



Overview

As a prerequisite for receiving Federal funding for financing regional transportation improvements, Federal transportation law requires urbanized areas (as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau) with population concentrations in excess of 50,000 persons to conduct an urban transportation planning process. The organization structure responsible for conducting this planning process is called a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). There are 10 MPO's in South Carolina, as shown in **Figure 1**. The Spartanburg Area Transportation Study (SPATS) is the MPO organization primarily located in Spartanburg County.

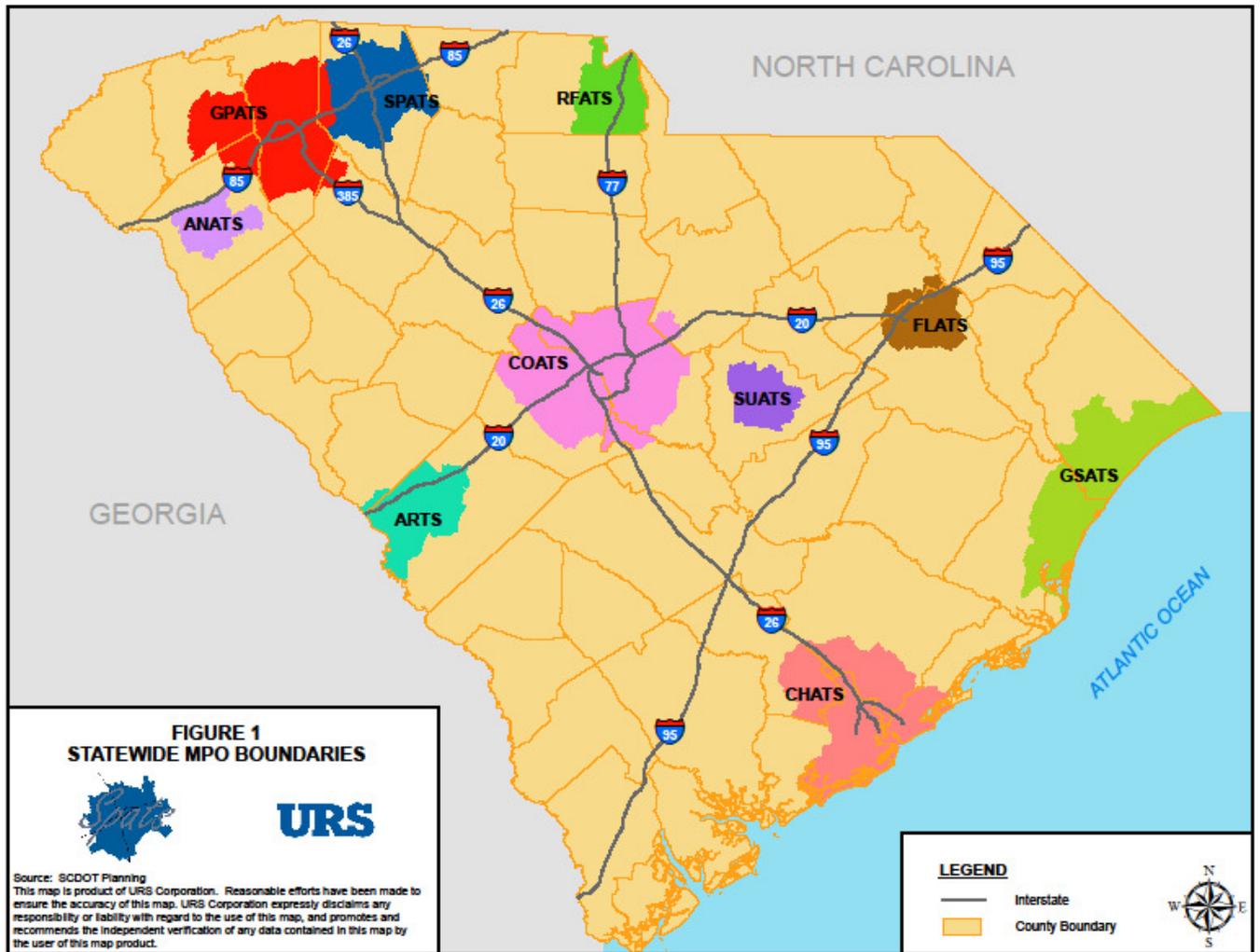
MPO's are committees comprised of local elected officials, operators of major modes of transportation (bus, rail, airplane, etc) and State officials. This group is formally designated by the Governor's office as the body responsible for conducting an urbanized area's transportation planning process. This committee is typically referred to as a Policy Committee. The Policy Committee meeting schedule varies according to the needs of the MPO. The SPATS Policy Committee meets once a quarter, in February, June, August and November. The meetings are held on the second Monday of each of those months.

Prior to making any decisions on behalf of the MPO, the Policy Committee receives information and recommendations from a Technical Advisory Committee and the MPO Staff. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is a working group of transportation professionals charged with the technical oversight of the MPO's work. TAC membership includes local, State and Federal transportation staff members, along with planners, engineers and other interested parties. The TAC meets on a regular basis, typically prior to each Policy Committee meeting, to review and approve technical and planning reports and to develop recommendations on items discussed at the Policy Committee meeting. As with all Policy Committee meetings, TAC meetings are open to the public to attend. The MPO staff provides continuing technical support to the transportation planning program, as well as conducting studies and overseeing projects as directed by the Policy Committee.

The SPATS MPO carries out the following three major activities to meet specific federal requirements:

- The development and maintenance of the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), updated every 5 years;
- The annual development and update of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the seven-year program for highway and transit improvements;
- The annual development of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the one-year planning program that describes and coordinates the individual transportation planning activities of all agencies within the MPO area.

The SPATS MPO utilizes a computerized traffic model to aid in the development of these documents. This model can simulate traffic flows within the area under both





current and future conditions. Through the development of this model, existing and future problems are identified, alternate solutions are proposed and tested and specific improvement programs can be developed for inclusion in the plan.

The complexity of transportation problems, the range of potential solutions and the number of agencies involved in operating and maintaining transportation systems in urbanized areas are the premise behind the Federal planning regulations related to MPO's. The MPO process requires an enhanced level of coordination and cooperation among the area's transportation stakeholders. MPO's provide a forum where regional transportation stakeholders collaboratively assess regional transportation issues and identify optimal solutions meeting area travel needs.

MPO urban transportation planning programs are based on the 3-C (continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive) process. The term **continuing** reflects the ongoing nature of the planning process. MPO planning programs are routinely updated to address current and future socio-economic and environmental conditions impacting regional transportation conditions. **Cooperative** references the effort to include all regional transportation stakeholders (public, private, and governmental) in the MPO transportation decision making process. **Comprehensive** means the MPO planning programs address persons and goods movement for all transportation modes.

In addition to the 3-C approach for planning transportation programs, Federal legislation outlines several planning factors that must be considered during the planning process. The following eight planning factors are used to guide development of the plan. The planning factors are outlined in the most recent transportation legislation, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). This legislation was approved in August 2005. These factors are a continuation from the previous transportation legislation, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). TEA-21 included seven planning factors. Under SAFETEA-LU, the factors were expanded to eight through the separation of safety and security components (factors 2 and 3) and the revision of the scope of environmental concerns (factor 5). The factors are as follows:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight.
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
7. Promote efficient system management and operation.
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.



Introduction

The Spartanburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (SPATS MPO) serves as the Spartanburg metropolitan area's long-range transportation planning organization. The SPATS MPO includes the following member cities and towns:

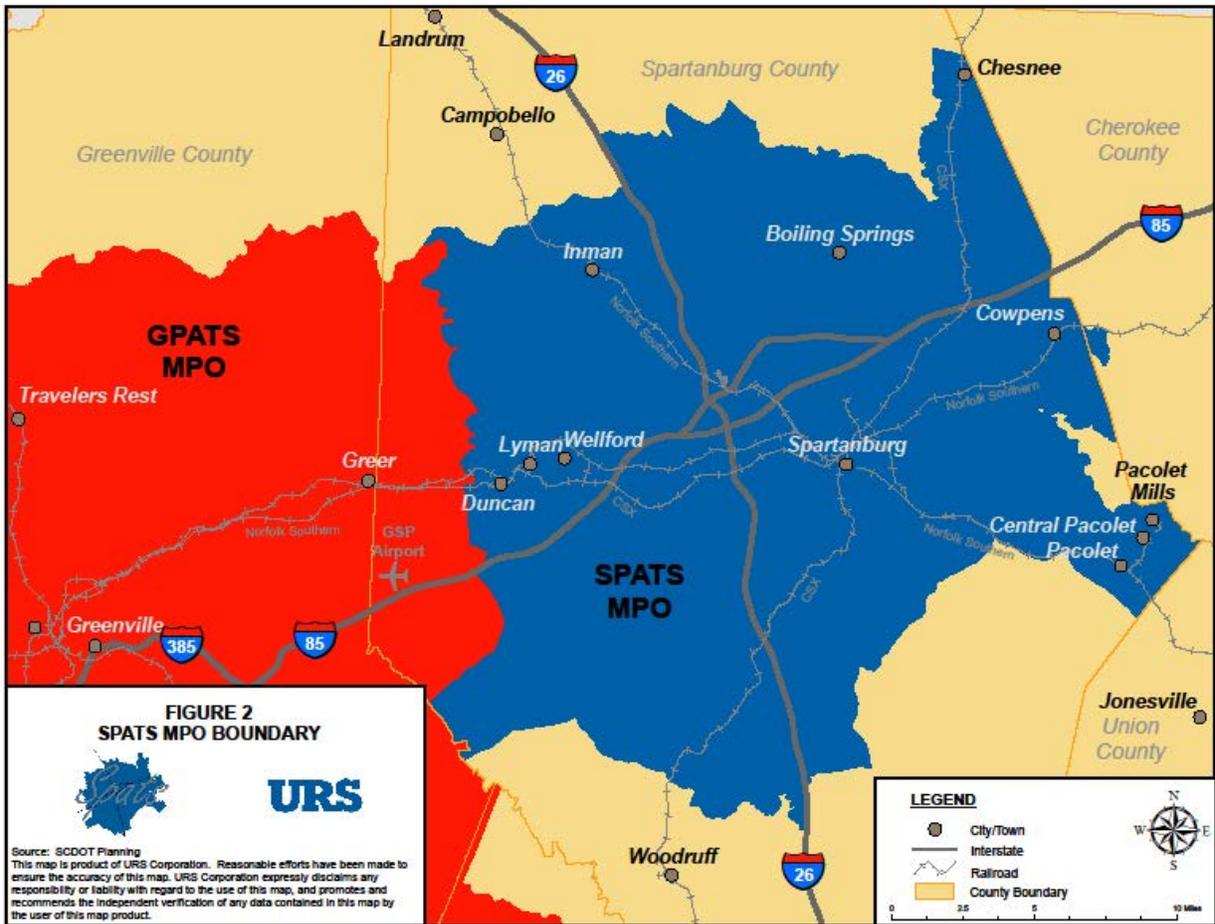
- Spartanburg;
- Wellford;
- Lyman;
- Duncan;
- Inman;
- Pacolet;
- Chesnee; and
- Cowpens.

The MPO also includes the urban area of Spartanburg County including the unincorporated communities of Roebuck, Moore, Valley Falls, Boiling Springs, Glendale, and the Clifton Converse area. A small portion of Cherokee County was added to the MPO area following the 2000 Census. The SPATS boundary and affected cities and towns are shown in **Figure 2**.

SPATS carries out its transportation planning responsibilities in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), the Spartanburg Area Regional Transit Authority (SPARTA) and the Spartanburg County Transportation Service Board (TSB).

Members of the SPATS Policy Committee, the governing board of the SPATS MPO, include the following:

- Mayor of Spartanburg;
- Mayor of Wellford;
- Mayor of Lyman;
- Mayor of Duncan;
- Mayor of Inman;
- Mayor of Pacolet;
- Mayor of Chesnee;
- Mayor of Cowpens;
- Spartanburg County Council Chairman;
- 2 County Council members;
- A member of the Spartanburg City Council;
- Spartanburg County Planning Commission Chairman;
- City of Spartanburg Planning Commission Chairman;
- Spartanburg County CTC Chairman;
- Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce representative;
- "Private Sector" representative from the community; and
- SCDOT 4th District Commissioner, SCDOT Chief Engineer, and FHWA Division Administrator (ex-officio members).





Since the passage of the ISTEA legislation in 1991, SPATS has developed and maintained a process of determining eligibility, analyzing and ranking proposed transportation system improvement projects. This process includes projects seeking funding from SPATS through either the Guideshare or Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds. SPATS has worked to develop an objective methodology for selecting surface highway projects to award funding, using specific criteria that utilizes accepted engineering techniques for measuring project need and benefit. SPATS has also developed criteria to rank the TE projects, dividing such projects into one of three categories. By the nature of TE projects, this ranking process is less technical and more subjective than the SPATS highway project ranking process.

The SPATS's Technical Committee is responsible for all highway and intersection project evaluations. The SPATS Enhancement Committee is responsible for the TE project evaluations including historic preservation, beautification, and bicycle-pedestrian facilities. Initially, the respective committees, along with the SPATS staff, review potential projects for inclusion in the respective program. Once evaluations are complete, the committees forward recommendations to the SPATS Policy Committee for final approval and inclusion in the TIP.

Surface Transportation Program (STP)

The intent of Guideshare funds are to aid the public road jurisdiction with funding for any road or bridge projects on the Federal Aid system, which includes all Federal functional class routes except local and rural minor collectors. Guideshare may also provide funding for transit capital improvements, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and regional transportation planning activities. A proposed project, to be eligible for SPATS Guideshare funding, must be included within or consistent with the SPATS's currently adopted long-range transportation plan.

SPATS sets a maximum funding award amount of 80 percent in Guideshare funding of an individual project's total cost. Historically, the SCDOT supplies the match for highway and intersection improvement projects. The match must provide at least 20 percent of the total project cost through non-federal funds.

SPATS has three categories for STP projects:

1. Major Construction. This category has two divisions: Major Construction- Existing Projects are for projects adding capacity for a significant length of an existing street or highway or adding lanes to an existing bridge. Major Construction- New Projects are for projects creating a new facility on a new alignment, including new interchanges, or bridge replacement.
2. Minor Construction. This category is for projects providing 'spot' improvements, such as arterial intersection channelization and signalization, bridge improvements or railroad crossing signal improvements.



3. Preservation. This category is for projects that maintain or preserve the existing highway and street infrastructure, such as pavement resurfacing, pavement replacement and bridge restoration.

SPATS receives approximately \$5.3 million a year in annual federal guideshare. In 1997, SPATS took advantage of the SCDOT's bonding ability to borrow approximately \$46 million to accelerate the completion of a number of new projects brought forward from the Long Range Plan. This "Project Acceleration Program" will be complete by 2008, and the borrowed funds will be incrementally repaid by the year 2023 using future guideshare.

SPATS Transportation Enhancement Program

SPATS follows the guidance from the FHWA in the administration of the TE project selection. The FHWA has prepared a document, *Guiding Principles and Questions for Transportation Enhancement Activities*, which may be publicly accessed at the url http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te/principles_pt1.htm. The purpose of the TE process is to fund the projects or programs related to transportation that will enhance the environmental, scenic, or cultural quality of a site or an area. A transportation enhancement project includes any project that qualifies in one of the following twelve activities:

1. Provision of facilities for pedestrian and bicycles;
2. Provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists;
3. Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites (including historic battlefields);
4. Scenic or historic highway programs (including provision of tourist and welcome center facilities);
5. Landscaping and other scenic beautification;
6. Historic preservation;
7. Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities (including historic railroad facilities and canals);
8. Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian or bicycle trails);
9. Inventory, control and removal of outdoor advertising;
10. Archaeological planning and research;
11. Environmental mitigation
 - i. to address water pollution due to highway runoff; or
 - ii. reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity;
12. Establishment of transportation museums.

To assist in the distribution of the TE funding, SPATS groups these twelve eligible activities into three categories as follows:

1. Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities (activities 1, 2 and 8)
2. Historic Preservation (activities 3, 4, 6, 7, 10 and 12)



3. Scenic/Environmental (activities 3, 4, 5, 9 and 11)

The list of qualifying activities is intended to be exclusive, not illustrative. Only those activities listed are eligible transportation enhancement activities. Enhancement measures in the activities listed, which go beyond what is customarily provided as environmental mitigation, are considered as transportation enhancements. Enhancement projects are non-motorized transportation-related activities, and the focus is on a clear and credible description of how the proposed enhancement project relates to the surface transportation system.

SPATS currently receives approximately \$363,000 annually for its enhancement program. An enhancement project may be developed in cooperation with other local jurisdictions, or public/private agencies, but the project must be sponsored and submitted to SPATS by a member government. Transportation enhancement funding is provided on a reimbursement basis, with the maximum amount of the federal funding at 80 percent of the eligible activities, and with the sponsoring government or agency providing at least 20 percent of the total eligible costs.



Acronyms Used

3-C – Continuing, Cooperative and Comprehensive
AADTT – Average Annual Daily Truck Traffic
AADT – Average Annual Daily Traffic
AASHTO – American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials
ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act
ADT – Average Daily Traffic
AVL – Automatic Vehicle Locator
BMW – Bavarian Motor Works
CTC – County Transportation Committee (C-fund Committee)
DPS – Department of Public Safety
EAC – Early Action Compact
EOP – Emergency Operations Plan
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
ESF – Emergency Support Function
FAA – Federal Aviation Administration
FHWA – Federal Highway Administration
FTA – Federal Transit Administration
GM – General Manager
GSP – Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport
HOV – High Occupancy Vehicle
ISTEA – Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act
ITS – Intelligent Transportation System
JARC – Job Access Reverse Commute
JTC – Joint Transportation Committee
LRTP – Long Range Transportation Plan
MDC – Mobile Data Consoles
MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization
NHTSA – National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
OHS – Office of Highway Safety
PDO – Property Damage Only
SAFETEA-LU – Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users
SCDHEC – South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
SCDOT – South Carolina Department of Transportation
SCP – Safety Conscious Planning
SCTA – South Carolina Trucking Association
SHSP – Strategic Highway Safety Plans
SMS – Safety Management Systems
SPARTA – Spartanburg Area Regional Transit Authority
SPATS – Spartanburg Area Transportation Study
SRHS – Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System
STP – Surface Transportation Program
TAC – Technical Advisory Committee
TE – Transportation Enhancement



TEA-21 – Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century
TIP – Transportation Improvement Program
TSA – Transportation Security Administration
TSB – Spartanburg County Transportation Service Board
UPWP – Unified Planning Work Program
USPS – United States Postal Service
VPD – Vehicles per Day
VTE – Virtual Transit Enterprise
V/C – Volume to Capacity Ratio