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Regional MPO Alliances in Florida: A Model for Setting Megaregion Transportation Policies?

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ABSTRACT

The megaregion concept is increasingly recognized by many disciplines, including transportation planning. In terms of transportation policy setting, consideration must be given to governance, coordination, planning, and programming. The ten identified megaregions in the United States (U.S.) span the jurisdictions of many municipalities, counties, and states. These also encompass many entities responsible for making transportation decisions including metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and other modal authorities.

A megaregion has no intrinsic governance structure allowing it to make policy decisions or develop products. While an efficient transportation system is key to the economic vitality and future maturation of a megaregion, system development may be challenged by diffuse direction and power. Transportation policy setting for a megaregion requires some form of governance structure to define boundaries and networks, develop a vision, produce plans, and communicate with its partners, stakeholders and others including the press.

Many Florida MPOs have formed regional alliances to address regional transportation issues. This paper describes several of these regional alliances, their governance structures, and planning products and activities. In addition, the paper details the joint effort of two of the regional alliances. The agreements, activities, and products of these regional alliances, while applied on a sub-megaregional level, provide one model for megaregion governance regarding transportation systems.

The governance model illustrated by Florida's MPO regional alliances is but one example of many possible governance scenarios for megaregions. The nature and needs of each megaregion are unique and governance structures will need to be tailored to the specific needs of the individual megaregion.

1 INTRODUCTION

2 The megaregion concept is increasingly recognized by many disciplines, including
3 transportation planning. In the 2009 book, "MEGAREGIONS" edited by Catherine L. Ross,
4 the megaregion is described as "one or a grouping of several urban areas, linked by social,
5 economic, demographic, environmental, and cultural ties, joining together to make
6 infrastructure and planning decisions." Acknowledging that megaregions are emerging, a
7 Transportation Research Board Subcommittee has been formed to investigate the topic and
8 identify research needs in that area.

9 In terms of transportation policy setting, consideration must be given to
10 governance, coordination, planning, and programming. The ten identified megaregions in
11 the United States (U.S.) span the jurisdictions of many municipalities, counties, and even
12 states. These also encompass many entities responsible for making transportation
13 decisions including metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), regional transportation
14 authorities, expressway authorities, airport and seaport authorities, bridge authorities,
15 transit authorities and others. A megaregion has no intrinsic governance structure allowing
16 it to make policy decisions or develop products; rather it is subject to the disparate
17 decision-making processes of the various entities within it. While an efficient
18 transportation system is key to the economic vitality and growth of a megaregion, system
19 development may be challenged by diffuse decision-making authority and direction.
20 Transportation policy setting for a megaregion requires some form of governance structure
21 to define boundaries and networks, develop a vision, produce plans, and communicate with
22 its partners, stakeholders and others including the press.

23 The Florida Megaregion, as illustrated in Figure 1, includes the bulk of the eastern,
24 central, and southern part of the state from north of Jacksonville to north of Gainesville and
25 Tampa Bay then south to the Florida Keys. Twenty-two of Florida's twenty-six MPOs fall
26 within this area. A majority of Florida MPOs are formed at the single county level which
27 differs from many MPOs nationwide that encompass many counties. The boundaries of
28 Florida MPOs are illustrated in Figure 2, and noticeably conform to County borders. Figure
29 2 also depicts the urbanized areas as an overlay, with these boundaries being much more
30 notched and irregular than the MPO boundaries. Notice that both the Tampa – St.
31 Petersburg and Miami Urbanized Areas are covered by multiple MPOs, while the First Coast
32 MPO in Jacksonville and METROPLAN ORLANDO each cover more than one urbanized area.
33 The Sarasota-Bradenton Urbanized Area spans three counties and includes two MPOs. In
34 addition, there are portions of other urbanized areas within Sarasota and Manatee
35 counties. The Pensacola urbanized area also includes parts of southern Alabama, forming
36 the Florida-Alabama TPO.

37 In many cases, MPOs in Florida have formed formal or informal regional alliances to
38 address regional transportation issues. By virtue of membership in an MPO and the MPOs
39 participation in the regional alliance, all participants in the MPO planning process have a
40 seat at the regional table. Participants may include local governments, transit agencies,
41 expressway authorities, seaports, and airport authorities. This paper outlines the
42 governance structures and planning products and activities of four regional alliances in
43 Florida - the West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee, the Central Florida
44 MPO Alliance, the Southeast Florida Transportation Council, and the Treasure Coast
45 Transportation Council - as well as the joint effort of two of the regional alliances. The
46 agreements, activities, and products of these regional alliances, while applied at a sub-

megaregional level, provide one model for megaregion governance regarding transportation systems.

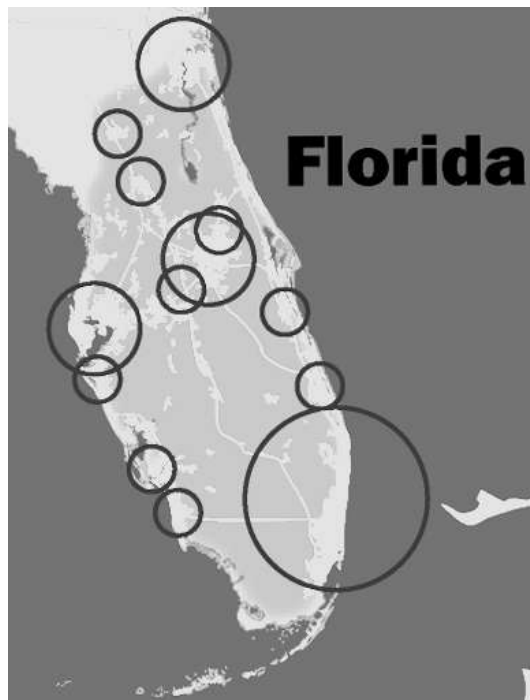


FIGURE 1 The Florida Megaregion with circles indicating the population of urbanized areas. (Source: <http://www.america2050.org/florida.html>)

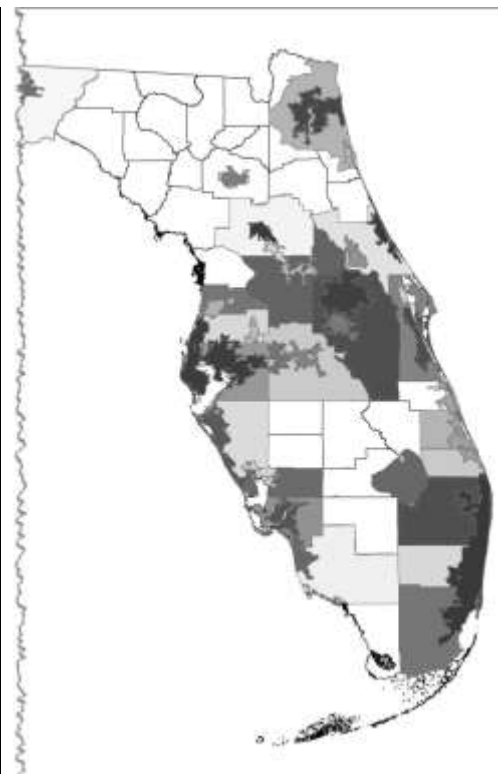


FIGURE 2 MPO Boundaries overlaid with urbanized area boundaries.

METHODOLOGY

Data contained in this paper was collected as part of a larger study conducted for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) assessing MPO long range transportation planning efforts in support of the development of the 2060 Florida Transportation Plan (FTP). Transportation-related planning products produced and activities performed by regional groupings of three or more MPOs were reviewed and summarized for this paper. The activities and products identified as part of this research are primarily available online at the web sites of the regional MPO alliance or the websites of member MPOs. Additionally information was gathered through telephone and in-person interviews, as necessary. The research findings reflect the status of regional transportation planning policy setting activities and products developed by Florida's regional MPO alliances as of November 2010.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTS

In all, a total of 22 of Florida's 26 MPOs have entered into formal arrangements to coordinate regional transportation planning activities with one or more neighboring MPOs. Transportation partners including the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), FDOT, regional transportation authorities, transit agencies, local expressway authorities, seaports, airports, and others have been active, but not voting, members of the alliances. While there is no official oversight of MPO alliances, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) certifies that each MPO planning process is conducted in accordance with Federal statutes and regulations. According to several MPOs that are members of a regional MPO alliance, FHWA does look at an MPO's individual participation with, and obligations to, regional MPO alliances as part of the certification process.

The widespread existence of regional MPO alliances has resulted in numerous regional transportation products including long range transportation plans, goals and objectives, project priority lists, multimodal transportation network maps, transportation demand models, congestion management systems, freight plans, public involvement programs, transit development plans, conflict resolutions processes, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plans and more. Four formal regional alliances involve three or more MPOs and are detailed below and illustrated in Figure 3. Table 1 summarizes the governance structures and composition of regional MPO alliances in Florida that three or more individual MPOs."

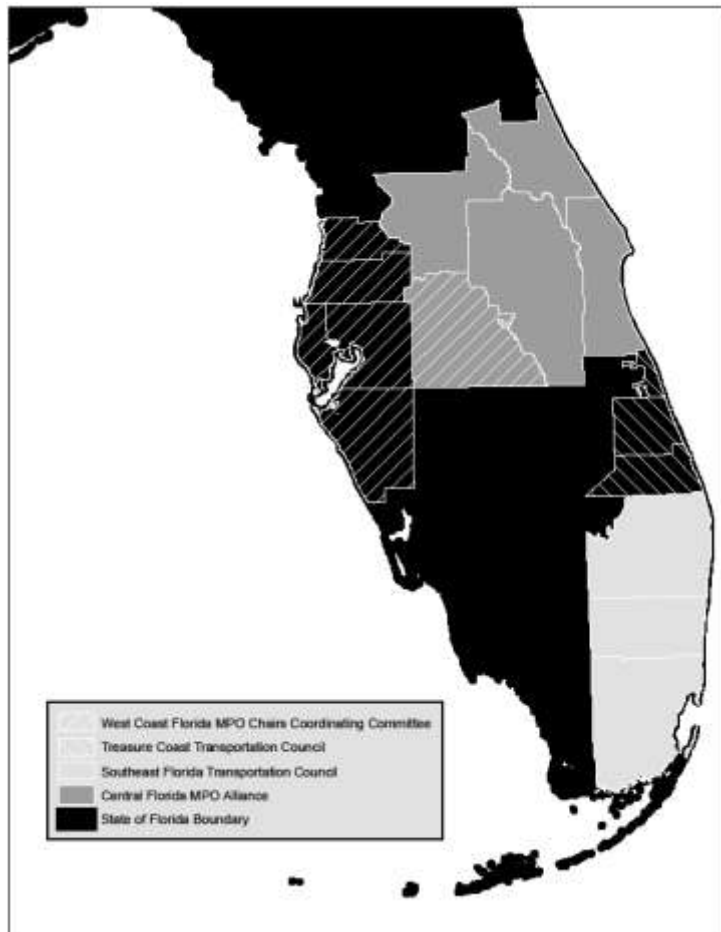


FIGURE 3 Florida MPO alliances of 3 or more MPOs.

West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee

The West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC) has been in continuous operation since it was formed in 1992. Originally formed by a mandate of the Governor and organized by the Florida Legislature, the CCC is now established and governed by an interlocal agreement. The interlocal agreement between the member MPOs addresses the purpose, organization and membership, staffing and conflict resolution, and other pertinent matters. The purpose includes:

- To provide a forum for coordination and communication among the members and its transportation partners
- To coordinate regionally significant transportation projects
- To review the impact of regionally significant land use decisions
- To review the impact of regionally significant transportation projects in the respective transportation improvement programs
- To institute a conflict resolution process

The voting membership of the CCC Governing Board is comprised of the chairs from six (6) individual MPOs including the Hernando County MPO, the Hillsborough County MPO, the Pasco County MPO, the Pinellas County MPO, the Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), and the Sarasota/Manatee MPO. An elected official from Citrus County, a neighboring rural county, is also a voting member of the CCC Board for Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) purposes. Additional non-voting members of the CCC Board include the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Districts One and Seven Secretaries and representatives from Florida's Turnpike Enterprise, four Regional Planning Councils (the Central Florida, Southwest Florida, Withlacoochee, and Tampa Bay RPCs) and the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA). Major modal providers participate on an ad hoc basis.

The CCC Board meets quarterly to develop regional solutions to transportation problems and to ensure a consistent regional planning approach in the West Central Florida super-region. The CCC Staff Directors Coordination Team, comprised of member MPO Directors, FDOT and RPC managers and staff from other partner agencies, meet bi-weekly to carry-out the regional work program and coordinating process. CCC products and activities include:

Organizational Structure and Coordination

- Interlocal agreement (forming the CCC)
- Operating procedures (outlining member responsibilities under the interlocal agreement)
- Memorandum of understanding for a conflict resolution process
- Regional coordination and transportation planning tasks for use in individual MPO unified planning work programs (UPWPs)
- Regional public involvement process comprised of:
 - A website (<http://www.regionaltransportation.org/>).
 - A joint citizens advisory committee (JCAC). The JCAC is composed of eighteen (18) eligible citizens who are members of the Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC) of each CCC member MPO.
 - A regional public involvement plan.
 - A public participation report which assesses CCC public involvement efforts.
- Limited English Proficiency (LEP) policy statement and plan, including discrimination complaint procedures
- Title VI (civil rights) policy statement and discrimination complaint procedure
- CCC and JCAC meeting minutes
- Coordination with the West Central Florida Air Quality Coordinating Committee

- Coordination with FDOT's Tampa Bay Regional Goods Movement Study
- Participation as a voting member of the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) Board
- Participation in an annual joint coordination meeting with the Central Florida MPO Alliance
- Brochure describing the CCC and the regional transportation planning process
- Periodic newsletters on CCC activities

Planning and Technical

- Adopted 2035 cost affordable regional long range transportation plan (RLRTP)
 - A detailed LRTP document addressing highways, public transit and multi-use trails
 - A summary brochure
- Regional transit action plan, needs assessment and economic impact study
- Designation of a regional roadway network using formal criteria Regional travel demand model development and refinement
- Annual regional (TRIP) project priority list (includes roadway and transit projects)
- Annual regional multi-use trails project priority list
- Regional congestion management system (CMS)
- Regional multi-use trails brochure (prepared in conjunction with the Tampa Bay RPC)
- Regional data sharing and mapping
- Regional geographic information system (GIS)
- Participation in a review capacity in the Courtney Campbell Causeway Bike Lane/Pedestrian Trail Feasibility Study conducted by the Florida Department of Transportation
- Participation in the development of the TBARTA Regional Master Plan
- Participation in the *One Bay: Livable Communities* visioning process

Planned CCC Products and Activities

- 2008/2009 public participation report
- Bi-annual newsletters on CCC activities
- Subcommittee process to look at enhanced coordination of CCC member LRTPs, the TBARTA Master Plan and regional transit agency Transit Development Plans. Reestablishment of the West Central Florida Air Quality Coordinating Committee as the air quality planning arm of the CCC
- Annual regional roadway (TRIP) project priority list
- Annual regional multi-use trails project priority list
- Regional long range transportation plan (RLRTP) update

The 2035 RL RTP, adopted in draft form in November 2009, is the CCC's primary means for coordination in the west central Florida region. The RL RTP was developed using a top down approach in which member MPOs agreed upon a regional multi-modal transportation network, identified needs on the regional transportation network, identified viable regional transportation improvement strategies, developed regional goals,

objectives and measures of effectiveness, identified available revenue sources that could be applied to the regional transportation network and developed a fiscally constrained list of regional transportation projects. In essence, the 2035 RL RTP was developed using a long range transportation planning process that would be used by any individual MPO, including public involvement activities and an advisory committee process.

The RL RTP documents the various data reviewed and decisions made as part of the planning process and provides a basis upon which member MPOs can make regional decisions, including the selection of regional project priorities. The plan is a strong policy mechanism for the regional transportation vision that is integrated into each of the individual member MPO LRTPs as appropriate.

CCC 2035 RL RTP Goals and Objectives

1. Provide a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system that serves the mobility needs of West Central Florida
 - Maintain and improve the regionally significant highway system
 - Maintain and improve an integrated public transportation system that addresses regional mobility, and promotes regional connectivity and customer convenience
 - Support an integrated regional transportation system with efficient connections between transportation modes
 - Support improvements to regional emergency evacuation routes and to related infrastructure
 - Support improvements to regional roadways with a high incidence of crashes
2. Provide a transportation system that contributes to the economic vitality of West Central Florida
 - Improve access to regional activity centers
 - Improve access to regional intermodal facilities on the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) to enhance the movement of people, goods and freight
 - Develop the regional transportation system to support adopted land use plans, and encourage land use and planning decisions that promote an efficient regional transportation system
 - Pursue opportunities to obtain maximum federal and state funding for regional transportation needs
3. Provide a regional transportation system that protects the environment and preserves quality of life
 - Minimize disruption to established communities and environmental justice areas
 - Minimize the adverse affects that regional transportation improvements may have on environmentally sensitive resources and foster their enhancements to such resources

The CCC 2035 RL RTP and other documents and background information pertaining to the West Central Florida Chairs Coordinating Committee reviewed as part of this research can be found at www.regionaltransportation.org.

Central Florida MPO Alliance

The Central Florida MPO Alliance (CFMPOA) was formed in 1997 by METROPLAN ORLANDO and the Volusia TPO (then called the Volusia County MPO) as a regional collaborative to focus on regional transportation planning issues, including improvements to the I-4 bridge across the St. John's River. The CFMPOA has grown to include a voting membership of six (6) MPOs including the Space Coast TPO, the Lake-Sumter MPO, METROPLAN ORLANDO, the Ocala/Marion TPO, the Polk TPO and the Volusia TPO. Additionally, FDOT Districts 1 and 5 are both non-voting members of the CFMPOA.

The CFMPOA was originally established and governed by a joint resolution of the participating member MPOs and the FDOT, but the members of the CFMPOA strengthened the formation documentation in 2005 by entering into an interlocal agreement. The interlocal agreement identifies the following as the purposes for the alliance:

- Maintain and update a regional transportation plan
- Pursue funding opportunities to advance regionally significant facilities and services which may include the establishment of transportation project priorities for the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP)
- Serve as a forum for exchanging information between members, especially on projects of regional significance
- Coordinate regional transportation planning and policy development with FDOT
- Identify regional transportation opportunities
- Solve regional transportation issues
- Establish legislative priorities that will assist in addressing the region's transportation needs

The CFMPOA has produced numerous documents and performed various collaborative planning activities over the years. CFMPOA products and activities include:

- Joint resolution and interlocal agreement
- 2025 Central Florida Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
 - A composite plan from individual MPO plans focusing on regionally significant transportation needs including highway, transit, ITS and trail projects
 - Identified regionally significant highway, transit, and trail corridors
- Annual Central Florida regional project priority list
- "Summary of Transportation Topics of Regional Significance" (a summation of the goals of the Central Florida Long Range Transportation Plan)
- Central Florida Regional Planning Model (CFRPM), covers the CFMPOA MPOs in FDOT District 5 and the northeast portion of Polk County which is part of FDOT District 1)
- Annual Central Florida legislative program
- Central Florida MPO Alliance web page hosted on the METROPLAN ORLANDO website (<http://www.metroplanorlando.com/site/partnerships/cfmpoa.asp>)
- Participation in the initiation of commuter rail service (SunRail) and express bus service in Central Florida
- Products and activities to support the *myregion.org* initiative

- PennDesign Central Florida, a study conducted by a team from the University of Pennsylvania focusing on the economic, environmental and demographic impacts that are projected to occur in the region by 2050
- “How Shall We Grow?” – a 15-month visioning process which serves as a framework for regional land use and transportation plans
- “Connecting for Global Competitiveness - Florida’s Super Region” – Using computer-aided analysis based on population and job projections, this study presents two alternatives for the Central Florida Super Region in 2050, one that follows growth patterns already established in Florida and one that considers the potential for compact urban centers and infill development along transit corridors given the impending presence of high speed rail and local transit opportunities
- Central Florida Smart Growth Alliance (as an outgrowth of the CFMPOA process)
- Participation in an annual joint coordination meeting with the West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC)

Planned CFMPOA Products and Activities

- Annual Central Florida regional project priority list
- Annual legislative priorities
- Central Florida Long Range Transportation Plan update

The CFMPOA used a bottom-up approach to develop the Central Florida LRTP. It is a composite of the individual CFMPOA member MPO LRTPs and reflects a synthesis of those elements of each LRTP that were determined to be regionally significant. The Central Florida LRTP includes a description of the need for regional transportation planning, provides a summary of each member MPO LRTP, broad regional goals, a list of regionally significant priority projects and the cost to implement those projects.

Because it is a composite plan, the Central Florida LRTP is well integrated with the individual MPO LRTPs and serves as an effective tool for conveying regional themes embraced by each of the individual member MPOs. It also provides a basis upon which member MPOs can make regional decisions, including the selection of regional project priorities for funding through the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) and the coordination of regionally significant planning and programming activities.

CFMPOA 2025 Central Florida LRTP Goals and Objectives

- Highways: A safe, reliable, efficient and attractive regional highway system that provides connectivity and capacity for residents, businesses, and visitors
- Non-Highway Modes: A balanced regional transportation system that safely accommodates present and future needs of users on all modes (transit, rail, airports, seaports, spaceport, bicycle, pedestrian)
- Planning & Policy: A transportation planning and policy development process that cooperatively addresses priority regional transportation needs while remaining sensitive to local concerns
- Funding: Funding levels that are adequate to address the region’s short and long range transportation needs in a cost-effective manner

- Land Use/Transportation Coordination: Coordination of land use and transportation planning decisions to optimize transportation efficiency while promoting quality of life and minimizing costs

The CFMPOA 2025 Central Florida LRTP and other documents and background information pertaining to the Central Florida MPO Alliance reviewed as part of this research can be found at www.metroplanorlando.com/partnerships/central-florida-mpo-alliance.

Southeast Florida Transportation Council

Three MPOs in Southeast Florida (the Broward MPO, the Miami-Dade MPO, and the Palm Beach MPO) coordinated informally on regional transportation planning issues for many years. Most of the coordination activities focused on air quality coordination, the implementation of coordinated Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), and the establishment of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA). These three MPOs also collaborated on joint studies and projects such as the Transit Bridge (a Bus Rapid Transit connection between the Broward County and Miami-Dade transit systems) and Tri-Rail services. The three MPOs formed the Southeast Florida Transportation Council (SEFTC) by interlocal agreement in 2005. The SEFTC interlocal agreement states that the SEFTC will be responsible for producing a regional long range transportation plan, a process for prioritizing regional projects, a regional public involvement process, and performance measures to assess the effectiveness of regional coordination activities.

The SEFTC Governing Board meets quarterly and is comprised of the chair or designee of each of the three Southeast Florida MPOs. SEFTC is supported by a committee structure that includes the Regional Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (RTTAC), the RTACC Modeling Subcommittee and the Regional Public Involvement Management Team. The RTACC meets monthly and is comprised of staff from the three Southeast Florida MPOs, FDOT Districts 4 and 6, the Florida Turnpike Enterprise, the SFRTA, the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils (RPCs), Palm Tran, Miami-Dade Transit, the Broward Office of Transportation and the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority. SEFTC products and activities include:

Organizational Structure and Coordination

- Interlocal agreement (forming SEFTC), including a conflict resolution process
- SEFTC and RTTAC meeting minutes
- Regional public involvement process
 - SEFTC website (<http://www.seftc.org/>)
 - A regional public involvement plan
 - A regional public involvement management team (comprised of staff from the three Southeast Florida MPOs) that meets quarterly by phone to discuss regional public involvement issues
 - A joint annual meeting of the three individual MPO Citizen's Advisory Committees
- Participation on the Southwest Palm Beach County and Northern Broward County Mobility Studies Coordinating Committee (a steering committee overseeing mobility studies analyzing the State Road 7 corridor in Broward and Palm Beach Counties)

Planning and Technical

- Adopted 2035 cost affordable regional long range transportation plan (RLRTP)
 - RLRTP document addresses highways, public transit and intermodal facilities
 - An executive summary of the RLRTP
- Designation of a regionally significant corridor network (roadway, rail and intermodal hubs) using formal criteria for determining regional transportation facilities and services
- A regional transit quality of service assessment
- Southeast Florida Regional Planning Model (SERPM) development and refinement
 - Supported by the RTTAC Model Subcommittee comprised of staff from the three Southeast Florida MPOs and FDOT Districts 4 and 6
- Annual regional (TRIP) project priority list (includes roadway, transit and intermodal projects)
- Participated in the development of a regional greenways and recreational links plan
- Participated in the development of a regional freight plan
- Participated in the development of regional mobility studies
- Integrated Transportation Information System (ITIS) provides a variety of technical data for the region
 - Interactive GIS mapping
 - Information on select communities in the region, including community history
 - Publicly accessible through the SEFTC website

Planned SEFTC Products and Activities

- Annual prioritized list of regional roadway and transit projects
- A regional public involvement process
- Performance measures to assess the effectiveness of regional coordination activities
- A regional transit Smartcard system that would coordinate transit travel throughout the three-county SEFTC area
- Support for restored Amtrak rail service along the east coast along the Florida East Coast rail corridor
- Participation in the ongoing South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis Study being conducted by FDOT
- Regional long range transportation plan (RLRTP) update

The adopted 2035 RLRTP, SEFTC's primary coordination document, is a composite plan that was crafted from the bottom up using a regional transportation model. In creating the RLRTP, the three MPOs: 1) identified needs on the respective county networks; 2) developed regional goals, objectives, and measures of effectiveness; 3) conducted a regional public involvement process (in conjunction with local LRTP public involvement processes); 4) identified available revenue sources that could be applied to the transportation network; and 5) developed a fiscally constrained list of transportation projects for each MPO. The 2035 RLRTP is based on a regional transportation network identified using criteria for roads, transit services, and intermodal hubs. Regional transportation projects were identified in the RLRTP from local projects on the regional

network. The SEFTC RL RTP provides a policy mechanism for establishing a regional transportation vision for the individual member MPOs to follow when making their own planning and programming decisions.

SEFTC 2035 LRTP Goals and Objectives

1. Provide an Efficient and Reliable Transportation System for Regional Passenger and Freight Operations
 - Preserve and expand the existing regional transportation system capacity to support passenger and freight operations
 - Maximize existing system capacity through increased highway and/or transit capacity, tolling, implementation of transportation system management (TSM) and intelligent transportation system (ITS) strategies and technologies
2. Provide Multimodal Access to Major Regional Passenger and Freight Activity Centers
 - Provide competitive travel times
 - Increase mode choice for regional travel
 - Provide efficient regional routes for freight goods movement to and from regional freight hubs and destinations
3. Provide an Integrated Multimodal Transportation System Throughout the Region
 - Increase multimodal connections between regional Origin-Destination (OD) pairs
4. Protect the Region's Environment
 - Improve air quality and minimize air pollution (via alternative vehicle technologies, increased mode split, decreased travel delay time, etc.)
 - Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
 - Protect the natural environment and historic areas
5. Provide for a Safer and More Secure Transportation System for the Region's Residents, Businesses and Visitors
 - Preserve and enhance the capacity of regional evacuation corridors
 - Reduce fatal and injury crashes on regional roads
6. Preserve and Enhance the Quality of Life and Promote Energy Conservation
 - Promote projects that support urban infill and densification
 - Prioritize funding to favor intra-urban improvements
 - Promote the use of alternative vehicle technologies

The SEFTC 2035 LRTP and other documents and background information pertaining to the Southeast Florida Transportation Council reviewed as part of this research can be found at www.seftc.org.

Treasure Coast Transportation Council (TCTC)

On April 10th, 2006 the Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River County MPOs entered into an interlocal agreement to create the Treasure Coast Transportation Council (TCTC) pursuant to the provisions of Chapters 163.01 and 339.175, Florida Statutes. The TCTC was created as an administrative entity to serve as a forum for formal coordination and communication among agencies and organizations involved in regional transportation planning.

The council consists of the Chair and Vice-Chair from each MPO Board (total of six) and three non-voting members, one from FDOT, one from the Florida Turnpike Enterprise and one from the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council. The TCTC meets to coordinate

regional planning issues, projects and funding. The duties of the TCTC include the development, review or updates as needed of:

- a regional long range transportation plan
- a process for prioritizing regional projects
- a regional public involvement process
- performance measures to assess the effectiveness of regional coordination activities

A regional project prioritization and selection process was adopted by the TCTC in May 2007. The regional prioritization process was incorporated into the regional long range transportation plan by the Martin MPO and St. Lucie TPO (a joint plan that covers both MPO areas) and into the Indian River MPO long range transportation plan. The regional project prioritization and selection process is used to develop a project priority list that is submitted to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to fund regionally significant project under the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP).

Summary information and meeting minutes for the Treasure Coast Transportation Council reviewed as part of this research can be found on individual member MPO websites (links to TCTC MPOs can be found at www.mpoac.org).

Table 1 Composition and Governance Structures of Florida MPO Alliances of 3 or More MPOs

	West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee (WCFMPO CCC)	Central Florida MPO (CFMPO) Alliance	Southeast Florida Transportation Council (SEFTC)	Treasure Coast Transportation Council (TCTC)
NUMBER OF MPOs	6	6	3	3
POPULATION	3,961,773	3,873,759	5,429,429	506,987
MPOs	Hernando Hillsborough Pasco Pinellas Polk Sarasota/Manatee	Space Coast Lake-Sumter METROPLAN Orlando Ocala/Marion Polk Volusia	Broward Miami-Dade Palm Beach	Indian River Martin St. Lucie
REASON FOR FORMATION	Legislative mandate	Focus on regional transportation issues including a specific one initially by joint resolution	Informal arrangement initially to address air quality, coordinated ITS, and to establish the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority	Administrative entity to serve as a forum for formal coordination and communication among agencies and organizations involved in regional transportation planning
VOTING MEMBERSHIP	7 – All MPO Chairs plus 1 elected official from neighboring Citrus County	18 – Three members from each MPO	3 – Chair from each MPO	6 – Chair and Vice-Chair from each MPO
NON-VOTING MEMBERSHIP	8	2	0	3 – FDOT, Florida's Turnpike Enterprise, and the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council

	West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee (WCFMPO CCC)	Central Florida MPO (CFMPO) Alliance	Southeast Florida Transportation Council (SEFTC)	Treasure Coast Transportation Council (TCTC)
MEETING FREQUENCY	Quarterly	Quarterly	Quarterly	Bi-Monthly
MPO STAFF DIRECTORS MEET REGULARLY	Bi-weekly	Unknown	RTACC meets monthly	Unknown
INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT	Yes	Yes, 2005	Yes, 2005	Yes, 2006
OPERATING PROCEDURES	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Unknown
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Yes
REGIONAL LRTP INCLUDE MODES	Yes, roadways, public transit, multi-use trails	Yes, highway, transit, trails	Yes, roadway, public transit, intermodal facilities	Yes
REGIONAL NETWORK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
REGIONAL TRAVEL DEMAND MODEL	Yes, by formal criteria	Yes	Yes, supported by RTTAC Model Subcommittee	Yes, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Model (TCRPM); Greater Treasure Coast Regional Planning Model III (GTCRPM III)
REGIONAL PROJECT PRIORITY LIST	Yes, roadways, public transit, multi-use trails	Yes, highway, transit, trails	Yes, roadway, transit, intermodal projects	Yes

Joint Regional Meetings

Two of the alliances described above, the Central Florida MPO Alliance (CFMPOA), and the West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC), also meet jointly once a year. Together, the member agencies span the entire Central Florida Area (see Figure 2), encompassing nearly one-half of the Florida Megaregion. These meetings, though primarily informational, are attended by members of each MPO alliance as well as many other interested parties including:

- MPO Board members and staff of MPOs within each alliance
- City and county government staff
- Congressional office representatives
- Economic development interests
- FDOT District Secretaries and representatives
- Federal Highway Administration representatives
- Federal Transit Administration representatives
- Florida's Turnpike Enterprise representatives
- A Florida Senator
- Media representatives
- Private consultants

- Rail representatives
- Real estate interests
- Regional planning council directors and staff
- Regional visioning interests
- State legislative office representatives
- Transit authority and agency representatives

Meetings are jointly chaired by the chairs of the member alliances. Agenda items include legislative briefings, reports on statewide transportation initiatives, reports on regional transit, high speed rail, and regional visioning projects, and discussions regarding collaboration. In 2010, the group passed two resolutions, one in support of a request for additional high speed rail funding from the federal government and the other relating to support for regional transit initiatives.

Although the alliances have discussed formalization as a forum for transportation issues in the megapolitan area of Central Florida, elected officials are reluctant to commit to forming yet another regional transportation planning entity. Nevertheless, annual joint meetings continue with most participants recognizing value in the meetings. These joint meetings may be viewed as another step toward transportation policy setting for the Florida Megaregion.

Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council

Another organization in Florida that may provide guidance for the transportation decision-making at the megaregion level is the Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council (MPOAC). The MPOAC is a statewide transportation planning and policy organization created by the Florida Legislature pursuant to Section 339.175(11), Florida Statutes, to augment the role of individual MPOs in the cooperative transportation planning process. The MPOAC assists MPOs in carrying out the urbanized area transportation planning process by serving as the principal forum for collective policy discussion.

The organization is made up of a Governing Board (26 members) consisting of local elected officials from each of the MPOs and a Staff Directors Advisory Committee consisting of the staff directors from each of the MPOs. Both meet quarterly. Guided by its own bylaws, the MPOAC includes a Policy and Technical Subcommittee and other committees as assigned by the Governing Board. The body is actively engaged with the Florida Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration to develop and implement statewide and metropolitan transportation policy and guidance. While the body does not create a long range plan or transportation improvement program, per se, it does provide overall guidance to the MPOs in the area of plan and program development. For example, the body developed and agreed on general adherence to financial reporting guidelines for MPO long range transportation plans in order to standardize financial information across the state and simplify the calculation of a statewide funding backlog.

The MPOAC annually prepares legislative policy positions and priorities to be advanced during Florida's legislative session. The MPOAC actively participates in the

activities of the national Association of MPOs (AMPO) and the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) in Washington DC and works with other stakeholder groups to help shape state and national policy regarding metropolitan and statewide transportation issues. The working relationship established among MPOs through this forum has laid a foundation for possible transportation infrastructure and planning decisions at the megaregion level.

ANALYSIS

A driving force behind these regional alliances is transportation funding. In the mid-2000's, the Florida legislature established a program called the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP). The TRIP provides up to a 50% match to local funds on regionally significant transportation projects as identified by two or more MPOs or neighboring counties. Regardless of their beginnings, these alliances have been in place for at least five years. Several commonalities exist among these regional alliances that may render their structure applicable to a megaregion alliance.

Each of the four MPO alliances reviewed has an interlocal agreement in place. Such an agreement, establishing purpose, membership, and general responsibilities, may be implemented at the megaregion level. Inclusion of all MPOs in the megaregion would be essential to the proper functioning and legitimacy of a megaregion alliance. In addition, counties within the megaregion that are not included in an MPO should be provided with the opportunity to participate in either a voting or non-voting capacity to ensure that the perspective of all areas of the megaregion are represented in the decision making process. This is a characteristic that all Florida multi-county MPO alliances share and has resulted in overall buy-in to the process itself and the products developed through that process.

Each regional MPO alliance has defined a regional transportation network and developed a regional long range transportation plan using either a top-down approach like the WCFMPO CCC or a composite plan approach like the remaining regional alliances. These LRTPs serve as a basis for establishing regional funding priorities. The state uses the priorities developed by the regional MPO alliances to make programming and other implementation decisions for a variety of fund types, including a source specifically set aside for regionally significant transportation projects (TRIP). Similarly, a megaregion alliance could define a network and develop a long range plan and priorities in a manner similar to that taken by Florida's MPO alliances.

Perhaps most importantly, each of the MPO alliances has institutionalized a process for bringing all interested parties (federal agencies, state agencies, local agencies and other stakeholders, including the public) together on a regular basis to discuss transportation issues of significant importance to everybody in the region. Even at meetings which do not feature action items on the agenda, participation in the discussion of regionally significant transportation policy issues forms a basis for mutual understanding and cooperation. It is within this governance structure that difficult regional decisions can be brought forward for debate and resolution. In much the same way, megaregion alliances could be formed to consider the most important issues in transportation planning and programming.

CONCLUSION

The megaregion concept clearly reflects the growth areas of the nation and has started the conversation of how these areas lacking any formal authority will make infrastructure and planning decisions. For transportation, existing transportation planning entities, particularly Florida's MPO alliances, provide some insight into one possible approach to creating a megaregion alliance. The nature and needs of each megaregion are unique and governance will likely be tailored to the specific needs of the region. The Florida model does offer the potential for individual tailoring of a megaregion alliance through a memorandum of understanding or interlocal agreement among MPOs and transportation partners within the region.

A number of challenges exist in establishing transportation infrastructure and planning for megaregions. While the some of the nation's megaregions are contained within one state, like Florida, others span several states increasing the potential for complications of various state laws. Elected officials charged with participating in a megaregion alliance may consider another layer of government and additional meetings a burden to their busy schedules. Of course, funding and staffing the alliance is yet another challenge. More research is required to analyze other large-scale policy setting examples across the nation and their applicability to transportation decision-making.