

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT
FOR EXPENDITURE OF STATEWIDE RPO PLANNING FUNDS
MID-EAST RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION
JULY 1, 2011 – JUNE 30, 2012**

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT NARRATIVE

The Counties of the Mid-East Rural Planning Organization, Beaufort, Martin and Pitt and the 22 municipalities therein continue to collaborate on transportation issues throughout the region.

Several important transportation work elements were undertaken by the MERPO in the past year and are identified below:

II-A-1 Traffic Volume Counts

The MERPO facilitated the collection of updated traffic count maps. We supplied organizations, developers and citizens with updated traffic count maps. Also, MERPO collected traffic count data for research for prioritizing projects, and for recommendation to DOT on modernization and safety related issues throughout our planning jurisdiction. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) of the \$2000 budgeted.

II-A-2 Status of Transportation Plans

The MERPO maintains an inventory of current Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTP) for the area. We began the initial prioritization of CTP for our member communities. We are in the process of revising our CTP priority list since DOT has begun the Beaufort County CTP for their County and Municipal jurisdiction. The Town of Williamston/Martin County has expressed interest as well and are currently on the CTP priority list. Also, MERPO assisted communities with inclusion of transportation element and guidance in Land Use Planning process. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred (100%) percent and totaled \$1,000.

II-A-3 Street System Inventory

The MERPO assisted NCDOT with review and provided comments on several roads/highways, and proposed bridge replacement locations in the region. This involved communication with NCDOT personnel and inclusion of these items for the TCC and TAC to consider, one example being Highway 264 throughout Beaufort County. Mid-East RPO staff also assisted communities with street database updates. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$1,000.

II-A-4 Traffic Accidents

The MERPO analyzed accidents, as part the process for Beaufort County's Transportation element in their CTP process. The MERPO also catalogued and provided up to date crash data as it was made available by NCDOT. Reviewed intersections as requested by TCC/TAC for evaluation and prioritization. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$1,000.

II-A-5 Transit System Data

The MERPO realizes the importance of efficient transit throughout and beyond the region. Mid-East RPO staff did preliminary research on most efficient routes, and coordinated with regional transportation providers for input on a regionalized transportation network. MERPO staff organized a RPO/Transit Provider workgroup to identify strategic coordination locations throughout the MERPO, PBRPO, and ARPO regions. RPO staff attended transit provider meetings and provided input on regionalization. The MERPO staff disseminated transportation data for inclusion in Beaufort County CTP, and other transportation planning documents. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$3,000.

II-A-6 Dwelling Unit, Population, and Employment Changes

The MERPO identified and evaluated changes in population and development for the entire region. We also serve as the lead regional agency for the State Data Center. Researched census data for assisting Beaufort County CTP and various member communities with grant applications. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$3,000.

II-A-9 Mapping/Data Inventory

The MERPO analyzed and created numerous transportation maps for several functions and stakeholders in the region. Examples of maps include crash maps, county road maps and maps of ongoing projects, Transit maps, maps for bike routes, abandoned rail beds, existing and potential trails and maps for recreational purposes. Reviewed NC 33 corridor maps to facilitate with educating NC 11 corridor committee and, local elected officials on potential interchanges etc. revised maps accordingly. Held two highly attended workshops regarding proposed/suggested alternatives. Provided TAC/TCC, and elected officials updated data/mapping of revised roadways. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$3,000.

II-A-11 Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Inventory

Continued working with the City of Washington and Coastal Carolina Rail/Trail for the Washington/Greenville Greenway. Assisted City of Washington, and the Town of Farmville with effort and development of a comprehensive bike/ped plan. Created maps showing options for interconnectivity throughout the City of Washington and Beaufort County. Created maps showing potential interconnectivity to East Coast Greenway route and other coordinated routes. Map potential improvement/sidewalk area for the Town of Farmville. The expenditure for this line item reached approximately one hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$8,000.

II-B-1 Collection of Data

The MERPO maintains a collection of the following variables for existing conditions: (1) population; (2) housing units; and (3) employment. The MERPO also collects data as requested by the TCC/TAC and member communities and stakeholders. Collected data relative to equity formula, merger team data/information, and data relative to functional classification changes in member communities. Collected shapefiles and other community/county data for various studies

and projects. Used data to guide and assist with municipal and other transportation related planning. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$7,000.

II-B-5 Community Goals and Objectives

Presented Mid-East Commission Board, (made up of representative from a five county region) with related transportation information/updates, new legislation, funding changes, and other transportation related updates. Assisted Member communities with identification of goals, objectives, expectations, and desires for transportation improvement in their communities. MERPO Staff met with and discussed Bike/Ped programs with several communities and collected feedback to match funding potential with needed improvements. The expenditure for this line item was one hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$6,500.

II-B-7 Capacity Deficiency Analysis

MERPO staff worked with towns to identify and discuss potential strategies related to capacity issues at various area/intersections. Studied NC 11 corridor in conjunction with East Carolina RPO, from the City of Greenville to Kinston for possible solutions to capacity deficiency through this corridor. Recommended alternatives and created mapping to show possible interchanges and presented to local elected officials. Reviewed draft Beaufort County CTP maps for input and suggested improvements throughout study area. Continued monitoring in Beaufort County regarding traffic impacts at various locations/intersections, and interchanges. The expenditure for this line item was one hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$2,500.

II-B-8 Highway Element of the LRTP

The MERPO updated TCC/TAC and other stakeholders on the new spot prioritization and the impacts relative to their role. Participated in ongoing Beaufort County CTP meetings and discussion relative to the CTP process. Provided data regarding same. Participated and directed regional workgroup for the NC 11 corridor in Pitt and Lenoir Counties. Coordinated and held two public input meetings regarding conceptual NC 11 corridor. The expenditure for this line item was one hundred percent (100%) of the \$2,300 budgeted.

II-B-9 Transit Element of the LRTP

The MERPO provided continual updates to transit providers on the new spot prioritization and the impacts relative to their role. Continued efforts to conduct meeting of Coordinated Transit Plan per NCDOT Transit Division. Collection of transit data for coordinated transit planning efforts. MERPO staff organized and conducted meetings with RPO/Transit staff covering a 3 RPO/17 County region. The MERPO has identified and realizes the importance transit service and unmet needs, and the importance of transit systems. The MERPO concentrated on immediate transit issues as indicated above. The expenditure for this line item was one hundred percent (100%) of the \$1,800 budgeted.

II-B-10 Bicycle and Pedestrian Element of LRTP

The MERPO realizes the role the bicycle and pedestrian element plays in the overall transportation system and concentrated on future needs for this issue, by attending Coastal Carolina Trail, and other related meetings. MERPO was awarded a contract to assist in the

completion of comprehensive bike plan for City of Washington. MERPO was successfully awarded the contract to assist the Town of Farmville with bike/ped planning. Also, MERPO continues to assist the Town of Historic Bath, and other member communities with Bike/Ped planning. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) of the \$4,800 budgeted.

II-B-13 Rail, or Other Mode of the LRTP

Collected and analyzed truck trip data for possible recommendations to DOT regarding Hwy 33 corridor and surrounding impacted facilities. Researched element for potential inclusion into prioritization process. Monitored proposed ferry tolling, and collected data on potential impact on local employees, and economic development for our area. Drafted and presented resolution opposing new ferry toll scheme. The MERPO continued efforts in consulting with local economic developers on potential of rail service to assist in Economic Development. Collection of freight data from local industry. Data was analyzed with business profile data for possible future transportation improvement recommendations to DOT. The MERPO also researched various routes and scenarios for facilitation of freight movement in the region. The MERPO worked with the DOT on reclassification, and provided TAC/TCC opportunity for review and comment. As part of NC 11 study, and Hwy 33 corridor, reviewed potential freight mobility issues and role of planning and corridor protection effort. The expenditure for this line item was one hundred percent (100%) of the \$4,800 budgeted.

II-B-16 Congestion Management Strategies

Attendance at NCARPO Quarterly meeting and other workshops/training for education on transit and other strategies as possible solution in minimizing the impacts of congestion through effective management practices. Researched related potential projects for inclusion into prioritization. The MERPO continued working with the City of Washington and other jurisdictions by offering insight and advice for ordinance amendments to address the concern of various transportation projects. Staff also worked with the TCC/TAC members in identification of congested candidate transportation routes. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) of \$2,500 budgeted.

III A Planning Work Program

The MERPO in cooperation with other participating agencies and under the guidance from the RPO Coordinator, Rural Technical Coordinating Committee and approval of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), created an annual Planning Work Program. This being a new process for both RPO and DOT. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$6,500.

III B Transportation Improvement Program

The MERPO worked with the TCC/TAC members in conjunction with the Greenville Urban Area MPO (GUAMPO) in developing a list of projects to be ranked by the MERPO TCC/TAC. The transportation projects for all three counties are represented in this list. The projects were ranked and submitted to DOT for inclusion in the Statewide TIP. The expenditure for this line item reached a hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$5,000.

III-C-1 Title VI

MERPO staff, along with TCC/TAC spent time addressing and reviewing the importance, legal issues and mandatory requirements, and continually recognizes and includes this item in our PWP. The expenditure for this line item reached a hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$650.00.

III-C-2 Title Environmental Justice

MERPO staff, along with TCC/TAC spent time addressing and reviewing the importance, legal issues and mandatory requirements, and continually recognizes and includes this item in our PWP. The expenditure for this line item reached a hundred percent (100%) and totaled \$650.00.

III-C-4 Minority Business Enterprise Planning

The MERPO continued working with representatives of community organizations to investigate resources and potential grants, loans, etc. for the promotion of minority owned and operated businesses. The expenditure for this line item one hundred percent (100%) of the \$650.00 budgeted.

III-C-5 Planning for the Elderly and Disabled

The MERPO continues outreach and coordination with communities in the region, Beaufort County, Belhaven, Chocowinity, Grimesland, in discussion of the rising aging population and potential issues that may result. MERPO staff has organized a RPO/Transit provider workgroup to help identify transportation needs to this population. The expenditure for this line item was one hundred percent (100%) of the \$1,000 budgeted.

III-C-7 Public Involvement

The MERPO continued to follow the public involvement process to provide for an open exchange of information and ideas between the public and transportation decision-makers in all of our meetings as well all of our transportation plans. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) of the \$1,050 budgeted.

III-D-1 Transportation Enhancement Planning

The MERPO continued working with member jurisdictions on the identification of potentially fundable enhancement projects. RPO Staff continued assisting member counties and various towns throughout on identifying potential Enhancement projects. MERPO staff updated and informed member communities on the changes and requirements of the Enhancement process. There is a high demand for Enhancement projects in the MERPO. Staff continues to monitor potentially fundable projects that meet DOT requirements. The expenditure for this line item was one-hundred percent (100%) of the \$4,000 budgeted.

III-D-3 Special Studies

MERPO assisted Beaufort County with monitoring and guidance regarding the transportation elements within the newly adopted CAMA Land Use Plan update and provided technical assistance and data relative to the newly adopted Hazard Mitigation Plan. Both elements will be

incorporated in the Beaufort County CTP process. Also, environmental issues and their effects, regarding transportation projects, were discussed with TCC and TAC members. Researched and communicated with local officials the new SPOT process. Researched and fielded inquiries regarding the effects and transportation patterns along US Hwy 17 bypass in Beaufort County. Several special studies were done as requested by our communities. Included, was continued effort and guidance to the City of Washington and Town of Chocowinity on a rails-to-trails project, and how to effectively incorporate Greenville Greenway into the route. Mid-East RPO staff created maps showing proposed interconnectivity between RPO and East Coast Greenway route. MERPO staff collected and analyzed trip and other data regarding future needed improvements along NC Hwy 33 & 306, in order to facilitate transport vehicles safely along this corridor. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) of the \$4,000 budgeted.

III-D-4 Regional or Statewide Planning

The MERPO staff presented to various members of the North Carolina Board of Transportation local transportation priorities and issues of concern throughout our rural jurisdiction, and stressed the need for more projects in our area to enhance economic development and tourism throughout our member Counties/Communities. Also, MERPO staff continues to stress the importance to elected officials, various transportation groups, and our rural region (TCC/TAC), the potential effects and impacts of changing the current transportation equity formula for disbursement of funds throughout North Carolina. The MERPO coordinated with state and federal agencies involved in transportation planning activities on the regional, state, and national levels. MERPO staff tracked Legislative Updates keeping the TAC/TCC up to date on issues regarding transportation at the State and Federal levels. The MERPO is represented as a voting member of GUAMPO and attends/provides input at scheduled meeting. MERPO provides guidance and updates to the Southern Albemarle Transportation Association, and is a member of the Roads and Bridges subcommittee within the Association. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) of the \$6,000 budgeted.

III-E Administration and Services

The continuing transportation planning process required considerable administrative time for attending quarterly committee meetings, preparing agendas and minutes to these meetings, training, preparing quarterly progress reports, documenting expenditures for the various planning work items, and filing for reimbursement of expenditures. The expenditure for this line item reached one hundred percent (100%) of the \$20,925 budgeted.