

FTA/FHWA Joint Certification Review Status Report for the Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization

October 21, 2013

Background

The federal Quadrennial Certification Review of the Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (Lincoln MPO) was conducted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on May 7th, 8th and 9th, 2013. The final report of the “FHWA/FTA Joint Certification Review of the Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization” was transmitted to the Lincoln MPO on September 26, 2013. The result of this Certification Review included full resolution of the twelve (12) corrective actions from 2009. The current review includes five (5) commendations, thirteen (13) programmatic recommendations and no corrective actions. In accordance with 23 CFR 450.334, the FHWA/FTA review team jointly certified the Lincoln metropolitan area transportation planning process through September 30, 2017.

Purpose

This is intended as an interim report on planning activity that has occurred since the Federal Certification Review of the Lincoln TMA. As a progress report, this is to fill any information gaps on current planning activity for the MPO, NDOR and FHWA/FTA teams on planning activities addressing the corrective actions as identified in the agreed upon Lincoln MPO Corrective Action Plan.

Overview of Finding Descriptions

Corrective Actions: Items that fail to meet the requirements of the Federal regulations, seriously impacting the outcome of the overall planning process.

Programmatic Recommendations: Items, while less substantial and not requiring action, that are significant enough that FHWA and FTA may have the State and local officials consider taking some action. Typically the recommendations involve the state of the practice instead of regulatory requirements.

Commendations or Noteworthy Practices: Elements that demonstrate well thought out procedures for implementing the planning process.

Commendations - Noteworthy Practices: Elements that demonstrate well thought out procedures for implementing the planning process. FHWA and FTA offer commendations on significant improvements and/or resolution of past findings.

2013 FHWA/FTA Joint Certification Review of the Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization

Findings from this Certification Review include recommendations for improvement and a listing of commendations of the strengths of the Lincoln metropolitan transportation planning process.

Corrective Actions:

No Corrective Actions were identified during the 2013 Certification Review.

Recommendations:

Civil Rights

1. The MPO shall continue to work with the City of Lincoln to integrate Limited English Proficiency and the associated four-factor analysis into the Public Participation Plan. The MPO needs to integrate LEP into the Planning Process and update their public participation plan to reflect the inclusion of the LEP requirements. The review team has coordinated with the Lincoln MPO and determined the MPO LEP process will be fully integrated into the MPO planning process in the near future; therefore we recommend this be accomplished by December 31, 2013 at the latest.
2. The MPO shall continue to work the City of Lincoln to utilize many best practices that have already been developed and are readily available to be integrated into the MPO planning process. The Lincoln MPO must ensure special accommodations, as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are covered on all public outreach events and documents, as well as included in the public participation plan. The Lincoln MPO needs to outline who the correct ADA coordinator is to contact. In addition, the MPO should be actively involved in the development and implementation of the City of Lincoln's ADA self-evaluation and transition plan. The review team has coordinated with the Lincoln MPO and determined the requirements of ADA will be fully integrated into the MPO planning process in the near future; therefore we recommend this be accomplished by December 31, 2013 at the latest.

Coordination

3. The Lincoln MPO should begin strategizing how best to integrate Performance based planning into the Development of the Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Programs. In addition, NDOR and the MPO should begin coordinating to ensure consistent data collection and process between the state and MPO process are in place once the National Performance Measures are in place.
4. The Lincoln MPO shall document the cooperative revenue forecasting and cost estimation process for both the MPO and NDOR. NDOR needs to have their revenues and projects fully integrated into the LRTP and TIP and this needs to be accomplished cooperatively Public Participation

5. The MPO should document the public involvement process and strategies it used for the LRTP update. Also, the MPO (and its planning partners, as appropriate), should consider how to incorporate the various strategies deployed under the Long Range Plan update into the overall transportation planning process and update the Public Participation Plan to reflect those strategies.
6. The MPO should continue to routinely engage the freight community in the planning process, building upon the relationships established during the LRTP update. This will continue to be an increased area of importance nationally and the MPO should continue working to engage the freight industry.

Transportation Improvement Program

7. The Lincoln MPO should develop a process for how to handle projects that are not considered to be of appropriate scale for individual identification in a given TIP year which could be grouped by function, work type, and/or geographic location using applicable classifications under 23 CFR 771 (c) into the development of the TIP.

Travel Demand Modeling

8. Focus on acquiring additional data from traditional and new data sources regarding regional travel patterns (bicycle/pedestrian counts even on a small scale, transit boarding/alighting, cell-phone or automatic vehicle location data for speed or trip distribution, traffic counts specially collected to complete a contemporary data set so proper count coverage exists for screen lines and key locations in the model, etc.)
9. Consider conducting a household survey or NHTS add-on survey, and a transit on-board survey (asking about passengers' actual origins, destinations and trip purpose)
10. Use those new data sources to estimate the model with local data rather than relying so extensively on borrowed data and model structures.
11. Focus in model validation on high-level thematic maps that visualize regional patterns of input socio-economic data and various outputs from the model steps (examples are provided in the text). The goal is to establish that the picture the model draws of regional traffic coincides with the experience of the public and decision makers.
12. Recommend NDOR and MPOs considering the inclusion of data collection for the Lincoln MPO as an activity in the coming years Lincoln MPO Unified Planning Work Program and Statewide Planning work program.
13. The MPO should consider having a sub-committee for travel demand modeling. This subcommittee would be made of Local, State, and Federal staff members to help ensure the travel demand model process and assumptions can all be agreed to during the update of the model. This will ensure a level of confidence in the outputs of the model by all parties who rely on those outputs to make investment decisions for transportation in Nebraska.

Commendations:

1. Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration would like to commend the Lincoln MPO for implementing the Corrective Action Plan in its entirety.
2. The Lincoln MPO recently adopted Complete Street Policy which will help lead the region in developing their roadway systems to consider non-motorized transportation in the project development process. In addition to the complete streets policy we commend the MPO updating the Long Range Plan by developing and implementing a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan will continue to help the Lincoln MPO prioritize the non-motorized elements of transportation throughout the region.
3. Fiscal constraint and the engagement of the public in the discussion to determine funding and future scenarios to determine appropriate strategies. The review team recognized there was a good collaboration between City Public Works and the MPO (city/county planning staff).
4. During the update of the Long Range Plan, the Lincoln MPO developed a robust Project Selection process for prioritizing projects for the inclusion of the LRTP. This included utilizing a weighted approach that relied directly on the goals of the MPO Long Range Planning process.
5. The MPO developed creative strategies to obtain higher levels of public involvement for the LRTP update, including sponsoring workshops, “gaming” and visualization exercises, and a citizen advisory committee. The public involvement exercises included consideration of fiscal constraint and the engagement of the public in the consideration of alternative funding scenarios to determine appropriate strategies.

Certification Action

Transportation planning activities in the Lincoln metropolitan area are being carried out in accordance with governing Federal regulations, policies, and procedures. The MPO's planning process provides adequate representation and input from all levels of local government and individual interest groups on the transportation needs of the metropolitan area. Overall, the MPO's planning activities provide for a transportation planning process that results in the support and development of transportation improvements for the entire area. In accordance with 23 CFR 450.334, the FHWA and FTA hereby jointly certify the transportation planning process in the Lincoln metropolitan area through September 30, 2017.