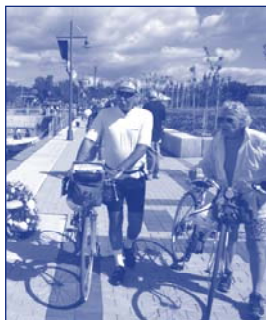


TEA-21 Works!



New York State Association of
Metropolitan Planning Organizations



*A Guide to the Metropolitan Planning
Process and Future Challenges in
Transportation Planning*

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New York State Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

TEA-21 Works

Every urban area is held together by a vast web of roads and highways, bus and rail systems, bike paths and trails. While often taken for granted, this network, like the circulatory system of the body, is vital to the health of



a metropolitan area. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is where the myriad local governments, state and local agencies, and community groups that make up an urban area



come together to decide how to allocate federal funds in order to preserve the vitality of the regional transportation system.

Beginning with the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and continued in the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), the federal government strengthened this cooperative, regional planning process for the simple reason that an individual project does not stand alone but fits into a larger network of transportation systems. An addition or change to a highway or transit line influences not just that individual segment but many connected pieces of the system as well.



TEA-21

Moving Americans into the 21st Century

New York State Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Local Consensus Building

An MPO operates through a community-wide consensus building process. A Policy Board, composed of local elected officials and other policy-makers, makes final decisions about regional transportation plans and projects. The Board is advised by technical and planning committees composed of full-time professional staff from local, state and federal transportation organizations, by committees made up of a variety of public interests and community groups, and by the MPO staff who coordinate and supplement the work of these advisory groups and implement the Policy Board's decisions.



Key Metropolitan Planning Processes

Federal law governing the distribution of transportation funds requires that this metropolitan planning process include the development of a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that outlines a broad vision for the metropolitan transportation system in a metropolitan area. Every two years, the members of the MPO update a Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) that prioritizes a list of transportation projects based on each project's contribution to the LRTP goals and on the amount of available funds. The LRTP and TIP must also conform with any federal Clean Air Act requirements.



Flexibility and Local Choice

The MPOs are committed to the idea advanced in TEA-21 that transportation investments should reflect local choice in a regional context. As such, MPOs strongly support the flexibility given in TEA-21 to be able to shift federal funds between different programmatic categories in response to local priorities as well as the emphasis in TEA-21 on multi-modal planning.

New York State MPOs are committed to the TEA-21 process, with its emphasis on community-wide consensus building, long-term planning, and local choice.

TEA-21 Works!

Current and Future Challenges*

Equitable Treatment of New York's Funding Needs: Each year, New Yorkers pay \$16 billion more in federal taxes than they receive in federal spending. Transportation is one area where New York can justifiably ask for more funding. In terms of personal transportation use and energy consumption, New York has one of the most efficient transportation systems in the country. New York is also a vital national and international center of commerce. Yet, much of its infrastructure is in need of upgrades and replacement. These unique needs are compounded by the fiscal ramifications of September 11.

- Preliminary results of a NYSMPO study on New York's transportation investment needs indicate that there could be a significant funding shortfall in the coming years. Increased federal funding for capital investments in the state's infrastructure will be critical in order to adequately maintain the safety and efficiency of the existing rural and urban transportation system.

Increased Flexibility for Traffic Management: Annual vehicular travel in New York State jumped by 50 billion miles between 1971 and 1995. Yet, the ability to build and expand highways in metropolitan areas is increasingly constrained. This requires MPOs to invest in new ways to make existing infrastructure yield higher capacity through operational improvements (such as improved signal system operations and timing) and by integrating multi-modal systems.

- In order to meet this challenge, MPOs need increased flexibility to use federal funds for strategic investments in highway and transit operational improvements.

Safety, Security and Reliability: In the wake of 9/11, the nation is challenged to make its transportation systems better prepared to prevent and respond to emergencies – including the development of rapid response systems to reroute traffic, supplement transit systems and coordinate inter-organizational and inter-jurisdictional communications.

- To expedite rapid implementation, the federal reauthorization should include provisions to assist MPOs with the costs of planning and deployment of these critical systems.

The Global Economy and Freight Movement: Over \$670 billion in goods are transported to, from, within, and through New York State each year, making the State one of the nation's most active for commodity movement. The increasing globalization of the economy has increased demand for sophisticated, efficient freight movement systems and freight planning.

- The reauthorization should recognize the federal government's responsibility for supporting collaborative decision-making and should continue to ensure that port-access and border and corridors projects are eligible for federal funds.

Integration of Transportation and Community Design: At the beginning of 21st Century, terms such as *quality communities and context-sensitive design* are at the forefront of transportation and community planning. MPOs are pivotal entities to encourage intelligent planning and effective, community-enhancing highway and transit design.

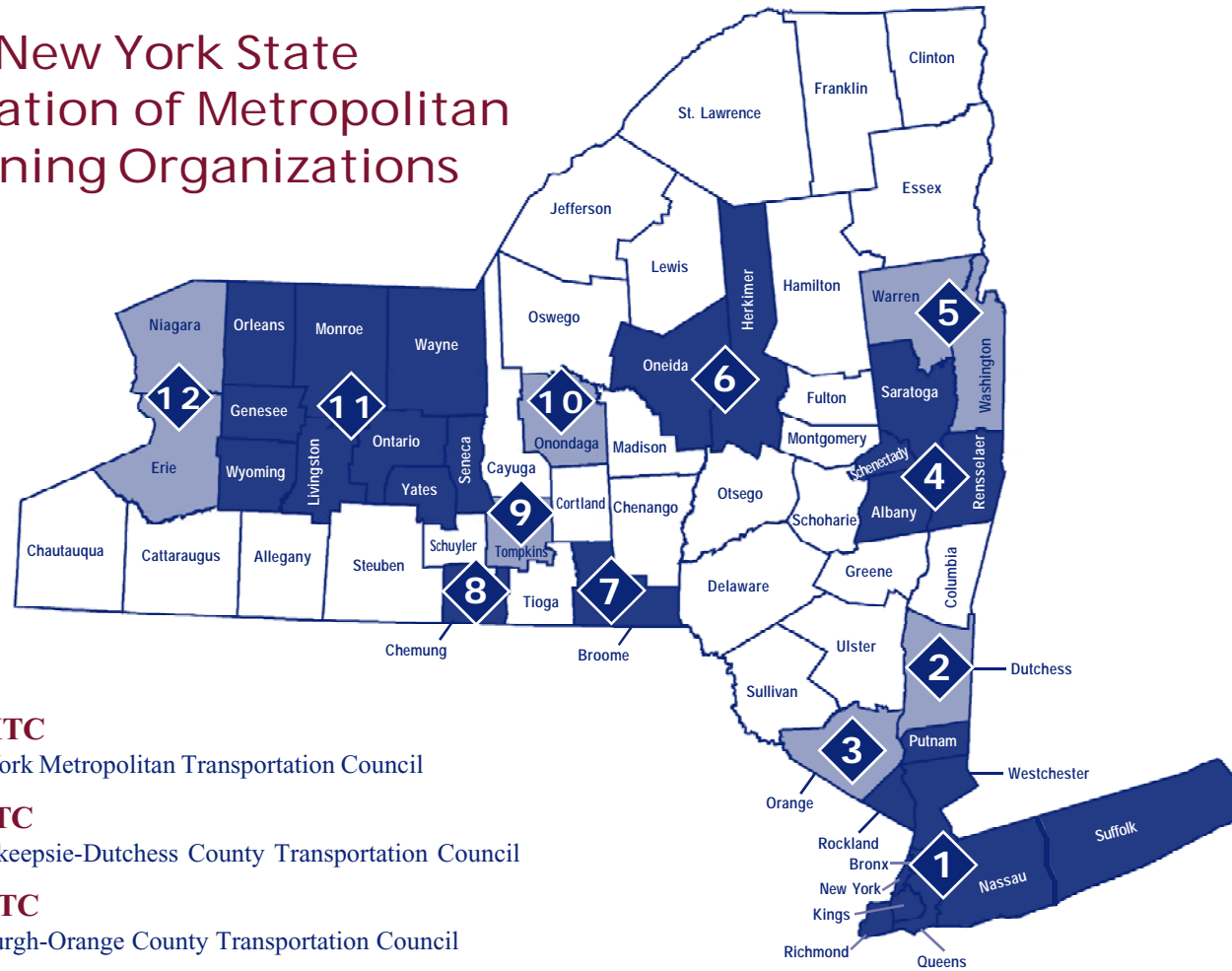
- Increased flexibility to use federal funds for these purposes and increased funding for such projects more generally will be critical to making a difference in the quality of life in New York's varied communities.

Increased Demand for Planning: As evidenced by the list of challenges above, coming years will reflect significantly increased demands on the MPOs. Additionally, many new MPOs will be created as a result of the 2000 Census, causing existing metropolitan planning funds to be spread even more thinly across urbanized areas.

- In order to meet critical future challenges and to accommodate new MPOs, the current highway funding "draw-down" of 1% for metropolitan planning should be increased to 2%.

* For more information on Current and Future Challenges, visit the NYSAMPO's web site: www.nysmpos.org

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