

Rural Planning Organizations (RPO)

In 2000, the State of North Carolina recognized the need for more coordinated transportation planning in rural North Carolina areas not within an MPO by enacting Chapter 136, Article 17, Section 136-210-213 of the General Statutes. This provided for the development of **Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RPO)**. There are 20 Rural Planning Organizations in the State.

Although organized and tasked in a manner very similar to MPO's, RPOs are grounded in state law rather than federal, and are intended to address and improve rural area transportation planning processes. RPOs assist the North Carolina Department of Transportation by carrying the following four core duties:

- Develop, in cooperation with the NCDOT, comprehensive transportation plans.
- Provide a forum for public participation in the transportation planning process.
- Develop and prioritize suggestions for projects that the organization believes should be included in the State's Transportation Improvement Program.
- Provide transportation-related information to local governments and other interested organizations and persons.

A **Lead Planning Agency** is designated for each RPO as staff from the COG (Council of Government), County, City or other entity to provide staff support for RPO functions. The LPA develops the draft documents, prepares Transportation Advisory Committee and Technical Coordinating Committee meeting materials, schedules meetings, administers the distribution of state transportation planning funds to member governments, and carries out the directives of the TAC and TCC.

The **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)** is the governing policy board for the RPO. The TAC's membership includes elected officials, members of the local governments, the area's representative on the Board of Transportation and other members as may be designated. The Transportation Advisory Committee provides policy direction for the planning process, facilitates communication and coordination among the member jurisdictions, and guides the development of a comprehensive multi-modal transportation program for the rural area.

The **Technical Coordinating Committee's (TCC)** role is to support and advise the TAC. It is comprised of staff representatives of the various member governments, NCDOT, transit providers, and other agencies with an interest in transportation planning. The TCC has the responsibility of supervising and coordinating the four core duties by making technical recommendations to the Transportation Advisory Committee on decisions pertaining to that process. The TCC, in conjunction with the Transportation Planning Branch, is responsible for providing guidance to the development, review, and recommendation for approval and changes to the Prospectus, Planning Work Program, and the Comprehensive Transportation Plan; for planning citizen participation; and for reviewing transportation study documents. .