

Policy: 3150-2- Metro Planning Funding Process

Section: Planning and Programming

Office/Department: Office of Planning

Reports To: Division of Planning

Contact: [Department Phone Number]

This policy serves to update the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) PL Formula to better reflect usage of funds, align with needs, and continue to ensure public trust.

PL Funding Formula and Distribution Process

1. When the Department is provided the available amount of PL funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), via FHWA's "Apportionment and Obligation Limitation Notice", the Department will utilize the amount identified for "Metropolitan Planning" (aka PL Funds) to calculate each MPO's PL Funding amount. This step typically takes place after Congress passes and the President signs an act appropriating funding.
2. The Department will allocate each MPO with a "Base Amount" of MPO Funding of \$35,000.
3. The Department will allocate \$20,000 to each MPO designated as non-attainment or maintenance by the US Environmental Protection Agency for violation of any of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
4. The Department will allocate \$10,000 to each MPO that has an urbanized area located within their Metro Planning Area (MPA) Boundary. This currently includes the current Transportation Management Areas (TMA): Atlanta, Chattanooga, Columbus, Augusta and Savannah; and includes the Gainesville and Cartersville MPOs, since portions of the Atlanta TMA extend into the Gainesville and Cartersville MPAs.
5. Funds which remain after distributing through steps 1 through 4 above; will be distributed to each MPO based on the MPO's percentage of the urbanized area population, located within each MPO's MPA boundary. This includes allocating urbanized area population that crosses between MPA boundaries. For example, the portion of the Gainesville urbanized area that is located in Forsyth County would be allocated to the Atlanta MPO; however, the portion of the Atlanta urbanized area population that crosses into Hall and Jackson Counties, would be allocated to the Gainesville MPO.
6. The distribution process noted in items 1-5, apply to all MPOs within the State of Georgia, including the Georgia portions of bi-state MPOs.

PL Funds Review Committee

The following process establishes a review committee and process for MPOs, to access prior year funding. The process does not allow for the 'automatic' accessing of prior year funding for MPOs, except for the Atlanta MPO, staffed by the Atlanta Regional Commission. The Atlanta MPO is allowed to develop their UPWP and PL Contract each year and include the amount of funding from the second most recently closed-out PL Contract. For example, as the

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Atlanta MPO develops their FY 15 UPWP/PL Contract, they automatically will include any unspent funding from their FY 13 UPWP/PL Contract.

Again, except for the Atlanta MPO, any prior year funds would be available, via the proposed "PL Funds Review Committee" process, as identified below:

1. Any unspent, prior year PL funds are released, following the final invoice of the PL Contract being paid out to the MPO. The unspent, prior year funds (apportionment) are then returned to the state's available apportionment for PL funds (this aspect of how PL funds are released and apportionment is again made available to the state is not being changed via this process, it is just provided for reference).
2. The unspent, prior year PL funds are reflected in FMIS. The unspent, prior year PL funds will then be available for any MPO (excluding the Atlanta MPO) to access for planning purposes.
3. In order to adequately consider and plan for future funding needs, MPOs should consider developing an unfunded portion of the UPWP. The unfunded portion of the UPWP should detail any anticipated, upcoming funding requests. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, funding requests submitted to the PL Funds Review Committee should be drawn from this unfunded section of the UPWP.
4. The "PL Funds Review Committee" will receive requests for funding from MPOs and determine which MPOs will receive available PL fund apportionment. The PL Funding Review Committee will be hosted by the GDOT Office of Planning and the President of the Georgia Association of MPOs (GAMPO) or his designee who will serve as meeting Chairman. Meetings will be held at the GDOT Headquarters and meeting minutes will be kept by an MPO representative, selected by the MPOs. The meeting minutes will be submitted to GDOT for approval.
5. The PL Funds Review Committee will be comprised of the following members:
 - a. Three non-voting staff members from the GDOT Office of Planning. In recognition of GDOT's oversight role for the use of PL funds, GDOT is provided a 'line-item veto' over which activities the committee elects to fund. The veto is to ensure that the committee decisions are made in the best interest of the use of PL funds and are in keeping with any federal requirements for the use of PL funds. The veto is not to be used to fund activities which the committee elected not to fund.
 - b. One MPO staff member (which shall have one vote, representing their respective MPO) from each of the MPOs within the State of Georgia, excluding a member from the Atlanta MPO (as staffed by the Atlanta Regional Commission).
 - c. One non-voting staff member from FHWA
6. The PL Funds Review Committee will meet semi-annually (twice a year), in the months of March and September. The meetings shall begin at 1pm and shall conclude by 3pm.

7. The President of GAMPO shall survey the non-Atlanta MPO members to determine dates for the March and September meetings. Meeting dates selected by the GAMPO President shall exclude the 3rd Thursday (State Transportation Board Meeting) and the Wednesday preceding the 3rd Thursday (State Transportation Board Committee Meetings) and any MPO (including the Atlanta MPO) scheduled MPO committee meetings. The GAMPO President shall provide the proposed PL Funds Review Committee meeting dates to the Department in January of each year.
8. A quorum of 9 of the 15 (non-Atlanta) MPOs shall be physically present at the meeting to take action. A teleconference line will not be available for individuals who are unable to join the meeting in person. The quorum requirements shall be met with a staff member of the MPO. A staff member of the MPO is defined as an actual employee of the agency which services the MPO (decision-making body, such as Policy Committee/TAQC/TPC/etc.), ineligible individuals to represent the MPO include transportation planning and engineering consultants, private contractors, or other temporary MPO employees. The quorum requirements will increase commensurate with the designation of any new MPOs, at any point in the future.
9. The determination of which activities are to receive unspent, prior year PL funds will be made at the scheduled meeting. Any unresolved matters will be addressed at the next scheduled semi-annual meeting.
10. The PL Funds Review Committee shall exclusively consider an agenda of considering requests submitted to the committee for the use of unspent, prior year PL funds.
11. Any entity seeking unspent, prior year PL funds shall submit via e-mail, their requested use of the funds and amount of requested funding to a single GDOT Point of Contact, (plfunds@dot.ga.gov), no later than 2 weeks prior to each of the semi-annual meetings. The submitted requests shall include a resolution from the MPO Policy Board supporting the specific proposed activity and requested funding level, with stated recognition of match requirement and confirmation of match availability. The Office of Planning will distribute requests to PL Funds Review Committee members for review and consideration. If there are no complete requests received within 2 weeks of the scheduled meeting, the meeting is automatically cancelled.
12. The PL Funds Review Committee will consider requests from MPOs based on the following priority order:
 - a. First priority: are activities focused on the development of the core MPO documents of Metropolitan Transportation Plans, Transportation Improvement Programs, and Congestion Management Programs.
 - b. Second priority will be given to MPO documents which enable a MPO to meet other core deliverables.
 - c. Third, and subsequent, priority will be given to MPO special studies (such as, but not limited to, corridor or sub-area studies; even if these studies are intended to inform a future Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, or Congestion Management Program) and other, similar items.
13. The GDOT Office of Planning will establish an externally accessible website, which will include:
 - a. Annual amounts of available PL funds for each MPO, as provided by the PL Distribution Formula

- b. Amount of PL funds contracted for between the Department and the MPO in each FY
 - c. Amount of remaining, unspent, prior year funds
 - d. PL Funds Review Committee meeting minutes and supporting documents
 - e. Other pertinent, PL related information
14. If the committee assigns additional PL funds to an MPO, the additional funds would be amended into the funded portion of the UPWP and assigned a new, specific PI number. A separate PL Contract would be developed specifically for the work identified and funding allocated to the prior year funding. This approach would simplify the tracking of any funding by the Department.
15. The activities funded through the PL Funds Review Committee should begin work as soon as possible after the committee agrees to fund the activity, the UPWP is amended and the PL Contract is executed but not later than 6 months after the committee approves the additional funding. Any delays beyond 6 months, deemed unreasonable by the GDOT Office of Planning, may result in the funds being returned to the unspent, prior year funding category, available for the next PL Funds Review Committee to assign to new projects.
16. If funding is provided by the committee, the recipient MPO must provide a written status update on the progress of the activity funded every 6 months. The written update must be provided via e-mail to plfunds@dot.ga.gov.
17. The Department is free to establish working procedures, so long as they do not differ from the core principles detailed in this letter, in order to implement this process. Also, the ability to provide prior funding (as is also the case with current year funding) is dependent on the availability of both federal apportionment and obligation authority being provided.

This process was implemented beginning with each MPO's FY 2017 UPWP and PL Contract. For further information, contact the Office of Planning at 404-631-1987 or plfunds@dot.ga.gov.

References:

Click here to enter Policy references, if any.

History:

annual review: 02/17/23;

new policy: 01/20/16

