

WHY ARE THERE MPOs?

A Brief History of MPOs and What They Do

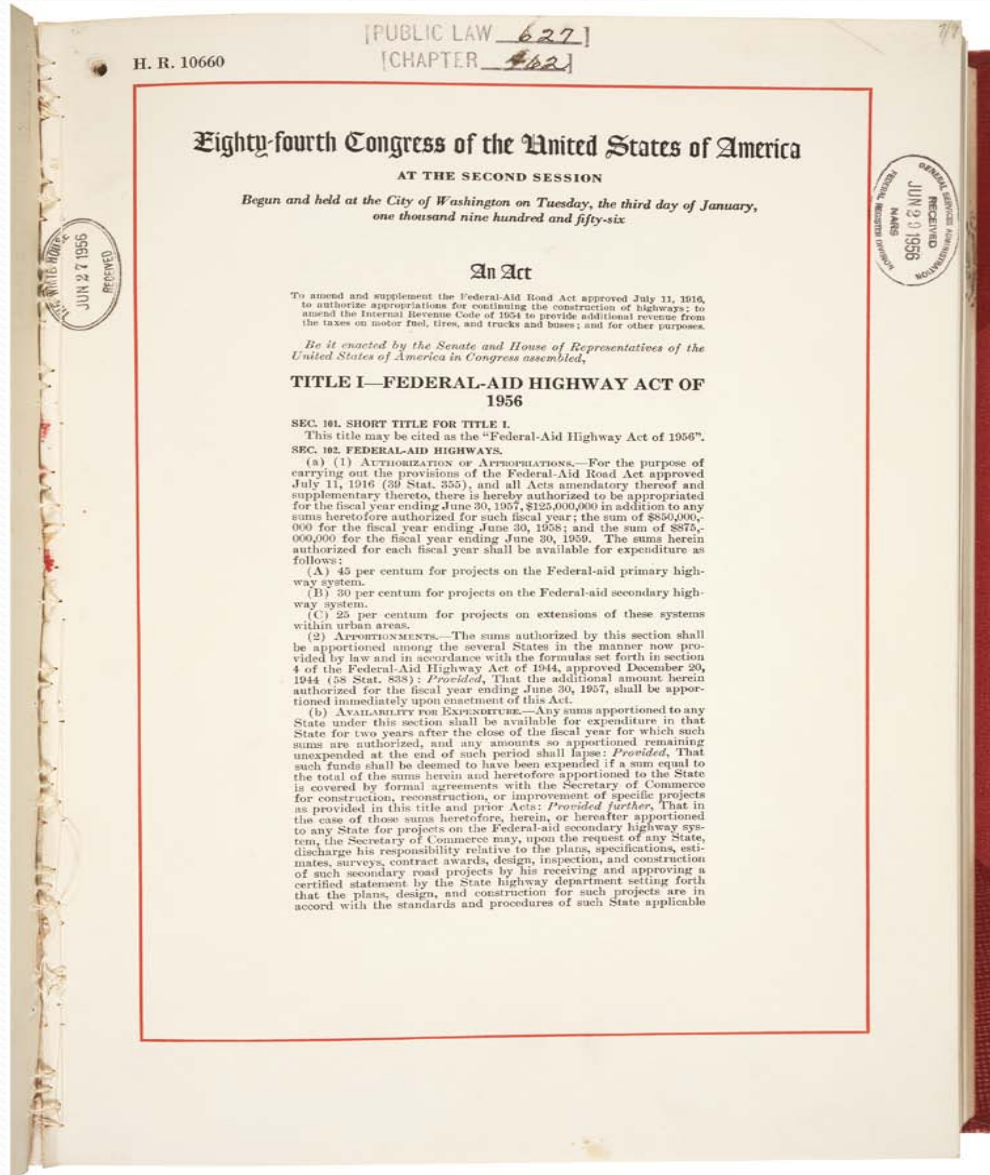
The Impetus

In 1919, Lt. Col. Dwight D. Eisenhower accompanied the first Army Transcontinental Motor Convoy from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco to test the mobility of the military during wartime conditions. This trip took 62 days with multiple delays due to poor or almost impassible roads resulting in frequent vehicle breakdowns along the way.

Eisenhower Presidential Library



The Vision Becomes Reality



Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956

- Billions of Dollars distributed across the United States
- Monies went to State Departments of Transportation (then primarily known as Departments of Roads and/or Public Works)
- States determined alignments

Unintended Consequences

- Cities had little to no say in where the new roadways would be located
- Neighborhoods directly impacted (Denver)
- Political push-back

Innovative Opportunities

- Chicago Area Transportation Study
 - Created in 1957
 - Partnership between the Federal Government, State Government, City of Chicago, Cook County
- Goal was to develop a cooperative 20-year plan to identify where the new interstates would go

(Excerpts from U.S. DOT's 1988 Report, Urban Transportation Planning in the United States: An Historic Overview)

- “The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 created the federal requirement for urban transportation planning largely in response to the construction of the Interstate Highway System and the planning of routes through and around urban areas,. The Act required, as a condition attached to federal transportation financial assistance, that transportation projects in urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population be based on a continuing, comprehensive, urban transportation planning process undertaken cooperatively by the states and local governments -- the birth of the so-called 3C, "continuing, comprehensive and cooperative planning process.””

Impacts of 1962 and the Growth of the MPOs

- 1962 Act authorized the formation of organizations for regional planning (Councils of Governments, MPOs, etc)
- The Federal Bureau of Public Roads did not offer specific guidelines for how these organizations should interact with Federal and State Agencies
- MPOs were often looked upon as “meddling local officials” by State and Federal Agencies

Rebirth of MPOs under Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991

- This transportation bill gave MPOs “teeth” – they could say “no”
- Placed specific requirements on MPOs:
 - Fiscally Constrained long range plan (MTP)
 - TIP projects must come out of MTP
 - Unified Planning Work Programs must be more comprehensive and more “user friendly”

So ... What Does the MPO Do?

- Metropolitan Transportation Plan-
 - 20 to 25 year plan updated every 5 years
 - Identifies anticipated future revenues (state, federal, and local if they apply)
 - Identifies anticipated future transportation needs
 - Identifies projects and processes to address identified needs within the anticipated budget
 - Often includes a “wish list” of un-funded projects

Transportation Improvement Program

- This document shows how the MTP will be implemented
 - Covers a 4 year period
 - Updated every two years
 - All “capacity enhancement projects” must have come out of the MTP
 - Must be fiscally constrained

Unified Planning Work Program

- This Document covers two years and is essentially a “program budget” and outlines:
 - What planning efforts and studies the MPO intends to undertake
 - How much these studies and plans will cost
 - How these studies and plans will be funded (federal, state, and local)
 - Objectives or anticipated results of plans and/or studies
 - Who will undertake the work (TxDOT, MPO staff, Consultant)