



A Citizen's Guide For Participating In The Transportation Planning Process



Why Should I Get Involved?

You already are! Chances are you used some form of transportation today. Whether you drove a car, rode a bike, took a bus, used a wheelchair, or walked; you are involved. Transportation is what allows us to get to and from work, school, meetings, the doctor, the grocery store, special events, vacations, etc.. It affects our quality of life, from the air we breathe, to the safety of our families, to our own personal budgets.



The transportation system is designed to serve you. The funding required to develop and maintain our transportation system comes from several sources-including your tax dollars!

Your input is critical to the overall quality of our region's transportation system, and to ensure that your transportation needs are being met.

- ❖ What forms of transportation do you use?
- ❖ Are you satisfied with your choices?
- ❖ Do you have any problems with this method?
- ❖ Would you like more options?

This booklet is designed to help inform you about the GF/EGF MPO, the transportation process, and ways you can get involved.

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What is the GF/EGF MPO?

The Grand Forks/East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization (GF/EGF MPO) serves as a planning organization for the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks area. Its principal role is to harmonize the activities of federal, state, and local agencies; and to render assistance and encourage public participation in the development of the area. Specific programs the GF/EGF MPO is directly involved in include: community development assistance; environmental and intergovernmental coordination; and areawide transportation and transit planning.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO)

MPOs are federally mandated for urbanized areas with populations over 50,000. MPOs provide regional transportation planning and coordination for their designated region. The MPO allows the region to qualify for federal highway funds, transit funds, and earmarks. Without these funds, the cost of transportation would rely entirely on local and state resources. The GF/EGF MPO leverages over ten million dollars in funds per year for transportation projects in the region and is responsible for ensuring these funds are used in a fiscally constrained manner.

The GF/EGF MPO consists of the Executive Policy Board, the Technical Advisory Committee, and planning staff.

- ❖ The **Executive Policy Board** is an eight-member policy board consisting of elected local and regional officials that represent the metropolitan area. They guide staff's planning efforts, assist in developing plans, and make the final decisions on key documents and amendments.
- ❖ The **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** is comprised of representatives from the Cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, the Counties of Grand Forks and Polk, the States of Minnesota and North Dakota, and MPO staff members. They provide recommendations on technical issues, critique documents and plans, and suggest revisions.
- ❖ The **GF/EGF MPO Planning Staff** is comprised of planning and technical professionals that are responsible for the day-to-day operations. The staff provides assistance and support to the TAC and the Executive Policy Board, and organizes public participation activities.

Understanding the Transportation Planning Process

Transportation projects are only implemented after a long, careful, and inclusive process. Below is a very brief outline of key components in the transportation planning process.



- ❖ Population, employment, freight movement, land use, and traffic flow trends are researched and analyzed.
- ❖ Public participation opportunities are created and implemented throughout the entire planning process (public meetings, surveys, charettes, public hearings, and comment periods).
- ❖ Public input is used to accomplish the following:
 - Identify the goals, visions, opportunities, and needs of the region.
 - Identify regionally significant projects.
 - Define alternative strategies.
 - Develop a long-range transportation plan, which includes a list of eligible projects.

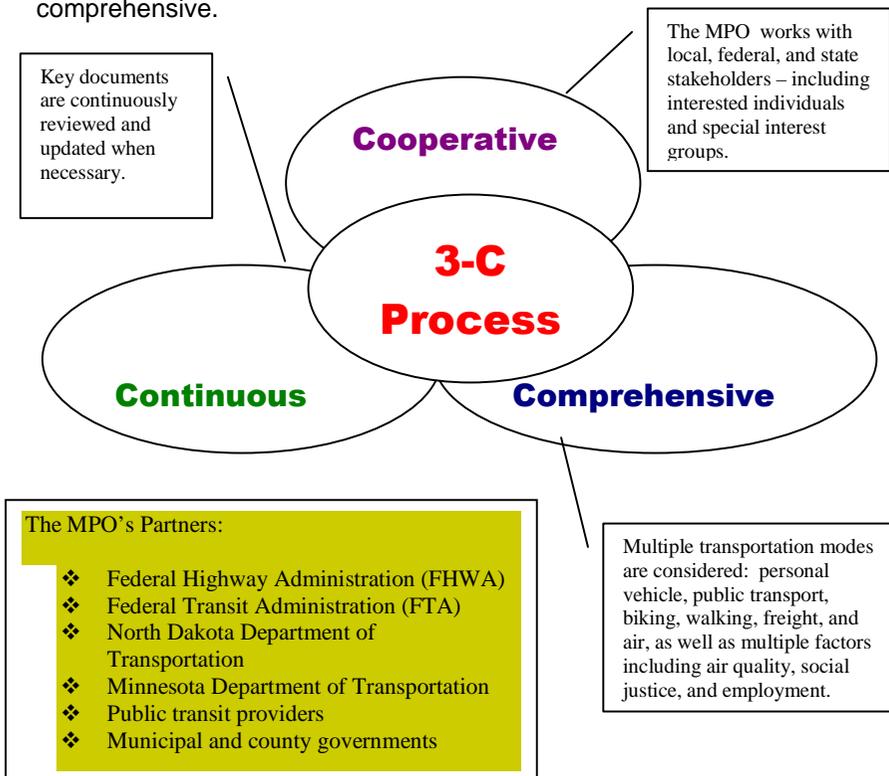
GF/EGF MPO Project Eligibility Criteria

1. Projects must be within the GF/EGF MPO study area.
2. The project must be listed in the Long Range Transportation Plan and correspond with one or more goals identified in the plan.
3. Road projects must be on roads functionally classified as a Minor Arterial or above if in urban boundaries or a Rural Major Collector if outside of city boundaries (To look up Functional Classification Map for definitions and road classification visit www.theforksmmpo.org).
4. The projects must be sponsored by an agency authorized to receive federal funds (a taxing entity).
5. Eligible projects are typically funded with a maximum 80% state or federal money. A minimum match of 20% local funds is required.

Transportation Planning Principles

The planning process is more than merely a listing of future highways and planned transit upgrades; it requires developing strategies for operating, managing, maintaining, and financing the area's transportation system in order to advance the region's long-term goals.

3-C Process: MPOs are guided by the 3-C process, which means the transportation planning process is continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive.



GF/EGF MPO Plans and Programs

The GF/EGF MPO coordinates and completes many plans, projects, and studies; however there are three main federally required plans and programs that the MPO is responsible for. These plans and programs are designed to create a vision, implement and monitor projects, and provide financial guidance. They are:

- ❖ Long Range Transportation Plan
- ❖ Transportation Improvement Program
- ❖ Unified Planning Work Program

To view these and other documents, to see the GF/EGF MPO study area, and various maps such as the bike map, the traffic count map, etc., go to: www.theforksmpo.org.

Long Range Transportation Plan

Transportation Systems Addressed In The Long Range Transportation Plan

Street & Highway
Transit
Public Participation
Regional ITS Architectural
Bike/Pedestrian
Rail & Freight

Other Key Components

Safety
Security
Coord. with Land Use
Congestion Management
Fiscally Constrained

- ❖ **What:** The Long Range Transportation Plan is the main MPO document. It guides future transportation improvements within the region, and sets goals that are developed from federal guidelines and public and stakeholder input. The plan documents the transportation needs for the future, lists strategies and alternatives for addressing those needs, projects available revenues, and anticipates the costs of projects.
- ❖ **How Often:** The Long Range Transportation Plan is typically updated every five-years with a minimum horizon of twenty-years.
- ❖ **Significance:** For a project to be funded with federal dollars, it must coincide with the goals in the Long Range Transportation Plan. All other plans and programs are linked to the Long Range Transportation Plan.

Purpose: To develop and maintain a multimodal transportation system that serves regional needs, promotes safety, supports economic development, and provides personal choice in the movement of people and goods.

Transportation Improvement Program (T.I.P.)

- ❖ **What:** The T.I.P. is used as a management tool to gauge progress in achieving the goals identified in the Long Range Transportation Plan. It documents the anticipated costs of projects, and the expected revenues from all three funding sources: local, state, and federal. Basically, the T.I.P. is the tool that allows federal funds to be programmed towards projects.
- ❖ **How often:** The T.I.P. identifies and lists transportation projects for implementation within the next four federal fiscal years. Projects may be programmed for periods beyond the four years provided they are prioritized, and funding sources are identified. It is updated annually.
- ❖ **Significance:** To receive federal funds, projects must be included in the T.I.P., and in most cases must have matching local funds available. As with the Long Range Transportation Plan, the costs of the projects cannot exceed the limited amount of available revenue.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

- ❖ **What:** The UPWP documents the transportation planning activities and products the GF/EGF MPO and the public transit provider will conduct or complete over a two year period.
- ❖ **How Often:** Every two years, however it can be amended when needed.

The public has multiple opportunities to provide comments on, and to be involved in the development of all plans and programs before they are approved by the MPO Executive Policy Board.

Special Documents and Studies

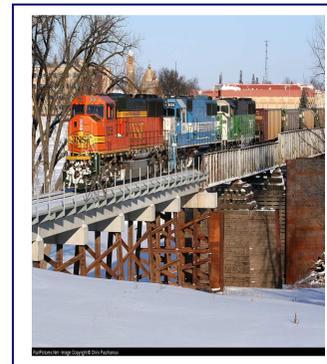
Corridor Studies
Downtown Parking Study
Freight Study
ITS/Regional Architecture
Public Participation Plan
Railroad Crossing Plan
Safe Routes To School Plan



How You Can Get More Involved!

Join the GF/EGF MPO email list: To receive notices when public meeting and comment periods are held, email info@theforksmpo.org or call (701) 746-2660.

You do not have to be a transportation expert to participate in the planning process. You have the knowledge and insight into local problems that transportation planners and local officials need to make informed decisions.



Log onto the GF/EGF MPO website: www.theforksmpo.org. From the website you can read our documents, learn about future events, read our meeting minutes, check our meeting agendas, and meet the staff.

Attend our monthly meetings:

- * **The Technical Advisory Committee** typically meets the second Wednesday of each month.
- * The Executive Policy Board Meeting is typically held on a Wednesday one or two weeks following the Technical Advisory Committee meeting.

Contact your elected representatives: Write or call your elected officials and let them know how you feel about your transportation system.

