

Below is information from TPB on the schedule for updating products resulting from the updated US Census, and a summary of FAQs from FHWA and the US Census Bureau websites regarding the MPOs and UZAs. Helpful definitions are located at the end of the document.

1. TPB Information/Schedule for revisions to UZAs, MPAs, Functional Class and designating new MPOs

Smoothing Urbanized Area Boundaries (UZA)

MPOs are allowed to smooth their US Census Urbanized Area Boundaries to capture adjacent areas that are urbanized in nature but not initially included in the UZA. These changes are usually minor in nature and result in a smoothing of the UZA. See FHWA's FAQs below for uses of the smoothed UZAs. Smoothed UZAs require the approval of the MPO and NCDOT. **Deadline – June 30, 2012**

Smoothing Urban Clusters Boundaries (UC)

FHWA allows DOTs to smooth urban cluster boundaries to facilitate FHWA reporting and data collection. In 2000, NCDOT identified small urban areas as those Urban Clusters with populations greater than or equal to 5000. Any UC less than 5000 will be treated as a rural area in regards to FHWA planning requirements. For 2010, NCDOT will utilize the same definition. As a minimum, UCs must include all of the Census designated area. Smoothing will be done to the UCs for the following reasons: maintain route continuity; use identifiable boundaries, such as streams, railroads, roadways, etc.; clearly show if a road is inside or outside of the UC. Smoothed UC boundaries (small urban areas) will be developed by NCDOT, and will be shared with the RPOs. **Deadline – June 30, 2012**

Updating the MPO Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) Boundaries

FHWA requires MPOs to identify a MPA boundary based on their UZA. The MPA will serve as the planning boundary for the MPO and serve as the bases for the development of the TIP, Project Prioritization and LRTP. The MPA Planning area for the MPO should include that land area that will be urban in nature within the next 20 years and all local governments included must be given the opportunity to be represented on the MPO through the TCC/TAC. The MPA requires approval by MPO and NCDOT. Following the approval of the MPA, the MPO must review and update, as necessary, their MPO structure (planning area boundary (MPA); membership; MOU and bylaws). **Deadline: June 30, 2012/ASAP**

MPO Evaluation Report

Following each decennial census, each MPO, in coordination with NCDOT is required (G.S. 136-200.4) undergo a review of their MPO boundaries, structure, and governance. Individual MPO reports to be completed by MPO Coordinators and NCDOT will submit a combine report to the General Assembly on January 1, 2013. **Deadline – December 31, 2012**

Functional Classification System Revisions

In conjunction with the update of the smoothed Urbanized Area and Urban Cluster boundaries, NCDOT will begin a review of the existing functional classification. This functional class review will be coordinated with the MPOs and RPOs. **Deadline – October 31, 2012**

Updating the RPO Boundaries

Since, by law, the RPO boundaries must exclude any MPO area, NCDOT will not begin a review/update of the RPO boundaries until the MPO MPA boundaries are complete. Any changes in funding, boundaries or structure will not become effective until the start of SFY 2014 (July 1, 2013). **Deadline – January 2013**

2. **FAQs From FHWA**

[\(http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/census_issues/urbanized_areas_and_mpo_tma/faq/\)](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/census_issues/urbanized_areas_and_mpo_tma/faq/)

New MPOs

When must new MPOs be designated?

Each UZA listed in the March 26, 2012 *Federal Register* notice must be represented by a MPO within 12 months of the official Census Bureau listing. **Deadline: March 27, 2013**

There is talk that the MPO threshold is going to be raised to 200,000 residents. If that's so, why should we start working on creating a new MPO for UZAs over 50,000 residents, but below 200,000?

Until new reauthorization legislation is enacted, the current legislation remains in effect. Current legislation requires that MPOs be established where there are new UZAs that exceed the 50,000 population threshold. FHWA will update the Census Issues website and this FAQ when new legislation is enacted.

What geographic area must be included within the MPA boundary?

The MPA boundaries must include the entire UZA boundary identified in the 2010 decennial Census and the contiguous geographic area likely to become urbanized within 20 years. The MPA may include the entire MSA or CSA as defined by the Census Bureau. The MPA boundaries for UZAs designated as nonattainment areas for ozone and carbon monoxide pollution may be further adjusted to include the entire non-attainment area identified under the Clean Air Act (42 USC 7401 et seq.).

What is required in order to designate a new MPO?

Designation of a new MPO consists of a formal agreement between the Governor (**in NC, this authority is delegated to the Secretary of Transportation**) and units of general purpose local government that together represent at least 75 percent of the population to be included in the MPA. The agreement should, at minimum, identify the membership structure of the policy board and establish the metropolitan planning area boundaries (23 U.S.C. 134 (b) and 49 U.S.C. 5303 (c)). A newly-designated MPO does not need to develop a MTP or TIP within the first 12 months. However, the initial MPO work plan should include tasks and a schedule to develop a TIP and MTP (23 CFR 450.308).

Do I need to adjust the Census-designated UZA boundaries?

No. Federal transportation legislation allows adjustments to the Census-designated UZA boundaries (Adjusted UZAs, **in NC we refer to this as the Smoothed UZA**); however, there is no Federal requirement to do so. States and MPOs may choose to use the Census-designated UZA boundaries without adjustment. Adjustments to UZA boundaries had significant funding implications when Federal-Aid Highway funding included separate apportionments for Federal-Aid Urban and Federal-Aid Rural Systems. These funding classifications were eliminated in 1992 under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). Currently, the Federal requirements for urban versus rural classifications are limited mostly to highway statistical reporting, highway functional classification, and regulation of outdoor advertising. These requirements are described below. However, a number of States have included urban versus rural classifications in their intra-State apportionment formulae. These State requirements should be reviewed before deciding whether or not to adjust the Census-defined UZA boundaries.

Can I adjust UZA boundaries to include less area than the Census-designated boundaries?

No. Federal transportation legislation specifically requires that any adjustments to UZA boundaries must include, at a minimum the entire UZA designated by the Census Bureau. For smaller urban areas (with a population between 5,000 and 49,999 persons), FHWA will allow a State to use either the Census-defined UC (**UCs are used in NC**) or Census Incorporated Place as its minimum area for inclusion for planning, highway functional classification, and statistical reporting. Whichever area type is selected (UC or Census Incorporated Place) must be used consistently throughout the State. However, Federal regulations on outdoor advertising control will continue to allow use of only the Census Incorporated Place as the minimum area for inclusion.

How often can I make adjustments to UZA boundaries?

Although there is no specific FHWA policy on how often UZA boundaries can be adjusted, States are strongly encouraged to make such adjustments as infrequently as possible and only when deemed absolutely necessary. Maps showing proposed adjustments to UZA boundaries must be submitted to FHWA for approval accompanied by approval letters from the MPO(s) and Governor(s). **NCDOT does not adjust UZA or UC between Census'.**

What Federal transportation programs are impacted by adjustments to UZA boundaries?

The following FHWA Programs distinguish between urban and rural areas:

- **Highway Functional Classification:** The highway functional classification system distinguishes both by type of roadway facility and whether the facility is located in an urban or rural area. A specific type of roadway facility may have different design criteria depending on whether it is in a rural or urban area, but highway design criteria are not applied strictly according to an urban versus rural boundary designation.
- **HPMS Reporting:** FHWA's Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) requests States to report annual highway statistics (i.e., lane and centerline miles, VMT) by highway functional classification, including urban versus rural. Several tables in FHWA's annual *Highway Statistics* Report also summarize information by urban versus rural classifications.
- **Distribution of Surface Transportation Program (STP) Funds:** 23 USC 133(d)(3)(B) guarantees that a minimum of 110% of the amount of funds apportioned to the State in FY 1991 for the Federal-Aid secondary system must be spent in rural areas. A rural area is defined as any area of the State that is outside of the Adjusted UZA (sometimes called the Federal-Aid Urban Area - FAUA) boundaries. This provision only affects where funds may be spent within a State, not how much money the State receives.
- **STP Apportionment Formula:** 23 USC 104(b)(3) includes, as part of the apportionment formula for STP funding, lane-miles and VMT on Federal-Aid highways within the state. Federal-Aid highways include all highway functional classifications except local roads and rural minor collectors. Expanding the boundary of urban areas within the state may change some rural minor collectors to urban collectors, making them eligible as Federal-Aid highways. However, the impact on apportionment of federal aid funding is insignificant.
- **Control of Outdoor Advertising:** The Outdoor Advertising Control Program (23 USC 131) uses the UZA definition in 23 USC 101(a)(36) to specify the boundary between locations where signage can be placed beyond 660 feet and be intended to be read from the highway. For further information concerning outdoor advertising control, contact Mary Jane Daluge, FHWA Office of Real Estate Services (MaryJane.Daluge@dot.gov).

Can FY2012 FHWA metropolitan planning (PL) funds be set aside for areas expected to be designated as UZAs in the Spring of 2012?

No, the new UZA definitions will be used to allocate FFY2013 PL funds. However, a State may provide State Planning and Research (SPR), National Highway System (NHS), Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Minimum Guarantee (MG) funds to support "start-up" planning activities in anticipation of a new MPO designation. **NCDOT will allocate the FFY 2013 PL Funds (received October 1, 2012) to the MPOs in January 2013 for the development of their FY 2014 Work Programs. As a new MPO, New Bern would see their first full year allocation for the work program that begins July 1, 2013. NCDOT could provide partial funding beginning October 1, 2012.**

Can a new UZA receive FY 2013 FHWA or FTA metropolitan planning (PL or MP) funds if an MPO has not yet been designated?

No, a new UZA cannot receive metropolitan planning (PL or MP) funds until its intra-State formulae have been approved by the FHWA Division Office or FTA Regional Office (respectively) and an MPO has been designated. FY2013 funds allocated by the adopted intra-State formulae to the proposed MPO should be reserved by the State and allocated upon MPO designation.

Existing MPOs

When do MPA boundaries for existing MPOs need to be updated to reflect the changes in UZA boundaries?

The MPA boundaries of current MPOs should be updated no later than the next scheduled MTP update after October 1st, 2012, or within four (4) years of the designation of the new UZA boundary, whichever occurs first. This is consistent with the guidance (Q&As) provided by FHWA/FTA in 1992 and in 2003.

What geographic area must be included within the updated MPA boundary?

The updated MPA boundaries must include the entire UZA boundary identified in the 2010 decennial Census and the contiguous geographic area likely to become urbanized within 20 years. The MPA may include the entire MSA or CSA as defined by the Census Bureau. The MPA boundaries for UZAs designated as non-attainment areas for ozone and carbon monoxide pollution may be further adjusted to include the entire non-attainment area identified under the Clean Air Act (42 USC 7401 et seq.).

If the new UZA boundary lies entirely within an existing MPA boundary, must the existing boundary be adjusted?

No. The existing MPA boundary does not need to be adjusted if it contains the entire UZA boundary identified using the 2010 Census. However, the MPO may still choose to adjust its MPA boundary to include new areas that are likely to become urbanized within 20 years.

Does an MPA boundary adjustment require redesignation of the MPO?

No. Expansion of the MPA boundary to reflect changes in the UZA boundary, or the addition of new members to the MPO policy board to provide representation for newly included areas, does not automatically require redesignation of the MPO. To the extent possible, it is encouraged that these changes be addressed without a formal redesignation. However, the Governor and MPO should review the previous MPO designation, State and local law, and MPO bylaws to determine if a formal redesignation is required (23 CFR 450.310).

If an existing MPO expands its MPA to include a new UZA, what changes need to be made to its governing board?

The MPO should take into account changes in its MPA in reviewing representation on its governing board. Current MPO bylaws would be the basis for determination of any board changes (23 CFR 450.310). The FHWA and FTA will not define, require or approve any specific changes, other than those affecting TMAs. **NCDOT will not approve any amended MOUs or Bylaws that have not provided each local government within a UZA/MPA to be included in the MPO as a voting member. If a county or municipality chooses to delegate their representations to another member (municipality to count, e.g.), they would need to provide that in writing to NCDOT.**

The new UZA boundary extends into an adjacent MPA. Must both MPA boundaries be adjusted to ensure that the UZA lies entirely within a single MPA?

No. There are at least three options available to handle this situation:

- By mutual agreement, each MPO represents the portion of the UZA lying within its existing MPA boundary. This option requires no boundary adjustment or MPO redesignation, so long as the interests of the UZA population residing within the adjacent MPA boundary are adequately addressed. **NCDOT will need to be provided with documentation from both MPOs that documents this agreement.**
- Both MPOs may adjust their MPA boundaries to ensure that the UZA is located entirely within a single MPA. This will result in a net increase in the size of one MPA and a corresponding decrease in the other MPA. This option may require redesignation of one or both MPOs, depending on State and local law and MPO bylaws. **NCDOT may or may not adjust the population used for allocation of PL funds based on this information. Regardless, the total new population used for allocation of PL funds, can not exceed the total population of the two MPOs.**
- Adjacent MPOs may decide to consolidate into a single MPO. This option definitely will require redesignation.

Who needs to approve MPA boundary changes?

The MPO and the Governor must approve any proposed changes to the MPA. Updated boundaries and approval letters must be submitted to the FHWA Division Office and the FTA. When new MPA boundaries are established, the MPO and

State will need to work with the FHWA [Division Office](#) to devise a way for the Division to receive the new MPA boundaries.

Will the MTP and TIP need to be modified immediately to assure that projects located in the new UZA boundary are eligible for advancement in existing MPO areas?

Following the Census 2000 UZA definitions, the MPA should have been expanded (if necessary) to include the 2000 Census-defined UZA, plus any additional area anticipated to be urbanized within the next 20 years. Therefore, it is likely that no immediate changes to the MTP or TIP will be needed. However, in cases where the UZA boundary has increased significantly beyond what was expected to become urbanized, the MPO should review and adjust the MPA boundary by the next MTP update occurring after October 1st, 2012, or within four (4) years of the Census definition of 2010 UZAs (whichever is sooner), to incorporate new UZAs outside the current MPA, as well as additional areas expected to become urbanized in the next 20 years. New MPA boundaries must be approved by the MPO and the Governor and submitted to the FHWA and the FTA. Once the expanded MPA boundary has been submitted, projects in the expanded MPA can be added to the MTP and TIP.

New TMAs (MPOs greater than 200k)

When will new TMAs be designated?

The Secretary of Transportation will designate new TMAs through an announcement in the *Federal Register* approximately six (6) weeks following the Census designation of new UZAs. Please refer to the schedule for more important dates and milestones. **NC is expected to have three new TMAs: Wilmington, Cabarrus-Rowan, and Hickory.**

What happens when an area is designated as a TMA?

An area designated as a TMA enjoys certain benefits and incurs additional requirements beyond those of smaller urbanized areas (23 USC 134 (k)).

- Transportation plans and programs within a TMA must be based on a continuing, comprehensive and cooperative transportation planning process carried out by the MPO in cooperation with the State and transit operators.
- The transportation planning process must include a Congestion Management Process (CMP).
- The FHWA and the FTA must certify the transportation planning process no less often than once every four years.

Does an existing MPO in an area that is newly-designated as a TMA have to modify its policy board?

At a minimum, the policy board of an MPO that serves a newly-designated TMA must include local elected officials, appropriate State officials, and officials of public agencies that administer or operate major modes of transportation in the metropolitan area. The MPO should review its policy board membership to determine if all of these groups are represented and add new members as appropriate (23 CFR 450.310(d)).

When must an area that is designated as a TMA establish a CMP?

Newly-designated TMAs need to implement a CMP within 18 months of their designation by the Secretary of Transportation.

Funding

When will the distribution of FHWA and FTA Metropolitan Planning (MP and PL) funds have to change to account for new UZAs?

The apportionment of metropolitan planning (MP and PL) funds to the States based on new UZAs will begin with FFY2013 funds, apportioned on or after October 1st, 2012. States need to evaluate and revise their intra-state formula immediately (if necessary), using the population figures released by the Census Bureau in the spring of 2012. FHWA and FTA will request that States and their MPOs reaffirm the existing formula, or agree on a new intra-State formula. Each State should work cooperatively with the existing MPOs (and elected local officials in newly-defined UZAs) to review and revise the formula, then submit it for approval to the appropriate office (FHWA Division Office for PL funds; FTA Regional

Office for MP funds). Current and prior-year FTA apportionments of MP funds can be found here. States should reference this information when reaffirming or revising their intra-State MP funding distribution formulas. By fall 2012 FHWA will complete a national study of PL funding distribution approaches and formulas used by State DOTs. This study will be posted on the FHWA Census Issues website when it becomes available.

How will the new UZA populations impact the apportionment of Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds?

STP funds are sub-allocated within each State between UZAs with a population over 200,000 and the rest of the State, in proportion to their relative share of the total State population. Each UZA with a population over 200,000 receives a share of the funds sub-allocated for such areas, based on the area's share of the total population in all areas with over 200,000 residents in the State. This sub-allocation formula will use population totals from the 2010 Census beginning with FY2013. In some instances where an existing UZA has been split, or if other UZAs in the State have grown at a faster rate, a UZA's population share, and therefore the UZA's share of STP funds, may decrease.

How will STP funds be sub-allocated between two or more MPOs that cover the same TMA that includes a UZA with over 200,000 residents?

There is no specific provision in Federal transportation legislation for allocation of STP funds among multiple MPOs serving the same TMA that includes a UZA with over 200,000 residents. **NCDOT sub-allocates between TMA areas based on population.**

Can a new UZA receive FHWA or FTA metropolitan planning (PL or MP) funds (FY2013) if an MPO has not yet been designated?

No, a new UZA cannot receive PL or MP funds until its intra-State formulae have been approved by the FHWA Division Office or FTA Regional Office (respectively) and an MPO has been designated. FY2013 funds allocated by the adopted intra-State formulae to the proposed MPO should be reserved by the State and allocated upon MPO designation.

HPMS, Roadway Functional Class, Control of Outdoor Advertising and Other Data Reporting

What impacts do adjustments in UZA boundaries have on Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) reporting?

Adjusted UZA boundaries adopted by the State and MPOs should be used for Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) reporting at the earliest time possible (within 2 to 3 years maximum) after the adoption decision. Any changes to the rural/urban roadway location and functional class that result from adjustments to UZA boundaries should be reported in HPMS Data Items 1 (Functional System Code) and 2 (Rural/Urban Designation) respectively. The size of urban area is determined based on the latest decennial Census (or special inter-decennial census) designation, not on the population within the Adjusted UZA.

What impacts do adjustments in UZA boundaries have on Highway Functional Classification?

Once the adjustments to UZA boundaries are adopted, highways that are impacted by the new boundaries must be functionally reclassified. The guide on classifying highways continues to be Highway Functional Classification: Concepts, Criteria and Procedures. Rev. March 1989. Please note that the 2008 Addendum allows for greater flexibility for deciding on an appropriate place for changing the functional classification of rural routes when they cross an urban boundary. Because the anticipated adjustments resulting from the 2010 Census are relatively minor (unlike the national reclassification required in the 1990's by ISTEA), FHWA is not planning any workshops or training in this area. It is the responsibility of the FHWA Division Offices to approve any changes in the classification of highways. If a State does propose major changes to their principal arterial system, those changes should be submitted to FHWA's Office of Planning for further review prior to Division action. For further information on Highway Functional Classification, contact: Spencer Stevens, FHWA Office of Planning (Spencer.Stevens@dot.gov).

What impacts do adjustments in urban area boundaries have on Outdoor Advertising Control?

States will continue to use the Census Incorporated Place data to map and control signage as it relates to places of 5,000 or more in population, in the manner defined by 23 CFR 750.153(t) and 750.703(m). For further information concerning

outdoor advertising control, contact Mary Jane Daluge, FHWA Office of Real Estate Services (Maryjane.Daluge@dot.gov).

Can I adjust UZA boundaries to include less area than the Census-designated boundaries?

No. Federal transportation legislation specifically requires that any adjustments to UZA boundaries must include, at a minimum the entire UZA designated by the Census Bureau. For smaller urban areas (with a population between 5,000 and 49,999 persons), FHWA will allow a State to use either the Census-defined UC or Census Incorporated Place as its minimum area for inclusion for planning, highway functional classification, and statistical reporting. Whichever area type is selected (UC or Census Incorporated Place) must be used consistently throughout the State. However, Federal regulations on outdoor advertising control will continue to allow only use of the Census Incorporated Place as the minimum area for inclusion.

How often can I make adjustments to UZA boundaries?

Although there is no specific FHWA policy on how often UZA boundaries can be adjusted, States are strongly encouraged to make such adjustments as infrequently as possible and only when deemed absolutely necessary. (NCDOT does not adjust (smooth) UZAs between census') Maps showing proposed adjustments to UZA boundaries must be submitted to FHWA for approval accompanied by approval letters from the MPO(s) and Governor(s).

Must the State or FHWA Division Office submit adjusted UZA boundaries to FHWA Headquarters?

Yes. After the adjusted UZA boundaries are approved by FHWA, the State DOT or the FHWA Division Office should provide the adjusted UZA boundaries files electronically to FHWA Office of Planning (HEPP-30) for inclusion into the FHWA Office of Planning Executive Geographic Information System (HEPGIS) database. Once the 2010 Census UZA boundaries are released, the State and MPOs will coordinate with FHWA to smooth UZA boundaries.

3. US Census FAQs

(<http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/uafaq.html>)

Does the Census Bureau allow local governments and other groups to participate in the delineation of urban area boundaries?

No. The Census Bureau's urban and rural area definitions provide a baseline for a wide variety of data users, researchers, and analysts; it is important to our statistical data users that we define urban areas in a nationally consistent and objective manner. In addition, although the Census Bureau does not take into account the needs of specific non-statistical programs, we are aware of the potential programmatic advantages or disadvantages deriving from urbanized area and urban/rural status. For that reason also, it is important that we define urbanized areas and urban clusters in an objective manner, applying the same criteria and delineation methodology throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.

Prior to each decennial census, the Census Bureau publishes in the Federal Register proposed criteria for delineating urban areas for public review and comment, in addition to meeting with various data user and stakeholder groups to ensure that the urban area concept and criteria continue to meet users' needs and expectations, while maintaining continuity with previous decades' definitions. The final criteria adopted for application with decennial census and other data to delineate urban areas reflects the comments received through the Federal Register comment process.

Is there an appeal process if I disagree with the location of an urban area boundary?

The Census Bureau does not have an appeal process. The Census Bureau applies published criteria with statistical and other publicly available data to identify a nationally consistent set of urban areas, defined in as objective a manner as possible. Prior to each decennial census, the Census Bureau publishes in the Federal Register proposed criteria for delineating urban areas for public review and comment. The final criteria adopted for application with decennial census and other data to delineate urban areas reflects the comments received through the Federal Register comment

Were there changes to the urban area delineation criteria for the 2010 Census?

Yes. A [description of differences](#) between the 2010 Census urban area criteria and Census 2000 urban area criteria are available.

Changes include:

- use of census tracts instead of block groups for the initial identification of urban area cores;
- at least 1,500 people must reside outside institutional group quarters for an area to qualify as its own urban area;
- no additional hops after a jump;
- inclusion of census blocks with a high degree of impervious surfaces (added to the criteria to help identify blocks containing non-residential urban land uses);
- criteria for merging and splitting urban areas were modified to ensure that any Census 2000 urbanized area will continue to be separately identified as an urbanized area for the 2010 Census, provided that the area still has a population of at least 50,000;
- central places are no longer identified;
- inclusion of airports with annual enplanements of at least 2,500 passengers and located within 0.5 miles of an urban area.

What are hops and jumps?

"Hops" and "jumps" provide a means for connecting outlying densely settled territory with the main body of the urbanized area or urban cluster. A hop provides a connection from one urban area core to other qualifying urban territory along a road connection of 0.5 miles or less in length; multiple hops may be made along any given road corridor. This criterion recognizes that alternating patterns of residential development and non-residential development are a typical feature of urban landscapes. A jump provides a connection from one urban area core to other qualifying urban territory along a road connection that is greater than 0.5 miles, but less than or equal to 2.5 miles in length; only one jump may be made along any given road connection. The jump concept has been part of the urbanized area delineation process since the 1950 Census, providing a means for recognizing that urbanization may be offset by

intervening areas that have not yet developed. The Census Bureau changed the maximum jump distance from 1.5 miles to 2.5 miles with the Census 2000 criteria.

Definitions

Urban Area - A Census-designated area consisting of a central core and adjacent densely settled territory that together contain at least 2,500 residents. Note: Until 2000, urban areas were limited to areas with populations of 50,000 residents or more. However, since Census 2000, urban areas have included both Urbanized Areas (UZA) with populations of 50,000 residents or more, and Urban Clusters (UC) with populations of 2,500 to 49,999 residents. The Census Bureau uses the term "urban area" to refer to both UZAs and UCs collectively. **NCDOT uses the term urbanized area and small urban area (UC's between 5000 and 49,999)**

Urbanized Area (UZA) - A Census-designated urban area with 50,000 residents or more. Note: USDOT typically uses the acronym "UZA" to refer to Urbanized Areas. The Census Bureau uses the acronym "UA." They are synonymous.

Urban Cluster (UC) - A Census-designated urban area with at least 2,500 residents and no more than 49,999 residents.

Adjusted UZA - A Census-defined UZA boundary that has been adjusted by a State DOT to include additional territory. Typically created to smooth irregular UZA boundaries, the Adjusted UZA must be submitted to FHWA for approval. NCDOT refers to these areas as smoothed boundaries. Both urbanized areas and urban clusters 5000 or greater may be smoothed. NCDOT does not adjust UC's less than 5000 and treats these areas as rural. Note: Federal transportation legislation allows for State and local officials to cooperatively expand the Census-defined UZA boundaries. The adjusted UZA must encompass the entire Census designated UZA and is subject to approval by the Secretary of Transportation (23 USC 101(a)(36) -(37) and 49 USC 5302(a)(16) - (17)). Population derived from the Adjusted UZA is not used in the federal transportation programs where a population count is required for funding allocations. Where a population count is called for it is the Census-designated UZA population that is used. Updated guidance on the methods and means for adjusting the urban area boundaries is forthcoming.

Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) - The boundary in which the metropolitan transportation planning process must be carried out. Note: The MPA must encompass the UZA(s) and the contiguous geographic area(s) likely to become urbanized within the next 20 years. In some cases, the MPA encompasses the entire metropolitan statistical area (MSA) or combined statistical area (CSA), as defined by the Office of Management and Budget (23 CFR 450.104).

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) / Combined Statistical Area (CSA) – Geographies defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for use in tabulating statistical data about metropolitan areas. Note: MSAs consist of the core counties surrounding a UZA, plus adjacent counties with strong commuting patterns to and from the core counties. A CSA combines an MSA and one or more adjacent additional statistical areas defined by OMB. NCDOT does not work with these areas.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) - The designated local decision-making body that is responsible for carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process. Note: Every UZA must be represented by an MPO (23 USC 134(b) and 49 USC 5303(c)).

Transportation Management Area (TMA) - A UZA with a population over 200,000, designated by the Secretary of Transportation. Note: In some cases a UZA with less than 200,000 residents has been designated as a TMA, upon special request from the Governor and the MPO designated for the area. This usually occurs when a non-TMA area contains TMA area within their MPO. In NC, this includes Cabarrus-Rowan and High Point.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) - A prioritized listing/program of transportation projects covering a period of four years that is developed by an MPO as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process, consistent with the metropolitan transportation plan (MTP), and required for projects to be eligible for funding under title 23 U.S.C. and title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) - The long-range transportation plan for a metropolitan area. The MTP is the statement of the ways the region plans to invest in the transportation system over the next 20-25 years. In NC, this is typically referred to as the LRTP.

Congestion Management Process (CMP) - A way of systematically considering congestion-related issues using a set of technical tools, and basing evaluations on a discrete set of locally determined performance measures. A CMP is required for all TMAs.