



# Lewis Clark Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization Regional Transportation Planning Process Frequently Asked Questions March 2005

## ***What is a MPO?***

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is an association of local agencies that coordinate transportation planning and development activities within a metropolitan area. Establishment of an MPO is required by law in urban areas with populations of more than 50,000 in order for the area to use federal transportation funding. (Reference: the *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962*, the *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991*, and the *Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century of 1998*).

## ***What is the MPO's role?***

MPO's provide the forum through which all levels of government work together to identify and address local, county and regional transportation needs. MPO's collaboratively determine where and how federal and state transportation dollars will be spent in the planning area. An MPO is not a level of government; however, the MPO has effective control over transportation improvements within the area since a project must be a part of the MPO's adopted long-range plan and be placed in their Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) in order to receive federal funding.

## ***What does a MPO do?***

MPO's are responsible for developing

- 1) The Unified Planning Work Program, outlining those planning tasks and projects that MPO staff will undertake,
- 2) The Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program—a list of projects to be undertaken over the next five years, and
- 3) The Long Range Transportation Plan – a guiding document for transportation improvements over the next 20 years.

## ***Why do we have an MPO in the Lewis Clark Valley?***

The Lewis Clark Valley was designated an urbanized area following 2000 census results which identified a population of more than 50,000 in the planning area. This designation of the Lewis Clark Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (LCVMPO) was official recognized by Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne and Washington Governor Gary Locke on December 3, 2003 and December 9, 2003 respectively.

## ***What value does a MPO bring to our area?***

MPO status provides value and opportunities not otherwise available to the planning area:

- 1) MPO designation and status greatly strengthens the planning areas' voice in promoting projects in state and regional transportation planning processes and in receiving funding for those projects;
- 2) With MPO status comes the acknowledgement that each entity's transportation system in this area affects others', and for the first time, transportation planning will be coordinated on a regional basis; and
- 3) Specific funds for regional planning and public transit planning are designated to plan for and develop transportation projects and a public transit system in the area served by the MPO.

## ***How can I be involved?***

The greater the participation in this process, the greater the results. Please become involved by inviting an MPO representative to talk with your group at your regularly scheduled meeting, reviewing the project website, participating in public meetings (open houses and workshops), and providing your comments on work materials and products.

### **For more information, contact:**

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### ***How does the LCVMPO operate?***

LCVMPO participating governments include Asotin County and the City of Asotin, Washington, and Nez Perce County and the City of Lewiston, Idaho. The MPO is led by an 8-member Policy Board comprised of elected officials from each of the four participating governmental agencies. A 20-member Technical Advisory Committee, which includes individuals from the four governmental agencies as well as other local and state government stakeholders, assists the MPO. An MPO Director coordinates activities for both groups. Each group meets on a monthly basis.

### ***How is the MPO funded?***

Funds used for the LCVMPO activities in FY04 come from local agencies actively participating in transportation planning as well as from federal agencies.

### ***What is a Long Range Transportation Plan?***

The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) guides transportation improvements over the next 20 years. It is the “defining vision” for the region’s transportation system and services. The plan is intended to be a product of regional collaboration, and any project the MPO desires to pursue and fund must be identified in the LRTP.

### ***What is the Public Transit Master Plan?***

The *Public Transit Master Plan* is a component of the *Long Range Transportation Plan*. It is intended to guide the future development of a public transportation system in Lewis Clark Valley, including but not limited to identifying area transit needs and potential financial resources.

### ***What type of transportation does the planning process consider?***

All reasonable multi-modal alternatives must be considered in an MPO’s planning efforts. This includes bicycling, bus travel, rail, water, and walking. An MPO must emphasize the need to provide travel choices that accommodate people with limited transportation options such as the elderly, children, people with disabilities, and the financially disadvantaged.

### ***What is the schedule and process for completing the LRTP?***

The LCVMPO is required to provide a preferred alternative to the Federal Highways Administration by December, 2005. The planning process commences in January, 2005; a preferred alternative will be delivered to the FHWA in December, 2005; and a draft plan is anticipated for distribution in March, 2006. The LCVMPO anticipates a final decision made on the planning document sometime subsequent to that final public review.

### ***How does the plan determine what projects will be implemented and how they will be funded?***

As a visionary document, the LRTP will identify a way to meet all needs. These projects will fold into a Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Plan (MTIP), which identifies those prioritized projects to be funded and pursued over the next five years. Any project listed in the MTIP must also be identified in the LRTP or it will not be funded. However, projects may be identified in the LRTP that the MPO is ultimately not able to pursue.

### ***What is the planning area?***

A planning area map can be obtained via the website, [www.lewisclarkmpo.org](http://www.lewisclarkmpo.org), or by contacting the LCVMPO Director (see contact information below).

### ***What kind of research will you do to inform the LRTP?***

The MPO has hired HDR Engineering, Inc., to develop the LRTP. HDR will be collecting and analyzing regional data, reviewing and coordinating with other local planning documents, conducting accident and demographic analysis, developing a community profile, conducting travel forecasts, and conducting a comprehensive public transit survey and analysis process.

### ***How will the City of Clarkston be included in the process?***

The City of Clarkston is now an official member of the MPO. Welcome Clarkston! Clarkston residents are encouraged to participate in all public processes to the extent they desire.

### ***How does GARVEE Bonding fit into this process?***

GARVEE bonding, as proposed by Idaho Governor Dick Kempthorne to the 2005 State Legislature, does not factor into the regional long range transportation planning process at this point in time. Should Garvee bonding projects become a reality at some point in time, transportation planning efforts will work to coordinate and accommodate those activities as appropriate.

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