

# Metropolitan Planning Organizations: A Nexus Between Federal Highway Funding and Local Land Use Planning

The University of Texas School of Law  
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Tom Nuckols  
Director, Land Use Division  
Travis County Attorney's Office

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## What does federal highway funding have to do with land use planning?

- Land use planning and transportation are connected.
  - Transportation systems steer where future development will occur, affect development density and other community characteristics, affect housing affordability and economic development patterns, etc.
- We remain an auto-centric society, so land use planning remains heavily auto-centric.
  - County and city subdivision and site plan regulations and review processes continue to focus heavily on various requirements for local roadways.

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## Federally-funded highways can affect land use as much *or more* than local roadways.

- Counties and cities control when, how and where local roads are built
  - They control funding for roads (e.g., public improvement district bonds, voter-approved general obligation bonds, non-voter-approved certificates of obligation, etc.).
  - They have regulatory control over roads (development exactions, plat approval, site plan approval, etc.).
- Since it affects land use, should also have some measure of local control over federal highway funding.

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## The Basics of Federal Highway Funding

- Administered by State Departments of Transportation (DOTs).
- Process
  - Congress periodically enacts a transportation bill that includes the dollar amounts that are ***anticipated*** to be sent to state DOTs based on formulas set by law.
  - The ***actual*** amounts sent to state DOTs are included in Congress' annual federal budget.

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## The Basics of Federal Highway Funding (cont.)

- Process (cont.)
  - The appropriated federal funding is then distributed to state DOTs.
  - State DOTs then spends or distributes the federal funding for individual projects.
    - There is typically a requirement for local matching funds for each project.
- ***Under federal law, state DOTs may only spend/distribute federal transportation funding in accordance with local transportation plans approved by the Metropolitan Planning Organization.***

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## Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)

- Federal law requires creation of an MPO for each “Urbanized Area” (UA) with a population of over 50,000.
  - The MPO is created by agreement of the governor and units of general purpose local government representing at least 75% of the urbanized area’s population.
- The MPO is governed by a “Transportation Policy Board” (TPB) consisting of local elected officials, officials of public agencies administering major modes of transportation, and appropriate state officials.

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