Rapides Area Planning Commission

AP-MPO
ALEXANDRIA • PINEVILLE
Metropolitan Planning Organization

A Guide to Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) | Basics

Federal law requires all metropolitan areas with populations greater than 50,000 people to designate a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to develop transportation plans for the region. It also requires that a Public Participation Plan be created that affords the public a reasonable opportunity to participate in and comment on transportation plans. This plan is intended to fulfill those requirements outlined in 23 Code of US Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 450.210 and 450.316. The content of this publication reflects the views of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the Department of Transportation, State of Louisiana, or the Federal Highway Administration.

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RAPC

RAPC & Alexandria-Pineville MPO

Are you a locally elected official who has an influence on transportation decisions for your community? Or maybe you are a community leader, a committed advocate, or perhaps a newly hired community planner? If you are interested in understanding how the regional transportation planning process works, then this guide is for you!

This guide will help you learn more about:

- how MPOs like Alexandria-Pineville comply with federal regulations for transportation planning
- what processes must be followed to be eligible for transportation funds
- what kind of transportation plans the Rapides Area Planning Commission develops and adopts
- the regional committee structure that supports the transportation planning process
- how the public gets involved in transportation decision-making

RELEVANT ACRONYMS

ADA Americans with Disabilities Act
BIL Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
CEN Community Engagement Network
CFR Code of Federal Regulations
CLRIBC Central Louisiana Regional Infrastructure Beltway Commission
CTC Cenla Transportation Coalition
CTP Comprehensive Transportation Plans
EPA Environmental Protection Agency
FAST Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
FY Fiscal Year
FHWA Federal Highway Administration
FTA Federal Transit Administration
DOTD Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development
HSTP Human Services Transportation Program
ITS Intelligent Transportation System
IIJA Investment in Infrastructure & Jobs Act
LEP Limited English Proficiency
ATRANS Alexandria City Transit
MPA Metropolitan Planning Area
MPO Metropolitan Planning Organization
MSA Metropolitan Statistical Area
MTP Metropolitan Transportation Plan
POP Program of Projects
RAPC Rapides Area Planning Commission
STIP Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
TAC Technical Advisory Committee
TDM Transportation Demand Management
TIP Transportation Improvement Program
TPC Transportation Policy Committee
UACE Census Urban Area Code (2020 Census)
UPWP Unified Planning Work Program
USDOT U.S. Department of Transportation
UZA Urbanized Area (2010 Census)

The Rapides Area Planning Commission is Planning for Our Future

As a regional planning commission and the metropolitan planning organization for the Alexandria-Pineville metro area, RAPC's job is to develop, plan, and facilitate a regionally significant, locally relevant, and future-focused transportation vision. Working in a comprehensive fashion, RAPC incorporates aspects of transportation, community development, water resources, aging & health services, and workforce development into all of its planning work. Continuous collaboration with communities, elected officials, advocates, subject matter experts, local leaders, and interested parties is the foundation upon which this comprehensive planning happens.

On any given day, you can contact RAPC to learn about advancements in transportation, discuss the region's growing and changing population, find out exactly how travel patterns were impacted by a recent event, learn about the latest trends in infrastructure. In this way, RAPC serves as a regional convener and a collaborative hub.

The following pages of this guide to Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Basics outline how RAPC serves as the MPO for the Alexandria-Pineville area and the functions of regional transportation planning.

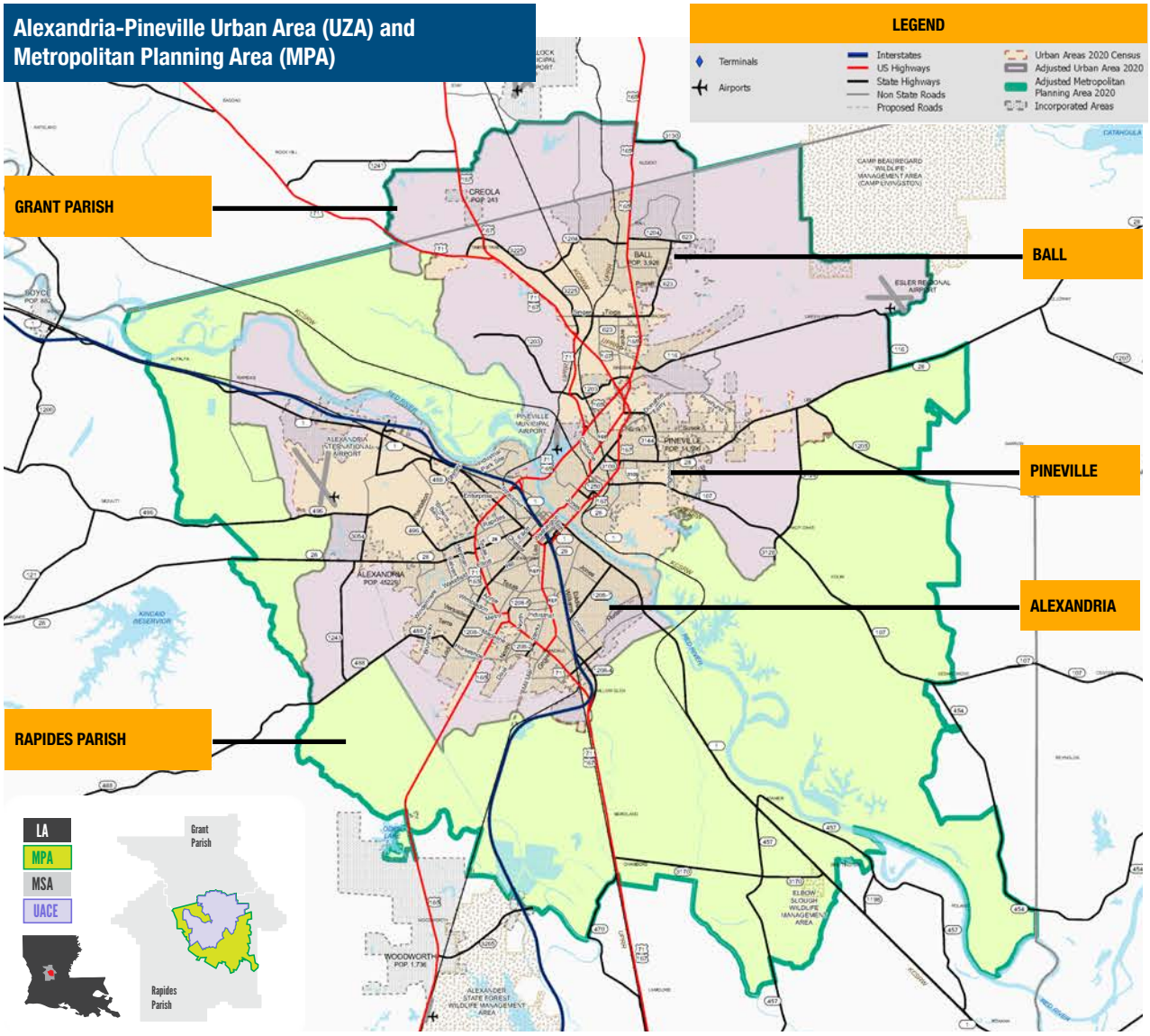
What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization?

A Metropolitan Planning Organization, or MPO, is an organization designated by federal law to provide local officials and residents input into the planning and implementation of projects funded with federal transportation dollars for metropolitan areas with populations of greater than 50,000.

To receive federal aid, an urban area of this size must follow the federal metropolitan planning process outlined by the US Department of Transportation (USDOT). The MPO is responsible for carrying out this process. In the Alexandria-Pineville metropolitan planning area, the Rapides Area Planning Commission is the federally-designated MPO. There are currently 11 MPOs in the state of Louisiana. These are all areas with a population greater than 50,000, as defined by the U.S. Census.

It is the job of an MPO to develop a transportation vision, direct planning, allocate federal funds, and engage the public and other stakeholders in this process for the Alexandria-Pineville metropolitan planning area (MPA).

Alexandria-Pineville Urban Area (UZA) and Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA)



Since 1975, the Rapides Area Planning Commission (RAPC) is responsible for carrying out the transportation and transit planning process inside the metropolitan planning area (MPA) including parts of Grant and Rapides Parishes.

The MPA consists of the 2020 US Census defined Alexandria-Pineville urban area plus contiguous areas likely to become developed in the next 25 years.

RAPC must implement a comprehensive, coordinated, and continuous transportation planning process, as outlined by the 2020 federal transportation act, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). RAPC acts as a regional forum to address transportation issues. It is a policy-making organization made up of representatives from local governments and transportation authorities.

The MPO's organizational structure is designed to allow it to operate as an entity separate from the member jurisdictions, so that no single entity dominates the organization's decision-making. Members include five local governments including Rapides Parish, City of Alexandria, City of Pineville, Town of Ball, plus the Central Louisiana Regional Port, England Airpark, and the local Louisiana DOTD District (08) as voting members, in addition to the Louisiana DOTD Planning Division, Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration as non-voting members.

Approximately 2.3% of Louisiana's population is represented inside the metro area.

Population and Employment Trends

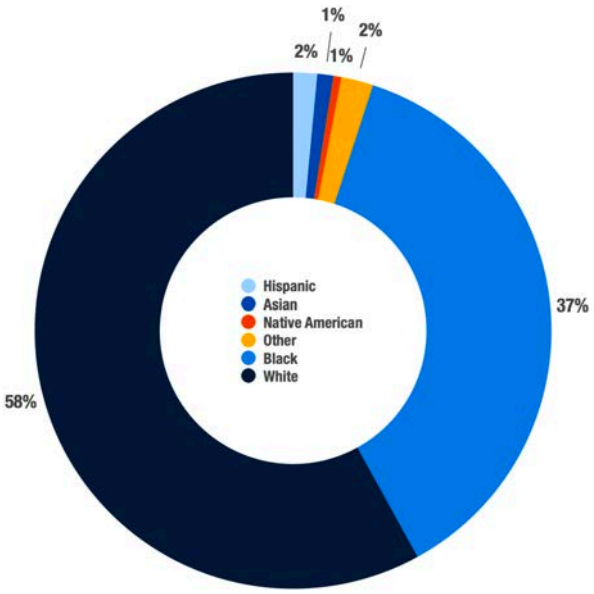
In the next 20+ years, RAPC forecasts the Alexandria-Pineville metro area will add 9.6 thousand people and 13.8 thousand jobs. The overall number of residents inside the urban core of the Alexandria- Pineville metro area experienced a decline between 2010 and 2020. Although the urban core of the UZA is declining, the MPA population is projected to experience moderate population growth by 2050.

Population

2015 **107,631** → 2050 **117,307**

Jobs

2015 **58,170** → 2050 **71,942**



RAPC Transportation Planning Committee Structure

The regional transportation decision making process is conducted through discussion, guidance, review, and approval of an official committee structure and also supported by the use of advisory groups on focused topic areas:

Transportation Policy Committee (TPC)

The TPC consists of elected officials representing parish and municipal governments inside the metropolitan planning area (Alexandria, Ball, Pineville, Rapides Parish), as well as LADOTD, Central Louisiana Regional Port, and the England Authority. The TPC oversees how federal transportation dollars are spent within the metropolitan planning area (MPA).

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC consists of local planners, engineers, as well as LADOTD, FTA, FHWA and provides input on transportation matters from a technical perspective on projects inside the metropolitan planning area.

Central Louisiana Regional Infrastructure Beltway Commission (CLRIBC)

The Beltway Commission consists of commissioners representing the City of Alexandria, City of Pineville, Town of Woodworth, Town of Ball, Town of Boyce, Rapides Parish Police Jury, Grant Parish Police Jury, LADOTD, England Authority, Central Louisiana Regional Port, Louisiana State University Alexandria, Louisiana College, and the Central Louisiana Regional Chamber of Commerce. The Commission oversees the development of a transportation and utility corridor for the growth of residential, commercial, and industrial developments serving the urban and rural areas of Rapides and south Grant Parishes.

Cenla Transportation Coalition (CTC)

The CTC (formerly HSTP until 2019) oversees the region's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Program and consists of representatives from public transit, social service agencies, DOTD, and citizens who utilize the Program.

Planning Requirements and Work Products

The Rapides Area Planning Commission must meet the requirements of the Metropolitan Planning Regulations and other applicable federal or state laws. The federal laws are outlined in the latest surface transportation bill, currently, the BIL (also known as IIJA). These requirements include three key products:

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

Long range – 20+ year plan

This plan is a long-range blueprint that prioritizes spending on transportation projects over the next two decades. It is financially constrained (based on revenue forecasts); multi-modal (transit, roads, freight, active transportation, human services transportation, etc.); addresses air quality and Justice 40 standards. Any transportation project that receives federal funding must be in both the MTP and the TIP.

Link to view the current plan - MTP 2045 online.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Short range – 4 year plan

Projects included in the TIP cover the first four years of the MTP. The TIP is the means by which federal, state, and local funds are approved for all significant surface transportation projects and programs in the Alexandria-Pineville metropolitan planning area.

Link to view the current TIP online.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Annual

The UPWP is developed annually in cooperation with the state, local governments, and public transportation operators. It documents metropolitan transportation planning activities performed with federal, state, and local transportation funds in the Alexandria-Pineville metropolitan planning area.

Link to view current FY25 UPWP online.

Additional Plans and Studies

RAPC produces many other modal plans, studies, and reports that inform the development of the MTP. It also provides insight to the latest trends, most up-to-date data, and general guidance for advancing the quality of planning in the Alexandria-Pineville metropolitan planning area and Central Louisiana region. Plans and studies are available online at www.rapc.info/transportation.

A few examples include,

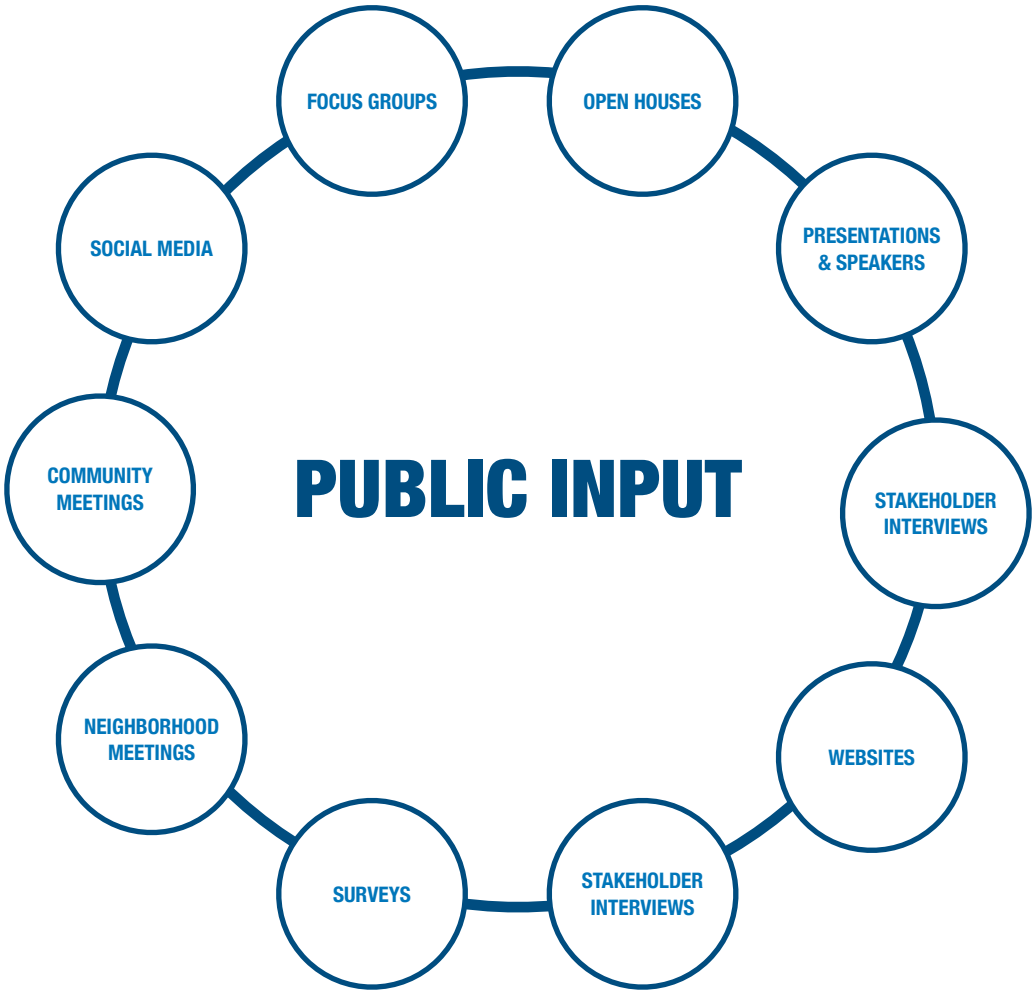
- *ATRANS Service Planning & Asset Study (2021)*
- *Central Louisiana Rural Public Transportation Study (2021)*
- *Rapides Parish Local Road Safety Plan (2021)*
- *Rock Island Greenway Feasibility Study (2022)*
- *Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (2023)*
- *Virtual Public Involvement (2023)*

How Transportation Projects are Identified

A. A local government identifies projects or transportation needs through a local planning or outreach process.

B. Works with RAPC, and partners such as DOTD or ATRANS, so the project is considered for inclusion in the MTP Projects are scored using the MPO's Project Evaluation Framework.

C. The project meets regional goals and funding is available, it is included in the draft MTP for public comment. When MTP is adopted, the project is officially scheduled based on funding availability.

Public Input is a vital and valuable part of RAPC's process for identifying and prioritizing regional policy recommendations, plans, and projects.

Public Input is Critical to MPO Activities Every Step of the Way