimbursement rates for meals and mileage) for which FHWA has delegated responsibility to CTDOT) are being followed by the COGs when undertaking and requesting federal reimbursement for PL-funded tasks and studies.
- Ensure that State statutes, regulations and policies are being followed by the COGs when undertaking State-funded studies, if the Unit is asked to function as project manager for such studies.

Unified Planning Work Programs (UPWPs):

- Coordinate the development and the implementation of the regions' Unified Planning Work Programs.
 - Prepare, in cooperation with FHWA & FTA and appropriate CTDOT offices, guidance for COGs' preparation of UPWPs & distribute the guidance to COGs.
 - Review draft UPWPs
 - Meet with and coordinate with FHWA & FTA to discuss and jointly provide feedback to COGs
 - Transmit draft final UPWPs to FHWA & FTA for joint final approval
 - Forward to COG directors and planning staff a copy of the letters received from FHWA/FTA approving the COGs' UPWPs.

- Review, approve, and if required, seek federal approval of amendments to UPWPs.
- Review and distribute the Planning Agreement that goes along with the UPWP.
- Respond to requests from FHWA's CT Division staff for copies of quarterly reports and UPWPs.

Invoices:

- Review and sign off on COG's' monthly invoices submitted for work done on Planning tasks identified in the Work Program
- Coordinate with Finance & Administration and External Audits, when necessary, to resolve questions and address issues pertaining to invoices, B, F & O Rates, address changes, etc.
- Prepare and respond to requests of FHWA & FTA for information on COGs invoices and related practices & procedures followed.
- Coordinate final payments consistent with audit reports with various regions; and coordinate with internal and external parties as needed.

Travel & Purchase Requests:

- Receive, review and approve COG staffs' TA requests & purchase requests
- Seek FHWA & FTA approval of purchases exceeding \$5,000
- Update and distribute to COG staff revisions to travel policies, mileage reimbursements and procurement rules, regulations and policies.

Audits/ Auditors:

- Guidance Letters for audits of COGs: Seek input from External Audits, prepare guidance letters and e-mail to COGs.
- Review and, when appropriate, update for use by State Auditors' Office in conducting a Statewide Single Audit, a Sub Recipient Monitoring- Internal Control Summary.
- Respond to State Auditor's request for copies of quarterly reports for several regions.
- Meet with and respond to information requests from state auditors when the RPO Coordination Unit is being audited.

Long-Range Regional Transportation Plans (LRTPs)

- Ensure schedule of LRTP update is in line with federal requirements.
- Provide guidance to COGs re preparation of long-range transportation plans to identify items that FHWA, FTA, and CTDOT want them to include in their plans
- Coordinate review of RPO's LRTPs with various offices within the Department.
- Review and provide to COG staff feedback on their LRTPs to ensure that all federal requirements pertaining to the LRTPs and the metropolitan planning process are met.
- Attend RPOs' public meetings on LRTPs

Public Involvement Procedures

- Periodically review and assist in updating CTDOT's PIP document
- Provide to the COGs information for their use in reviewing and updating their PIPs

Project and Program Management Roles

CMAQ Program

- Solicit applications from COGs
- Coordinate CTDOT's review & selection of applications
- Obtain CTDOT management's and FHWA's approval of the applications proposed for selection
- Notify COGs of the status of the municipal applications that they submitted
- Coordinate the assignment of CTDOT project managers for the selected CMAQ projects
- Prepare annual CMAQ report for submittal to FHWA.
- On-demand, respond to questions pertaining to the selection process, the status of the applications, etc.

Corridor Studies

- Prepare or update guidance on corridor study process for COGs to distribute to the member municipalities
- Solicit applications
- Coordinate CTDOT's review & selection of applications
- Inform COG Directors of outcome of selection process
- Request that managers in appropriate CTDOT offices assign project managers & technical support staff to the selected studies

TAP Program

- Prepare, with input from Local Roads staff and FHWA, guidance information on the program and the process for soliciting applications
- Distribute guidance to COGs and solicit from them applications for projects
- Coordinate with CTDOT's Local Roads staff on CTDOT's review & selection of applications

2011 TOD Studies

- Administer the 2011 TOD Pilot Program grant projects (2 of the 11 are still active - all will need to be closed out)

PL-funded Studies and Non-PL Funded Studies

- Administer PL funded studies
- Administer non-PL-funded studies if asked to do so
- Receive, distribute material related to and/ or coordinate reviews of selected PL-funded transportation studies & non-PL-funded studies
- Initiate close out of completed studies

LIAISON ROLES

- Function as CTDOT's liaisons to the COGs.
- Attend MPO & COG policy board meetings and Transportation Advisory Committee or Technical Advisory Committee meetings.
- Represent CTDOT at MPO policy board meetings (if officially designated to do so by CTDOT management).
- Attend project management meetings, technical advisory committee meetings and task force meetings and teleconference calls pertaining to studies in regions to which RPO staff functions as liaison.
- Represent CTDOT at TAC study or task force study meetings as back up when project manager or staff from other CTDOT offices is unable to do so.
- Respond or obtain responses to COGs' questions on studies, projects and TIP amendments.

- Request, on behalf of a COG or a municipal official, meetings with Department staff or the Commissioner's office and/or the provision of information by various CTDOT offices.
- Facilitate responses to COGs' or municipal officials' or staffs' questions on various programs and topics such as federal and state earmarks, TIGER grants, TOD, TAP, etc.
- Function as CTDOT's liaison to OPM for coordinating CTDOT's review of Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) Strategic Plans. Represent CTDOT on the Statewide NRZ Advisory Board.

- **TIP/STIP**
 - Receive and review TIP amendments and actions for the COGs' MPOs received from the Department's STIP unit.
 - Coordinate STIP approval of STIP amendments and actions between the COGs and internal staff;
 - Respond or obtain responses to COGs' questions on or requests for additional information on proposed TIP amendments sent to them for action by their technical transportation advisory committees and MPO policy boards.
 - Prepare written and oral responses to questions on TIP amendments and actions.
 - Attend MPOs' technical transportation advisory committees, MPO policy board meetings and COG meetings at which transportation-related topics are discussed.
 - Inform STIP staff and other appropriate CTDOT staff of MPOs' actions on proposed TIP amendments.
 - Attend RPOs' public meetings on TIPs.

- **Surface Transportation Program (STP) - Urban and Rural**
 - Forward to the COGs copies of the monthly STP Program Summaries by Region prepared CTDOT Capital Services Office.
 - Attend meetings with Department and Regional staffs on projects funded under the STP urban and rural programs
 - Answer or facilitate the provision of responses to questions pertaining to these programs or to projects funded with STP funds.

- **CTDOT's Capital Plan**

- Solicit from, receive and compile for transmittal to bureaus of Engineering & Construction and Finance & Administration COGs comments on CTDOT's draft Capital Plan.
- Facilitate the provision of CTDOT's responses to COGs' and municipalities questions on Capital Plan projects.
- Facilitate the provision of CTDOT's responses to COGs' and municipalities' questions on earmark projects.

EDUCATIONAL ROLES

- Provide monthly forums, via quarterly, in-person RPO Coordination meetings and RPO Teleconference meetings, to brief COG directors and staff on various transportation-related programs, processes, procedures, requirements and resources and to provide a forum for discussion of topics of interest or concern to COGs.
 - Identify appropriate speakers on topics of interest to COG staff.
 - Obtain management approval of potential topics and speakers
 - Contact, confirm participation of and coordinate arrangements with speakers.
 - Develop and distribute meetings agendas to COGs, FHWA, FTA and appropriate CTDOT managers and staff.
 - Reserve meeting rooms
 - Make, and confirm with support staff, technical arrangements for meetings (including obtaining teleconference phone for meetings held in Conference Room A).
- Forward to COG staff announcements of relevant webinars sponsored by FHWA, FTA and other parties.
- Forward to COGs information on various funding opportunities.
- Inform COGs of changes in relevant, transportation-related laws, orders, regulations, rules, policies and procedures.
 - CCOG Handbook – Develop and periodically update, when appropriate (when there are changes in laws, regulations, rules or policies) a COG Handbook.
 - Invoice Procedures Manual – Develop and periodically update when appropriate (when there are changes in procedures, rules or policies)

- Distribute to the COGs information on behalf of other CTDOT offices, federal agencies and other state agencies.
 - Annual mileage reimbursement rates issued by State Comptroller's Office
- Forward to COGs relevant information on topics of interest to COG staff and/or their member municipalities.
- Share with appropriate CTDOT managers and staff, presentations and other information given at COG or MPO policy board or technical transportation advisory committee meetings.
- Offer to the COGs opportunities to participate in various courses and workshops on transportation topics.