

FY21 UPWP PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dr. Nwoko,

It is always encouraging to see detailed transportation planning efforts in progress for our region. Thank you for your ongoing work on transportation planning and environmental justice. Regarding the draft Unified Planning Work Program, I had the following comments and questions.

1. There is no direct mention of climate change, the climate crisis, global warming or carbon emissions in the 100+ pages of the work program document.

As you know, we face a crisis of global heating due to ongoing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. In our region, transportation remains the largest source of carbon emissions and any plan that anticipates meeting the stated goals of our local governments, the modest goals of the Paris climate treaty or the more ambitious goals necessary for maintaining a livable world for our children and grandchildren will require urgent and dramatic changes to our transportation system. Those changes will require shifts away from single-occupancy vehicles and air travel. And to the extent that climate change is not mitigated through a worldwide effort to decrease carbon emissions, large temperature increases and more extreme weather events will also have substantial impacts on our transportation systems. As experts in this field, I have no doubt that your team are aware of these factors. Will these factors play a substantial role in the planning activities outlined by this work program for the coming fiscal year?

Could you update the report to state explicitly:

- a) that a top priority for all planning activities will be reducing carbon emissions and increasing climate resilience;
- b) that vehicle miles traveled and air travel flights must be decreased; and,
- c) that the MPO will allocate funds primarily for public and active transportation?

I'm not fully informed about the different steps in your process, so it may be that the direct responses necessary to effect a dramatic change to our transportation system are instead outlined in different reports and documents from the MPO. If so, what are the more directly relevant plans and reports?

2. If the MPO were responding boldly to an urgent crisis that directly affects all of our residents, would this be the same allocation of planning priorities and funds? Does the MPO have the necessary direction from our elected representatives to encourage planning for necessary, transformational changes to our local transportation system? If not, what can the interested public do to help?

Sincerely,
Nick Doty
Durham, NC

Nick,

Thanks for taking the time to review the MPO's draft FY 2021 UPWP and for your observation and comments regarding climate change. The MPO has always recognized the need for climate change adaptation in the transportation sector and consequently has devoted time and resources through various UPWP planning activities, notably, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), etc. Through the development and implementation of the MTP and TIP, the MPO has sought to reduce emissions by approving multimodal and balanced transportation. This balanced transportation system will provide opportunities for greater use of alternative modes of transportation, including public transit, bicycling, and pedestrian movement. Transportation Demand Management programs (TDM) and land use policies that reduce use of single occupant vehicles and promote transportation choices are also important elements of the MPO transportation policy.

The factors you alluded to in your email have played and will continue to play substantial role in the MPO planning process. However, Key considerations that influence the extent to which the MPO address climate change are the prevailing federal and State regulations and funding. The draft FY 21 UPWP was developed in accordance with federal requirements. Responses to your questions are embedded below:

Could you update the report to state explicitly:

a) that a top priority for all planning activities will be reducing carbon emissions and increasing climate resilience;

Response: This is implied but can be made more explicit.

b) that vehicle miles traveled and air travel flights must be decreased; and,

Response: One of the main goals and top priority of the MTP and air quality planning is the reduction of VMT. As mentioned previous, the MPO is doing everything within its purview; investment on bike/ped and transit, encourage local governments to allow more dense and mixed-use developments, etc.

c) that the MPO will allocate funds primarily for public and active transportation?

Response: MPO is only responsible for the allocation of STBG-DA and allocate those funds consistent with the federal regulations.

I'm not fully informed about the different steps in your process, so it may be that the direct responses necessary to effect a dramatic change to our transportation system are instead outlined in different reports and documents from the MPO. If so, what are the more directly relevant plans and reports?

Response: Yes, MTP and TIP

2. If the MPO were responding boldly to an urgent crisis that directly affects all of our residents, would this be the same allocation of planning priorities and funds? Does the MPO have the

necessary direction from our elected representatives to encourage planning for necessary, transformational changes to our local transportation system? If not, what can the interested public do to help?

Response: This is a loaded question, nonetheless very good question. Perhaps, I'd suggest we talk further for more clarification. But, I would say that the MPO is constrained by the current funding formula and philosophy. Public can help with a push for legislative and regulatory changes to policies and funding that currently inhibit and handcuff the MPO in pursuing and implementing our community supported vision and goals. Other actions that will result to quick gains are but not limited to:

- * Reverse current administration intent to relax mpg goals in CAFÉ standards.
- * More stringent tail pipe emissions standards
- * More funding for non-auto
Funding flexibility

Thank you again for your thoughtful comments

Felix