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## Technical Bulletins: SAFETEA-LU Transportation Funding for Tennessee Cities

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**MTAS**  
**Municipal Technical  
 Advisory Service**

*In cooperation with the  
 Tennessee Municipal League*



**April 3, 2007**

**SAFETEA-LU TRANSPORTATION FUNDING FOR TENNESSEE CITIES**

**Ron Darden, Municipal Management Consultant**

**INTRODUCTION**

On August 10, 2005, President George W. Bush signed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), hereinafter referred to as “the act,” which obligates \$244.1 billion over a period of five years (FY2005-FY2009) for transportation improvements. Most of the funds provided in the act come from the Highway Trust Fund. The primary sources of these funds are the 18.4 cents per gallon federal tax on gasoline and a 24.4 cents per gallon federal tax on diesel fuel. Tennessee cities are eligible to receive transportation funding under the act, and some Tennessee city transportation projects were included in the act as priority projects.

As a condition for receiving funds under the act, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) is required to develop transportation plans in cooperation with local governments. It is important that Tennessee cities participate in local and state transportation planning to receive these funds.

Funds are apportioned to the states annually using formulas contained in the act. TDOT is responsible for planning, administering, and allocating funds to cities for transportation

projects based on federal standards and requirements. Guaranteed national obligations under the act for FY2005-FY2009 are

FY2005	\$43.549 billion
FY2006	\$46.583 billion
FY2007	\$49.175 billion
FY2008	\$51.294 billion
FY2009	\$53.547 billion

Cities may receive a share of these funds for transportation projects by participating in the planning process that identifies transportation needs and allocates project funds.

This report discusses programs available to Tennessee cities, the planning process that cities are encouraged to participate in, planning organizations, required transportation plans, and whom to contact about city transportation planning needs.

**SAFETEA-LU PROGRAMS AVAILABLE FOR TENNESSEE CITIES**

The act provides funds for

- Bridge construction, repair, and maintenance;
- Surface transportation—streets and highways;

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- Congestion mitigation;
- Air quality improvements;
- Highway safety;
- Appalachian Development Highways;
- Recreation trails;
- Scenic byways;
- Projects of national and regional significance;
- High priority projects;
- Safe routes to schools; and
- Magnetic levitation—rail.

Cities may qualify for projects to

- Install traffic signal;
- Paint lane markings;
- Install guardrail;
- Correct a sight distance problem;
- Add a turning lane or lanes;
- Install school flashing lights;
- Sign and mark a railroad crossing;
- Install a flashing beacon;
- Remove roadside obstacles;
- Install skid-resistant overlays;
- Add shoulders to streets;
- Install sidewalks;
- Undertake enhancement projects;
- Replace a deficient bridge;
- Light an interstate exchange;
- Construct, reconstruct, or widen a road that connects to a new or expanding industrial facility;
- Improve air quality or mitigate congestion;
- Widen or relocate an existing road;
- Construct a new road;
- Renovate historical transportation facilities;
- Construct bicycle and pedestrian trails;
- Construct welcome centers;
- Add landscaping and other scenic beautification;
- Perform historic preservation;
- Rehabilitating and operating historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities;
- Preserving abandoned railroad corridors (including converting and using them for pedestrian or bicycle trails);
- Control or remove outdoor advertising;
- Conducting archeological planning and research;
- Mitigating water pollution due to highway runoff; and
- Establishing transportation museums.

### THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR TENNESSEE CITIES

Cities are encouraged to participate in either the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) or the regional transportation planning organization (RTPO) for rural areas.

### METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

In cooperation with the state, the MPO develops transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas of the state with populations greater than 50,000. Small cities within urbanized areas are required to participate in the MPO designated for their area. MPO responsibilities are administered

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by an executive board whose members may include locally elected officials, transit providers, the governor, and a representative from TDOT. If the MPO is adjacent to another state, it may also include officials from that state. In addition to the executive board, an executive staff committee, sometimes referred to as the technical committee, composed of planners, engineers, public works directors, and members from other technical disciplines. It reviews the technical aspects of transportation planning and projects and makes recommendations to the executive board.

The MPO coordinator typically is a staff member of the local or regional planning commission who serves as the liaison between the MPO and the Federal Highway Administration, TDOT, and local governments, and other groups or individuals interested in transportation issues. The MPO coordinator serves the executive board and the technical committee and should be contacted for information about transportation planning and project funding under the act.

If a city is located in an area represented by an MPO, it is recommended that a knowledgeable staff person represent the city at the staff committee level and that the mayor or other executive represent the city at the executive board level. Some MPOs do not provide for direct representation of small cities on the executive board. They rely on a mayor or other official to represent the interests of several cities. Projects are

funded based on the needs of the area's transportation system and the number of votes received from the executive board.

### REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION FOR RURAL AREAS

The RTPO is used by TDOT for transportation planning within rural areas that are not represented by an MPO. RTPO responsibilities are administered by an executive board whose members represent decision makers from all government entities in the area. The RTPO is concerned with setting the organization's vision and policies, authorizing studies, and making transportation funding recommendations to TDOT.

A technical committee representing the most competent and engaged transportation professionals from all operative levels of government entities in the area, as well as all modes of transportation, assists the RTPO staff in compiling data, conducting transportation studies and analyses, and making recommendations to the executive board. The RTPO organizational structure is very similar to that of present MPOs; however, the RTPO acts in an advisory capacity to TDOT.

### MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND TECHNICAL COMMITTEES

According to TDOT, federal law describes local officials as "elected and appointed non-metropolitan local officials of general purpose local government in non-metropolitan

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areas with jurisdiction/responsibility for transportation.” Representatives include

- County representatives (mayors and commissioners);
- City representatives (mayors and council members);
- County highway superintendents;
- City public works directors/engineers street supervisors;
- Local and/or regional planning commissioners; and
- Joint economic and community development board.

The minimum transportation mode representation required is rural public transit. If there are other modes of transportation in the areas of aviation, rail/freight, bicycle, pedestrian, or water, they must be represented in the planning process.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation’s (TDOT) home page, <http://www.tdot.state.tn.us>, includes sample executive board membership and sample technical committee membership lists. MTAS recommends that cities participate in both the executive board and the technical committee to the fullest extent possible. Your city has a better chance of having projects included in transportation plans and receiving funding if you are at the table.

Tennessee Development Districts, in cooperation with TDOT, facilitate planning efforts of local communities. A staff person is assigned to coordinate meetings

of the executive board and the technical committee. The staff person assists in collecting and analyzing data needed for transportation studies and performs studies for the purpose of making recommendations to the executive board.

### REQUIRED TRANSPORTATION PLANS

The required plans are the transportation plan (sometimes called the long-range transportation plan), the transportation improvement plan (TIP), and the unified work plan.

The long-range transportation plan is a 20-year plan that identifies streets that should function as an integrated regional system. Cities need to make sure that appropriate streets are included in this plan and that projects are consistent with the plan.

The implementation plan is called a transportation improvement plan. It is a three-year schedule of all federally funded and regionally significant transportation projects to be implemented in the urban area. This plan includes the list of priority projects to be carried out in each of the three years. Projects in the TIP must be consistent with the Long-Range transportation plan. The TIP serves as a strategic management tool that accomplishes the objectives of the plan. City projects need to be on this list of projects in the TIP in order to receive funds. Be sure to ask the MPO planning coordinator and the executive board to include your project in the TIP.

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The unified work plan program is a one-year schedule of transportation planning activities that documents work to be performed with planning funds. Cities must monitor this plan to ensure that their projects are funded.

### MPOS IN TENNESSEE

MPOs vary greatly in Tennessee. Some have more direct representation than others. In addition to the governor and a TDOT representative, the state's 11 MPOs and their executive boards are

#### MEMPHIS URBAN AREA MPO

##### Executive board members

- Mayor, Memphis
- Mayor, Shelby County
- Governor of Mississippi
- President of the Desoto County, Mississippi, board of supervisors
- Elected representative from the MPO's regional advisory board

**Note:** *The regional advisory board comprises the elected executive of each county and municipality in the planning area as well as the chairperson for the boards of the Airport Authority, the Port of Memphis, and the Memphis Area Transit Authority. Tennessee cities and counties represented on the regional advisory board include cities of Millington, Lakeland, Memphis, Arlington, Collierville, Bartlett, Germantown, Piperton, Galloway, and Shelby and Fayette counties. Mississippi representatives include cities of Horn Lake, Southaven, and Olive Branch, and Hernando and DeSoto counties.*

#### NASHVILLE AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

##### Executive board members

- Mayor, Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County
- Mayor, Portland
- County executive, Rutherford County
- County executive, Williamson County
- Mayor, Murfreesboro
- Mayor, Springfield
- Mayor, Lebanon
- Mayor, Hendersonville
- Vice-mayor, Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County
- Mayor, Fairview
- Mayor, Goodlettsville
- Mayor, Nolensville
- Mayor, Mount Juliet
- Mayor, White House
- Commissioner, Brentwood
- Mayor, Franklin
- Mayor, Smyrna
- County executive, Sumner County
- Mayor, Millersville
- Mayor, LaVergne
- Mayor, Spring Hill
- Mayor, Gallatin

#### KNOXVILLE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION

##### Executive board members

- Mayor, Knoxville
- Mayor, Maryville
- Mayor, Farragut
- Mayor, Alcoa
- County executive, Blount County
- Mayor, Knox County
- Representative of East Tennessee Development District

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### CHATTANOOGA URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

#### Executive board members

- Commissioner, Georgia Department of Transportation
- Mayor, Chattanooga
- Council member, Chattanooga
- Hamilton County executive
- Hamilton County commissioner
- Elected official, North Georgia legislative delegation from Catoosa, Dade, Walker counties, Georgia
- Elected official, Tennessee legislative delegation from Hamilton County,
- Tennessee chairman of the board, Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority
- Chairman of the board, Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport Authority
- Elected representative, Dade County, Georgia
- Elected representative, Walker County, Georgia
- Elected representative, Catoosa County, Georgia
- Mayor, Chickamauga, Georgia
- Mayor, Collegedale
- Mayor, East Ridge
- Mayor, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia
- Mayor, Lakesite
- Mayor, Lookout Mountain
- Mayor, Lookout Mountain, Georgia
- Mayor, Red Bank
- Mayor, Ridgeside
- Mayor, Ringgold, Georgia
- Mayor, Rossville, Georgia
- Mayor, Signal Mountain
- Mayor, Soddy-Daisy
- Mayor, Walden

### BRISTOL

#### Executive board members

- Mayor, Bristol
- Mayor, Bristol, Virginia
- County executive, Sullivan County
- Mayor, Bluff City
- County executive, Washington County, Virginia
- Representative of Virginia Department of Transportation

### CLARKSVILLE-MONTGOMERY COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

#### Executive board members

- Mayor, Clarksville
- County executive, Montgomery County
- Two representatives from the Kentucky Department of Transportation
- County judge, Christian County, Kentucky
- Representative from Christian County, Kentucky
- Mayor, Oak Grove, Kentucky
- Representative, Oak Grove, Kentucky
- Executive director of GNRC
- Transportation specialist, GNRC
- Mayor, Hopkinsville, Kentucky
- Member, Hopkinsville-Christian County Planning Commission

### JACKSON URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

#### Executive board members

- Mayor, Jackson
- Council member, Jackson
- Mayor, Madison County
- Madison County commissioner



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### **JOHNSON CITY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

#### **Executive board members**

- Mayor, Johnson City
- Mayor, Elizabethton
- County executive, Carter County
- County executive, Washington County
- Mayor, Jonesborough
- Representative, Johnson City Transit System
- Representative, First Tennessee Development District

### **KINGSPORT METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

#### **Executive board members**

- Mayor, Kingsport
- Governor, state of Virginia
- Executive director, Lenowisco, Virginia
- Tennessee state representative
- Virginia state representative
- Representatives from the cities of Mount Carmel and Church Hill
- County executive, Sullivan County
- County executive, Scott County, Virginia
- Representative, Virginia Department of Transportation

### **CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

#### **Executive board members**

- Mayor, Cleveland
- County executive, Bradley County
- Vice-Mayor, Cleveland

### **LAKEWAY AREA METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MORRISTOWN AREA)**

- Mayor, Morristown
- Mayor, White Pine
- County executive, Jefferson County
- Mayor, Jefferson City
- County executive, Hamblen County

### **WHOM TO CONTACT FOR INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE**

Contact the Tennessee Department of Transportation, the MPO coordinator, the area development district RTPO staff representative, or your MTAS municipal management consultant.

#### **The MPO Planning Coordinators are**

Bristol MPO: Rex Montgomery  
(423) 989-5519  
Chattanooga MPO: Karen Rhodes  
(423) 757-5216  
Clarksville MPO: J. Stan Williams  
(931) 645-7448  
Cleveland MPO: Greg Thomas  
(423) 479-1913  
Jackson MPO: Keith Donaldson  
(731) 425-8275  
Johnson City MPO: Glenn Berry  
(423) 434-6272  
Lakeway MPO (Morristown):  
Rich DesGroseilliers, (423) 581-0100  
Kingsport MPO: Cris Campbell  
(423) 224-2677  
Knoxville MPO: Jeffrey Welch  
(865) 215-3790  
Memphis MPO: Richard Copeland  
(901) 379-7860  
Nashville MPO: Michael Skipper  
(615) 862-7240



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### REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS FOR RURAL AREAS

**Northwest Tennessee Development District.** Counties of Lake, Dyer, Obion, Crockett, Weakley, Carroll, Henry, and Benton. Cities in these counties, which do not participate in an MPO, should call Robert Goad at (731) 587-4213 for transportation planning assistance and information.

**Memphis Area Association of Governments.** Counties of Lauderdale, Tipton, Shelby, and Fayette. Cities in these counties, which do not participate in an MPO, should call Steve Andrews at (901) 729-2871 for transportation planning assistance and information.

**Southwest Tennessee Development District.** Counties of Haywood, Madison, Hardeman, McNairy, Chester, Henderson, Hardin, and Decatur. Cities in these counties, which do not participate in an MPO, should call Monique Hazelwood at (731) 668-6412 for transportation planning assistance and information.

**Greater Nashville Regional Council.** Counties of Stewart, Montgomery, Robertson, Houston, Humphreys, Dickson, and Cheatham. Cities in these counties, which do not participate in an MPO, should call Jeff Panciron at (615) 880-3901 for transportation planning assistance and information.

**South Central Tennessee Development District.** Counties of Perry, Wayne, Lewis, Hickman, Lawrence, Maury, Giles, Lincoln, Marshall, Bedford, Moore, Coffee, and Franklin. Cities in these counties, which do not participate in an MPO, should call Sara Brown at (931) 490-5912 for transportation planning assistance and information.

*Note: This development district has two regional transportation planning organizations within its area.*

**Upper Cumberland Development District.** Counties of Macon, Smith, Clay, Jackson, Overton, Pickett, Fentress, Putnam, DeKalb, Cannon, Warren, White, Van Buren, and Cumberland. Cities in these counties, which do not participate in an MPO, should call Ken Mabery at (931) 432-4111 for transportation planning assistance and information.

*Note: This development district has two regional transportation planning organizations within its area.*

**Southeast Tennessee Development District.** Counties of Marion, Grundy, Sequatchie, Hamilton, Bledsoe, Rhea, Meigs, Bradley, McMinn, and Polk. Cities in these counties, which do not participate in an MPO, should call Kim Harpe at (423) 424-4268 for transportation planning assistance and information.

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### East Tennessee Development District.

Counties of Morgan, Scott, Campbell, Roane, Anderson, Union, Claiborne, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Blount, Sevier, and Cocke. Cities in these counties, which do not participate in an MPO, should call Jennifer Lehto at (865) 273-6003 for transportation planning assistance and information. **Note:** *This development district has two regional planning organizations within its area.*

### First Tennessee Development District.

Counties of Hancock, Hawkins, Greene, Sullivan, Washington, Unicoi, Carter, and Johnson. Cities in these counties, which do not participate in an MPO, should call Susan Reid at (423) 928-5209 for transportation planning assistance and information.

### SUMMARY

The SAFETEA-LU provides federal funds for city transportation programs in Tennessee. Cities should become aware of available street improvement programs under the act and participate in the transportation planning process that determines eligible transportation needs and project funding. Cities participate in the planning process through either an MPO or the RTPPO. City projects are not funded unless they are included in the area transportation plan.

**Footnote:** *Some information for this report came from Tennessee Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration documents and reports.*

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