

Certification Review of the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process for the Rockford Transportation Management Area

APPENDIX

Certification Review by:
Federal Highway Administration
Federal Transit Administration



March, 2008

APPENDIX A

ROCKFORD METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING CERTIFICATION REVIEW DEFINITIONS OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act | NHI – National Highway Institute |
| AMG – Arterial Management Group | NHS – National Highway System |
| BCCA – Boone County Council on Aging | NICTI – Northern Illinois Commuter Transportation Initiative |
| BTS – Beloit Transit System | NTOC – National Transportation Operations Coalition |
| CFR – Code of Federal Regulations | PL – metropolitan Planning funds |
| CHSP – Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan | PPP – Public Participation Plan |
| CMP – Congestion Management Process | RATS – Rockford Area Transportation Study |
| CMS – Congestion Management System | RMTD – Rockford Mass Transit District |
| EJ – Environmental Justice | RPD – Rockford Police Department |
| EPA – Environmental Protection Agency | SAFETEA-LU – Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users |
| FHWA – Federal Highway Administration | SLATS – Stateline Area Transportation Study |
| FTA – Federal Transit Administration | SIP – State Implementation Plan |
| GIS – Geographic Information System | SMTD – Stateline Mass Transit District |
| HES – Hazard Elimination-Safety program | SR2S – Safe Routes to School program |
| HSIP – Highway Safety Improvement Program | STIP – State Transportation Improvement Program |
| HSTP – Human Services Transportation Plan | STU – Surface Transportation Program Urban funds |
| IDOT – Illinois Department of Transportation | SOV – Single Occupancy Vehicle |
| ISHTA – Illinois State Highway Toll Authority | TEA-21 – Transportation Equity Act for the 21 st Century |
| ISTEA – Intermodal Surface Transportation Act of 1991 | TIP – Transportation Improvement Program |
| ITS – Intelligent Transportation Systems | TMA – Transportation Management Area |
| LOS – Level of Service | UPWP – Unified Planning Work Program |
| LRTP – Long Range Transportation Plan | USC – United States Code |
| MCR – Mobile Crash Reporting | USDOT – United States Department of Transportation |
| MPA – Metropolitan Planning Area boundary | UWP – Unified Work Program |
| MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization | UZA – Urbanized Area |
| MYP – Illinois Department of Transportation Multi-Year Highway Program | WinGIS – Winnebago County Geographic Information System |
| NAAQS – National Ambient Air Quality Standards | |
| NEPA – National Environmental Protection Act | |

APPENDIX B

ROCKFORD METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING CERTIFICATION REVIEW SITE VISIT AGENDA

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 – ROCKFORD CITY HALL

4:00 Public Meeting

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 – ROCKFORD CITY HALL

9:00 Introductions and Overview

9:15 Organization and Administration of the Planning Process

MPO Committees

MPO Staff

Regional Development Issues and Challenges

Unified Planning Work Program

Boundaries and Agreements

10:30 Long Range Transportation Plan

11:30 Lunch

1:00 Public Participation in the Planning Process

Comments from Public Meeting

Public Participation Plan

Title VI

Americans with Disabilities Act

2:30 Transportation Systems Management

Congestion Management Process

System Management and Operations

Intelligent Transportation Systems

Air Quality

4:00 Adjourn/Federal Review Team Discussion

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 – ROCKFORD CITY HALL

8:00 Programming

Transportation Improvement Program

Project Selection

Annual Listing of Obligated Projects

9:00 Transit and Non-Motorized Transportation

Transit

Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan

10:00 Planning Process Elements

Safety

Security

Environmental Mitigation & Consultation

Self-Certifications

11:15 SAFETEA-LU and the 2007 Final Planning Rule

11:45 Disposition of any 2003 Certification Review Findings not already addressed

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Federal Review Team Discussion

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 – LOVES PARK CITY HALL

10:00 RATS Technical Committee

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 – LOVES PARK CITY HALL

1:15 RATS Policy Committee

APPENDIX C

ROCKFORD METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING CERTIFICATION REVIEW SITE VISIT ATTENDANCE

Stewart McKenzie, Community Planner, FTA, Region 5
Reggie Arkell, Community Planner, FTA, Region 5
Jon-Paul Kohler, Planning and Program Development Manger, FHWA, Illinois Division
JD Stevenson, Planning, Environment, and ROW Team Leader, FHWA, Illinois Division
Chris DiPalma, Metropolitan Planning Engineer, FHWA, Chicago Metropolitan Office
John Donovan, Transportation Planning Specialist, FHWA, Illinois Division
Traci Baker, Civil Rights Specialist, FHWA Illinois Division
Janice Osadczuk, Planning and Environmental Specialist, FHWA, Indiana Division
Theresa Claxton, Professional Development Program, FHWA, Illinois Division
Ashley Settles, Professional Development Program, FHWA Texas Division
Jim Stack, Planning and Transit Section Chief, IDOT, Office of Planning and Programming
Margaret Walker, Title VI Specialist, IDOT, Office of Business and Workforce Diversity
Steve Ernst, Executive Director, Rockford Area Transportation Study
Gary McIntyre, Transportation Planner, Rockford Area Transportation Study
Jon Paul Diipla, Transportation Planner, Rockford Area Transportation Study
Rick McVinnie, Executive Director, Rockford Mass Transit District
Jim Johnson, Rockford Mass Transit District
Paula Hughes, Rockford Mass Transit District
Lisa Brown, Rockford Mass Transit District
Steve Haight, Careers, Etc.

APPENDIX D

PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

LEGAL NOTICE

Metropolitan Transportation Planning Certification Review

NOTICE, is hereby given that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) invite interested persons to participate in a review and evaluation of the transportation planning process as conducted by the Rockford Area Transportation Study, the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Rockford Transportation Management Area (TMA). The FHWA and FTA must jointly certify the transportation planning process in the Rockford TMA in accordance with federal planning regulations. The certification review meeting will begin on September 18, 2007 at 9:00 AM and break at approximately 4:00 PM. The meeting will resume on September 19, 2007 at approximately 8:00 AM and conclude at approximately 12:00 PM. The certification review meeting will be held at the Rockford City Hall, 425 East State Street.

A public meeting will be held on Monday, September 17, 2007 from 4:00 to 7:00 PM in the Rockford City Hall lobby. FHWA and FTA will make a brief presentation of the certification review process and accept public comments on the Rockford TMA planning process at this time.

The public and interest groups are encouraged to attend the public meeting and the certification review meeting. Written comments also may be sent to either FHWA or FTA at the addresses below:

FHWA: Mr. John Donovan
Transportation Planning Specialist
3250 Executive Park Drive
Springfield, IL 62704
john.donovan@fhwa.dot.gov

FTA: Mr. Stewart McKenzie
Community Planner
200 West Adams Street, Suite 320
Chicago, IL 60606
Stewart.mckenzie@dot.gov

To be considered in the certification review, written comments must be received by October 12, 2007. For more information, please contact either Steve Ernst, Rockford MPO Study Director and Rockford Traffic Engineer, at (815) 967-6734 or Gary McIntyre, Rockford MPO Transportation Planner, at 815-987-5628. Individuals with special needs for communication, such as non-English speakers or the hearing-impaired, should contact Gary McIntyre one week in advance of the meetings to arrange for special language services.

Published September 12, 2007, The Rock River Times

APPENDIX E

PUBLIC MEETING ATTENDENCE

Attendees that Signed In

Eva Moreno
Linda Fuller
Aaron Rivera
Mary Sanson
Amy
Dennie Davis
Becky Aharez
Jim Neal
Jeff Stafford
Donald Ray
Ollie Hotton
Lucia Rine Poller
John Warner
Deborah Warner
Noreen McCarthy

Clarence McCoy
Charles Berry
Edward Jones
Jennifer Cacciapaglia
Heather Swartz
Lon Just
Brian Eber
Brad Moberg
Paula Hughes
Crosby
Joe Owen
Ann Thompson
Roger Jansen
Eldridge Gilbert
Russ Petrotte

Camille Alberty
Jim Stack
Patrick Zuroske
John Donehue
Mark Marinaro
Gerald Haye
Sudie Suit
Tad Olson
M. Lopez
M. Theradse
Becky Lichty
Fay Muhammed
Gary Schewers
Rufus Matthews

APPENDIX F

MPO STAFF RESPONSES TO ADVANCED REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Who are the member agencies of the RATS Policy Committee? How prevalent is the use of proxies for Policy members? Who are the member agencies of the RATS Technical Committee? Discuss the impacts thus far of inclusion of new members into the RATS planning process resulting from Census 2000.

The RATS Policy Committee consists of:

- ◆ *Winnebago County*
- ◆ *Boone County*
- ◆ *City of Rockford*
- ◆ *City of Loves Park*
- ◆ *City of Belvidere*
- ◆ *Village of Machesney Park*
- ◆ *Illinois Department of Transportation*

The RATS Technical Committee consists of:

- ◆ *Illinois Department of Transportation, District 2*
- ◆ *Winnebago County Highway Department*
- ◆ *Rockford Public Works Department*
- ◆ *Loves Park Public Works Department*
- ◆ *Machesney Park Planning Department*
- ◆ *Chicago/Rockford International Airport*
- ◆ *Rockford Mass Transit District*
- ◆ *Loves Park Community Development Department*
- ◆ *Cherry Valley Planning Department*
- ◆ *Rockford Community Development Department*
- ◆ *Winnebago County Planning & Economic Development Department*
- ◆ *Belvidere/Boone County Regional Planning Department*
- ◆ *Boone County Highway Department*
- ◆ *Belvidere Public Works Department*
- ◆ *Roscoe Planning Department*
- ◆ *Village of Winnebago (via a consultant)*

Non-Voting Technical Committee Members:

- ◆ *Illinois Environmental protection Agency*
- ◆ *Illinois State Toll Highway Authority*
- ◆ *IDOT Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation*
- ◆ *IDOT Division of Urban Program Planning*
- ◆ *Ogle County Highway Department*
- ◆ *Boone County Council On Aging*
- ◆ *State Line Area Transportation Study*
- ◆ *Federal Highway Administration, Illinois Division*
- ◆ *Rockford Area Economic Development Council*
- ◆ *Rock River Water Reclamation District*

◆ *Growth Dimensions*

The use of proxy by members of the Policy Committee, in its true definition, is never used. A vote can only be cast if a representative from that agency is present at the meeting. Other than the IDOT Policy member, all of the Policy Committee members are elected officials. It is fairly common for the elected officials to send a staff member to represent them when they are not available for a meeting. The by-laws of RATS have specific language on voting.

There have been three distinct changes in the MPO representation since the 2000 census that are noteworthy. First, the addition of Boone County and the City of Belvidere. This change has caused the MPO to look at transportation issues from a broader, more regional perspective. This has caused the MPO to look at changing its core mission, in a similar fashion to what happened in NE Illinois with the merger of CATS and NIPC into CMAP. When the original Rockford-Winnebago County Planning Commission disbanded in the 1980s the mission of the MPO, and the associated work program, became one of meeting federal requirements only. Discussion is underway to see if it is advantageous for the Rockford MPO to add to its work program items related to regional planning beyond what is necessary to meet federal requirements. Second, the 2000 Census removed the Village of Roscoe from SLATS and placed them in RATS. The transition has been difficult for Roscoe as their planning and operations have firm roots in the neighboring communities of Rockton and South Beloit, both which remain in SLATS. The transit initiatives, which have culminated in the creation of the State Line Mass Transit District, have been difficult to navigate because of the differing planning requirements for a TMA. And the land use planning issues for Roscoe (annexations, boundary agreements, etc) are more active with the SLATS neighbors than they are with Machesney Park. Third, is the addition of the Rock River Water Reclamation District, Rockford Area Economic Development Council and Growth Dimensions as non-voting members of the Technical Committee. This welcome addition has allowed the MPO and its members to understand the broader issue of economic development, and the role of non-transportation utility providers in the region. As the work program of the MPO matures it is anticipated that these new members will add needed technical resources.

2. Discuss the organizational structure of the RATS staff. To what degree is the MPO process supported by staff activities of member agencies?

The staff of the MPO is two full time transportation planners, Gary McIntyre and Jon Paul Diipla. In addition is a part-time study director, Steve Ernst, who also holds the position of Traffic Engineer for the City of Rockford. The RATS offices are located on the 6th floor of Rockford City Hall. In many ways the staff structure has been beneficial, especially for the planning activities related to operations and maintenance. The technical staff of the Engineering Division and the Traffic Engineering Division of Rockford Public Works, with daily work tasks that often deal with land use planning issues, operations and safety issues, and transportation infrastructure issues, have afforded the RATS staff with many opportunities to provide MPO input into the daily activities of these divisions. This arrangement has its drawbacks as well but overall seems to be the best possible scenario.

The RATS staff also meet quite often with engineers and planners from the other member agencies. So the City Hall location has not kept the RATS staff isolated from coordinating with

the members. And the permanent location for Technical Committee meetings in Loves Park City Hall furthers the effort to foster the MPO process into the daily activities of the members.

The structure of the MPO is currently being looked at by the Policy Committee for possible expansion. There is general agreement that staff needs to be added to the MPO just to meet federal requirements. There is also a desire from some of the Policy members to have additional planning tasks added to the MPO work program. Some of these additional tasks are strictly transportation related, some are more general comprehensive planning related. The MPO is awaiting the fate of SB 1201, which passed both houses of the Illinois General Assembly. The bill awaits the signature of the governor. The matter will be decided one way or the other by September 2007. If the bill is signed into law the State of Illinois will provide funding directly to the MPOs for planning. These dollars would be the foundation of any future expansion of the MPO staff. Without these dollars the Policy Committee would have to re-allocate PL and 5303 dollars to allow staff to be added. A staff expansion would also necessitate relocation to another building as Rockford City Hall has no room for the MPO to expand. The City of Rockford has offered space in a building that it owns to accommodate any future expansion, but that decision has not been made. It is anticipated that that the subject of MPO expansion will be decided sometime in FY 08.

3. What official cooperative agreements or memoranda of understanding identifying planning responsibilities have been established among RATS, IDOT, public transit providers, or other agencies involved in the planning process? Please attach these documents to your response packet.

The planning relationship between the MPO and IDOT is governed by the Cooperative Agreement Forming and Empowering the Rockford Area Transportation Study, dated March 2003. This Cooperative Agreement followed the addition of Boone County and the City of Belvidere to the Policy Committee as a result of the Year 2000 Census.

The planning relationship between the MPO and the transit operators is governed by RATS Resolution 2000-9, Public Transit Agencies / RATS Cooperative Agreement. This Resolution followed the addition of the urban portion of Boone County to the MPO, which partially changed the status of the Boone County Council on Aging.

4. Discuss organizational challenges and opportunities that are anticipated during the planning horizon. How is RATS involved in discussions concerning regional land use planning? How does RATS envision its future role relative to the Chicago Metropolitan Area? The Beloit Metropolitan Area? The regional I-90 corridor from Rockford to Madison? The Intermodal Facility located in Rochelle? Are there any other land use or economic impacts on the horizon that will significantly impact the planning process in the region?

The MPO organization in the Rockford region is facing organizational challenges, but the Policy Committee recognizes the opportunity to migrate RATS to a regional decision making body, one that does not simply meet federal requirements. The Policy Committee has directed staff to research and prepare recommendations for the RATS agency of the future. This work is planned to be completed in 2007.

The addition of economic development agencies to the MPO technical partners has fostered a renewed interest in regional land use planning. The impact of freight transportation has caused agencies to look regionally at site selection factors. The residential growth in the eastern portions of the MPO has caused agencies to look at the effect on the environment, school enrollment & taxes and the life cycle cost of infrastructure. These all position the MPO to take a strong leadership role. But the MPO must evolve and the discussions and visioning are underway. The Rockford MPO looks to the changes at CMAP as a model to move beyond an agency devoted to meeting federal requirements.

The changes come with certain challenges. The Rock River Valley has essentially become a contiguous urban area from Janesville, WI to Belvidere encompassing 3 existing MPOs. Air quality issues at the stateline remain as a barrier to formal merging of MPOs that may become desirable in the near future. The development pressure of an expanding Chicagoland could mean explosive growth in travel within the urban area, resulting in the type of congestion that has plagued the western suburbs. Transit investment for commuter travel is projected to be expensive because of the lack of investment in rail infrastructure of the past 30 years. Growth in air cargo, truck & rail freight will require additional resources to be devoted to providing a quality transportation system. Private investment at Daimler-Chrysler, Global III Intermodal Hub in Rochelle, UPS and other logistics companies at the Chicago/Rockford International Airport will necessitate a robust, multi-modal long range transportation plan.

The proposed changes in environmental regulations represent the greatest unknown and the potential for significant changes in the planning process. Other potential changes on the horizon may include:

- ◆ Annexation battles in Boone County due to the lack of boundary agreements*
- ◆ Balanced growth planning against the development pressure of expanding Chicagoland*
- ◆ Global competitiveness for Illinois industry will require an investment strategy that can leverage private, federal and state funding*
- ◆ Safety and security may require non-traditional transportation strategies*
- ◆ A fundamental shift in national transportation policy and decision-making from the states to regions may dramatically change the authority of the MPO*

5. How does RATS evaluate the overall effectiveness of its planning processes and procedures?

There is no formal process in place for a self-evaluation. RATS staff have judged their effectiveness by listening to comments from the Policy Committee, Technical Committee, and the general public. There is general agreement that the MPO planning process is effective and meets the intent of the federal requirements. As explained above (question #2) there is a general consensus that the MPO must expand, but funding and other issues will take time to be completed.

In November 2006 the MPO held a retreat to look at issues of effectiveness and how the MPO could change in the future. This retreat was led by a facilitator from Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies. The brainstorming sessions from this retreat have formed the foundation for the MPO expansion discussions. The retreat can be summarized by saying that the MPO, with limited staff, has been very effective at meeting federal

requirements. But most of the retreat participants agreed that the future of the region will require the MPO to expand its role.

6. How are UWP activities developed, selected, and prioritized?

In the UWP, Part 8 explains the process that RATS uses to suballocate the FHWA-PL and FTA-5303 funds. Essentially, work for the forthcoming fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) starts approximately eight months before July 1st. At the October – November Technical Committee and/or Policy Committee meetings, RATS staff will start the discussions to inform the committees of the projected planning funds that will be available, planning projects that need to be initiated, continued or completed to respond to FHWA/FTA planning emphasis areas. In the past several years, RATS has budgeted PL and 5303 funds to enlist consultant help to complete the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and its many subcomponents. Before that time, RATS staff prepared the LRTP document. From the completion of that document in 2005, additional long-range planning projects became apparent. Specifically, the Bicycle – Pedestrian Element of the LRTP needed to be updated. Accordingly, RATS programmed a portion of the PL and 5303 funds to complete an analysis to lay the foundation to implement an area-wide network of on-street bike facilities to connect to the network of shared-use path facilities. Also, this study reviewed the mass transit routes and the availability of sidewalks in the MPO area. In another related area, in the FY 2008 UWP, RATS will begin a regional analysis of freight movement for the entire Rockford Metro Area. Also, we will continue to program funds to regional corridor studies where the interaction between the transportation facilities, adjacent land uses and the projected growth in land use warrant an in-depth analysis. These studies may result in sub-area plans.

7. Briefly describe some of the significant sub-area or corridor studies in the RATS metropolitan area since the last federal certification review.

- ◆ *Springfield Avenue: This study provided a land use & transportation analysis for the City of Rockford and Winnebago County on this corridor between Owen Center Road (on the north side of Rockford) and South Main Street (on the south side of Rockford). As a result of the last link (from West State Street to Montague Road) of the Outer Loop being completed in 2002, RATS provided some of its planning funds to enhance the existing plans for this area and to provide an outside consultant perspective.*
- ◆ *Illinois Route 173 in Boone County: This study is almost completed. The last public open house meeting was held on July 25th. As a result of the recently completed interchange at IL 173 and Interstate 90/39 and further land use changes along this corridor, RATS planning funds were programmed into the UWP to review the 1999 Land Use Plan for Boone County and to provide an updated vision for this corridor (from the Winnebago County Line to the McHenry County Line).*
- ◆ *Illinois Route 2 (North Main Street) in Rockford: As a result of some recent land use / redevelopment projects being completed along this section of IL 2 in the City of Rockford (between Auburn Street and Riverside Blvd.), the City decided to contract with an outside consulting firm to review its land use plan and to provide an updated plan that reflects a vision for this corridor that provides for more neighborhood redevelopment opportunities and growth potential.*

- ◆ *Illinois Route 173 in Machesney Park: This is an on-going land use & transportation analysis as a result of continuing growth along this corridor between the Boone County line and IL 251. With the IL 173 interchange now completed, the plan is almost completed.*
- ◆ *Illinois Route 251 / Kishwaukee Street in Rockford: This analysis is just getting underway. The principal reason for this study is that the City of Rockford wants to address the land use, economic and transportation challenges along one of the older urban corridors that provide entry to the central city. As changes continue to occur in downtown Rockford and at the Chicago/Rockford International Airport, the Kishwaukee Street corridor is one of the two transportation facilities that connects these two major areas.*
- ◆ *Flora Neighborhood/Tollway Station Point Plan in Belvidere / Boone County: The Belvidere – Boone County Regional Planning Department completed this study in 2006. As a result of continued growth along the I-90 / U.S. 20 corridor in this portion of Boone County and the City of Belvidere, a sub-area plan was needed to update the City/County 1999 Land Use Plan. Also, as the vision for possible connection of commuter rail service continues to move through the planning process, the City and County wanted to refine the vision for the immediate area around the planned Irene Road interchange at I-90 (Northwest Tollway). Multi-modal connections to a planned transit oriented development (TOD) at this location are highly desirable.*
- ◆ *Boone County – Winnebago County Transportation Planning Study (TPS) / Phase 1-B and Phase 2: These studies were completed in 2004. Phase 1-B is the technical report that has all the land use projections for 2010 and 2025 and the model analysis based upon the existing, committed and planned highway networks for the three different time periods (base year, 2010 and 2025). Phase 2 of the TPS displays future cross-sections of six different corridors and four separate intersections in the RATS MPA. Together with Phase 1-A, these three reports provide the technical background and analysis for the continual use of the RATS modeling effort.*

8. Are sub-area and corridor studies conducted in a manner so that planning decisions and analyses may be carried through to the project development and environmental review processes? If so, provide examples and discuss benefits and costs of such activities.

For the above-mentioned studies most, if not all, can be used as the foundation for the development vision for that particular corridor and can initially identify some of the environmental issues that will need to be further investigated during the project development process. For example, the Springfield Avenue Corridor Study was completed in May 2005. This study reviewed many of the issues that this corridor will be facing in the forthcoming years. It provided a very good analysis of the assets for land use development and issues of access location (i.e. safe access to/from the Springfield Avenue Road and location of parks and other environmentally sensitive areas). However, this study did not do a parcel by parcel analysis for land use criteria that reflect the vision for this section of Springfield Avenue.

9. Is there a process in place to evaluate past performance (efficient and effective funds use) of UWP projects/ work elements? If so, please provide documentation of this process and its results. Does past performance affect your agency's decision to include updated versions of a project in the new program?

There is no formal process to evaluate past performance of UWP projects. Until recently all UWP projects that were completed with consultant assistance were very project specific (such as corridor studies). And most of the consultant-led studies were the result of special funding, such as Illinois Tomorrow, which was given to individual members based on a competitive grant application process. Each of the member agencies would evaluate their UWP projects separately for their own internal purposes. The MPO was simply the vehicle to program the funding.

As far as the performance of staff is concerned, and the dollars within the UWP, the outcome of the FHWA/FTA Certification review is the best barometer of effectiveness. There is very little debate among the member agencies concerning the projects in the UWP; in fact the general consensus is that the MPO is doing more work with less money than ever before. Because priorities for planning activities change as federal and state guidance change, the UWP has remained very flexible to respond to mandates and new guidance. The MPO staff believe that many planning activities which are required by the TMA status of RATS are not flexible enough for a smaller MPO region. Even though we are both TMAs, CMAP and RATS have very different planning requirements and the federal guidance should reflect that difference. A good example of this is the Congestion Management Process, which is discussed in more detail within this questionnaire.

With regards to specific documentation of past UWP projects / work elements, the best examples are the annual reports of the RATS TIP, LRTP, UWP, Public Involvement Plan and other required FHWA/FTA planning reports. All of these documents can be found on the RATS website. Some of the normal planning projects that involve the RATS staff results with programmed entries in Capital Improvement Programs of member agencies. For example, this past June 2007, a new interchange was opened at IL 173 and Interstate 90/39 (Northwest Tollway). While this interchange has been included in past RATS plans for the past 30 to 35 years, the actual steps to move this project forward from the RATS LRTP started 10 years ago when the Winnebago County Board Chairman and the Mayor of Machesney Park testified before the House Subcommittee on Transportation. Also at that time, RATS staff prepared and submitted to our local Congressman the questionnaire that was required to secure High Priority Funds for this project. Once funds were included in TEA-21, RATS staff, IDOT, The Illinois Toll Highway Authority, Village of Machesney Park, City of Loves Park, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Winnebago County Boone County and the various consultants working on the project, began the process to generate traffic projections for this project. During the course of about 18 to 24 months during 2003 to 2005 while the Phase One Engineering process was underway, the MPO completed traffic projections to ensure that all issues had been investigated and guaranteed the greatest success for funding.

10. How is projected demand determined in the LRTP? What are the roles and methods of demographic, land use, and travel demand forecasting? Were different population and/or employment growth rate scenarios considered in addition to the forecast documented in the LRTP? Discuss how regional economic development influenced the development of the LRTP.

The land use forecast that is used in the RATS travel demand model was coordinated with the land use planners of all the local jurisdictions in Winnebago County, staff from the Belvidere-Boone County Planning Department and City of Beloit and the State Line Area Transportation Study (SLATS) staff. A wide range of planning issues were considered for different growth rate scenarios including future economic development that will continue to occur in the northern

Illinois – southern Wisconsin region. The LRTP acknowledges that the RATS travel demand model will continue to be the primary resource for travel demand, both at the project level and regional level. It is important to note that the NICTI project is using a combined RATS/CMAP model which can model mode split, which has not been available in the past. This ensures that regional transit trips can be modeled effectively and meets the FTA guidelines for Alternatives Analysis.

Travel demand is incorporated into the project development process of the TIP by the implementing agency in the RATS MPO area. However, the LRTP identifies the region's overall demand for future roadway capacity improvements, bicycle / pedestrian improvements, public transportation route changes and other new facilities. Other planning documents prepared by RATS, such as the Transportation Planning Study, and other information obtained from resource agencies at the federal, state and local level are incorporated into travel demand forecasting. This includes census and economic data from federal agencies, employment data from Illinois Department of Employment Security and local data from Rockford Area Economic Development Council and Growth Dimensions.

RATS staff work with the local units of government to determine annual growth rates for employment and dwelling units at the traffic analysis zone level in both Boone and Winnebago County. Information used in the process included the historical growth, available land planned for development by land use category, the different employment categories within the RATS area, and the existing and planned public sewer and water infrastructure. This did not result in a travel demand forecast matrix (high growth, medium growth, low growth) but resulted in a single forecast that continues to track extremely well with actual data.

During the development of the LRTP, RATS wanted to “window-in” on three of the major forecasted strengths of our region. These three strengths are (1) the Chicago / Rockford International Airport, (2) the region's strong labor force that has continued to grow despite several turbulent time periods over the past 20 to 30 years and (3) the geographical position of the Rockford Metro Area to the expanding borders of the Chicagoland area. Over the past 15 to 20 years, the RATS Metropolitan Planning Area has expanded into Boone County and connected to the State Line Area Transportation Study (SLATS) in northern Winnebago County. SLATS is also connected to the Janesville, Wisconsin MPO, both being in Rock County. Essentially the three MPOs form a continuous region along the Rock River, characterized by a strong interdependence of local economics. Thus the Year 2035 LRTP development took the extra effort to expand upon the connection between transportation and regional economic development in this broader regional context.

The project development process, resulting in TIP additions, start with the implementing agency in the RATS MPO area. However, the LRTP identifies the area's overall demand for future roadway capacity improvements, bicycle / pedestrian improvements, public transportation routes changes and other new facilities. Based upon the LRTP, other planning documents prepared by RATS (such as the TPS) and other information obtained from resource agencies at the federal, state and local level (i.e., census and economic data from federal agencies, employment data from Illinois Department of Employment Security and local data from Rockford Area Economic Development Council and Growth Dimensions) all this information is used during the discussion stages of project development.

For the roles and methods in land use and travel demand forecasting, RATS works with the local units of government in determining annual growth rates for employment and dwelling units projections by traffic analysis zones in the Boone County and Winnebago County region. Information used in the process includes the historical growth, available land planned for development and by what land use category, the different employment categories within the RATS area, and the existing and planned public sewer and water infrastructure.

During the discussions and preparations of the land use forecast that was used in the RATS travel demand model, RATS staff coordinated and worked with the land use planners of all the local jurisdictions in Winnebago County, staff from the Belvidere-Boone County Planning Department and City of Beloit and the State Line Area Transportation Study (SLATS) staff determined a wide-range of planning issues that affect growth rate scenarios. The future economic development that will continue to occur in the northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin region are key.

11. What is the strategy to implement provisions of the LRTP? Have implementation priorities been established? Has the proposed Strategic Regional Arterial System advanced in any substantial way?

As growth, development and redevelopment opportunities occur, the state and local units of government try to implement a program that directs growth to the best land parcels available for economic development. At the same time, the funds also have to be programmed into the TIP to maintain the investment in the infrastructure already in place. The principal method to ensure good quality transportation planning is being in contact with the local units of government (including public water and sanitary sewer districts), but also the local economic development agencies (like the Rockford Area Economic Development Council and Growth Dimensions in Boone County) and the private development companies that are in the region. As mentioned earlier, the physical location of the RATS staff offices allow daily contact with local staff that meet with developers, engineers and planners involved with local development.

As mentioned earlier, during the development of the land use forecast, RATS staff had discussions with all of the above-mentioned agencies and community organizations, but also met with the Greater Rockford Area Association of Realtors. This meeting with several members of the real estate profession was held to obtain a local and regional sense of both the employment and residential market, and to validate regional strengths that will attract new people to the Boone – Winnebago County region. The primary reason for having this discussion was to get an idea from one of the first community organizations that deal directly with citizens who are either moving into the area or who are moving within the area. Basically, the realtor is an effective way of gauging the current barometer of both the employment and housing markets in the RATS area. By using a wide-variety of community organizations, the information and the issues included in the LRTP can reach a wider populace, thus improving the understanding and acceptance of the LRTP.

In establishing “the strategy” to implement provisions of the LRTP, RATS attempted to reach out to organizations in the community who actually have direct contact with a wide-range of stakeholders who deal first-hand with development activities. This approach allows staff to

explain the information and some of the analysis that went into the development of the LRTP. At the same time, it was a good listening session for RATS staff because in the local economy, issues and opportunities can come up on the “spur of the moment.” It is the staff opinion that the LRTP addresses the principal planning issues that need to be included in the development process, addresses the area’s priorities while having flexibility to shift financial resources of pooled public funds to assist and to accommodate economic development opportunities as they occur.

The development of the Strategic Regional Arterial system (SRAs) in the RATS region has followed steps that have been completed or are underway:

- ◆ *The opening of the IL 173 interchange at Interstate 90 / 39, that occurred on July 2, 2007*
- ◆ *The first phase of the reconstruction of Harrison Avenue between Alpine Road and Mulford Road. The road reconstruction work should be completed by November 2007. The lighting and landscaping work was bid under a separate contract and should be completed in 2008,*
- ◆ *The second phase of Harrison Avenue, from 20th Street to 11th Street, is currently in Phase I engineering. Land acquisition and Phase II engineering will begin in late 2007 or 2008. It is anticipated that this section will be ready for construction between 2011 and 2013.*
- ◆ *The section of Harrison Avenue – Springfield Avenue was reconstructed and widened in 2006 to accommodate the freight movement to/from the Lowe’s regional distribution center in Southwest Rockford. The Lowe’s center opened in Spring 2007.*
- ◆ *The reconstruction of two interchanges (at East Riverside Boulevard and at U.S. 51/I-39/I-90) with the Northwest Tollway are programmed into the RATS TIP. These two projects are planned for 2008 – 2009 construction period.*
- ◆ *The reconstruction and widening of the Northwest Tollway to 6-lanes from Rockton Road to U.S. 51 / I-39 / I-90 interchange began in August 2007. This reconstruction work is scheduled to be completed in 2009.*
- ◆ *Boone County and RATS completed a corridor study along the entire IL 173 corridor in Boone County. This study will be used as a planning tool and template to guide development as it occurs in the next several years.*
- ◆ *Finally, IDOT is currently performing engineering analysis on the section on I-39 / U.S. 51 / U.S. 20 from I-90 to the U.S. 20/ I-39 interchange (just east of Alpine Road) for future widening to a six-lane facility.*

12. Discuss the LRTP’s strategies, investments, procedures, and other measures to ensure the preservation of the transportation system?

As mentioned in question #11, during the development of the RATS LRTP, two of the objectives were to identify future capacity expansion projects within the planning horizon, but also to plan for the preservation and maintenance of the existing system. Accordingly, in keeping with the financial constraint goal of our LRTP, Table 7-4 displays an inventory of:

- ◆ *The number of miles of principal arterials, minor arterials and collector roads*
- ◆ *Number of existing traffic signals*
- ◆ *Number of structures that cross rivers / creeks*
- ◆ *Number of railroad crossings*

The stated primary principle is, over the planning period through 2035, funds are planned to keep all the above in good operational condition.

In determining the investment procedure for the preparation of the LRTP, Table 3-2 displays the amount of funds that were used for transportation projects for the five-year time period from 2001 to 2005. Based upon the annual average over that 5-year period, the premise is that the same annual amount will be available over the next 30-year time period (through 2035).

13. Does the LRTP address potential environmental mitigation activities and potential areas in which to carry out these activities, including activities that may have the greatest potential to restore and maintain the environmental functions affected by the plan? What plans, maps, and inventories from other agencies have been considered relative to the RATS LRTP?

Over the past ten years, RATS has taken a leadership role, both in staff time and direct funding, in the preparation of the Boone County – Winnebago County Regional Greenway Plan. This plan was updated in 2004 and included in the LRTP. The 2004 update from the 1997 initial plan was a significant planning improvement. Over 100 layers of geographic information based (GIS) data were used to develop the final printed map. Agencies included in the preparation of this plan were the members of the RATS Technical Committee, plus other organizations like the Rockford Park District, Winnebago County Forest Preserve District, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Boone County Conservation District, Belvidere Park District, and Natural Land Institute.

The environmentally sensitive areas and other parkland properties included in the Greenway Plan were compared to the LRTP's Capacity Expansion Projects listed in Table 7-3, Enhancements Projects listed in Table 7-4, the East-Side Bus Transfer facility mentioned in Section 8.3, the Commuter Transportation Initiative included in Section 8.6 and currently underway, and possible expansion at the Chicago/Rockford International Airport. There are very few projects that would impact the environment that would require environmental mitigation activities. As a result of the close interaction during the planning stages of the above-mentioned projects and preparation of the Greenway Plan, all attempts were made to avoid these areas, thus reducing the need to carry out specific mitigation activities for each project listed in the LRTP. Included in the FY 2008 TIP is also an explanation on the process RATS has used to address this issue through the TIP development process. In addition, RATS staff are working with the WinGIS organization to help to complete a county-wide, GIS-based, inventory and catalogue of environmental assets and sensitive areas. The scope of work to be published in an RFP is complete and should be awarded in the next 60 days.

However, there are isolated locations that would require a more thorough analysis as required by the NEPA process. The RATS LRTP states that there are only three parts of an EA or EIS that directly relate to the transportation planning process. These are parts that deal with purpose and need, alternatives analysis and affected environment. This will be handled on a project basis and not as part of an MPO activity.

14. How are cost estimates developed for the LRTP? How are revenue estimates derived for each of the respective governmental units and jurisdictions? Do these revenue and cost

estimates include operating and maintenance costs for existing, plus planned facilities? Were inflation rate factors used in developing this plan? If so, what inflation rate factors were used?

Revenue estimates and projections are discussed in question #12. Cost estimates were determined based upon the average cost for each of the line items included in Table 7-4 and were validated by consultation with Rockford Public Works Department and Winnebago County Highway Department staff that prepare cost estimates and review bid proposals for many of the road projects in the area.

Over the past several years, some of the major highway projects in the area have been jointly funded by RATS member agencies. For example, when the section of Harrison Avenue – Springfield Avenue was reconstructed and widened in 2006 to accommodate freight movements from the Lowe’s regional distribution center in Southwest Rockford, the City of Rockford, Winnebago County and IDOT each programmed construction funds to complete this project. The intersection of East State Street (U.S. Business 20) and Perryville Road was reconstructed and widened in 2006 to accommodate current and future traffic demand. Winnebago County and IDOT jointly funded this project. RATS reviews transportation projects for the entire region but did not attempt to determine revenues for each agency. This recent trend implies that more projects are being jointly funded and local projects are eligible for federal and state funds to combine with local funds. As projects move from the planning phase into the TIP development process, we believe it is prudent to determine costs and revenues. Funding requirements for capacity expansion projects are listed in Table 7-3, as well as system preservation projects. As stated on page 83 in the LRTP, “all project costs are provided in Year 2005 dollars.” Accordingly, no inflation rate factors were used in Tables 7-3 and 7-4.

15. Discuss how RATS staff, member agencies, IDOT, and the transit operators collaborate on the development of the TIP? What improvements could be made to this process and what barriers exist towards implementing these improvements?

The TIP development process is essentially a data gathering process that documents the priorities of each of the members, and the non-federal funding that they intend to use. The TIP has very few federally funded projects, and in the case of STP-Urban funds, the regional priorities set by the RATS Policy Committee take 5 – 10 years worth of funding to reconstruct a one-mile section of arterial roadway. The current priorities of Harrison Avenue will require STP-Urban funding for the foreseeable future. The transit side is a little different, but mainly because FTA requires “planning” projects, such as the NICTI Alternatives Analysis, to be shown in the TIP rather than in the UWP. The MPO staff opinion is that the UWP is the most appropriate document to program the AA study dollars. It would be helpful to get a better understanding of this issue from the FTA at the certification review.

The priority setting for federal transit funds for the Rockford Mass Transit District has to be responsive to the Title VI & EJ plan as well as the new HSTP, so MPO coordination of transit operating and capital planning does not require improvements to the process. The procedures in place are working very well. And the MPO staff are very involved in transit-related projects such as adding bike racks to fixed-route transit vehicles.

The only existing barrier to an enhanced TIP development process is the federal funding allocation itself. If more dollars were available at the regional level there would be healthy debate on regional priorities and the MPO would take a lead role in helping to shape those priorities. But the current funding allocation of federal dollars direct to the MPOs in Illinois is so minimal that very little is accomplished without the aid of earmarks. RATS staff are aware of discussions around the State that would change federal funding allocations, allowing decisions to be made at the regional level (MPO level) instead of the state level or the local level. This has been particularly effective in other states such as California. In 2006 the MPO staff published a paper on this subject titled "The Burden of Transportation Investment on Local Agencies: A State of the Practice in the Midwest". This paper supports the idea of a change in funding allocations in Illinois to be more competitive with other midwest states.

16. Are projects grouped by function, work type, and/ or geographic area when they are not of appropriate scale to be individually identified? By what process do you identify these projects?

Almost all projects in the TIP are large enough to have an individual identity. The only projects in the TIP that do not meet this criterion are local agency-wide residential resurfacing projects, usually funded with Motor Fuel Tax funds from the State. There are no federally funded projects in the TIP that are not of sufficient scale to be identified in this fashion.

The TIP provides summary tables that group projects by funding source, by year and by agency. The projects grouped by funding source could be considered as a table of projects grouped by work type. The TIP projects are not specifically mapped by geographic area, but member agencies such as IDOT District 2, Winnebago County Highway Department and the Rockford Public Works Department do provide mapping of their projects as part of the development of their capital improvements program.

A regional map could be created that would highlight all federally funded projects. This would include STP, STR, HSIP, IM and others, but maps of this type often confuse the reader because maintenance projects get mixed in with capacity improvement projects, safety projects or projects that add new links or interchanges in the transportation network. As the web-based tools of the MPO mature this type of mapping can be explored.

17. Briefly discuss RATS procedures to distribute suballocated Surface Transportation Program (Urban) funds.

In 1992 the RATS Policy Committee adopted Resolution 92-4 which approved of a new statewide method of allocating federal dollars at the start of ISTEA. This new method was developed by IDOT. In 2006 the RATS Policy Committee adopted Resolution 2006-2 which rescinded 92-4 and called upon IDOT to develop a new funding formula that keeps Illinois competitive with other surrounding states. To date a new formula has not been forthcoming.

In 1994 the RATS Policy Committee approved Resolution 94-2 which detailed an extensive application process to prioritize the expenditure of STP-Urban funds that are discretionary to the MPO. This process coincided with the passage of ISTEA and the MPO subsequently approved of two sections of the Harrison Avenue project as the top priorities. Some 13 years later, spanning ISTEA, TEA-21, and SAFETEA-LU, the first section of Harrison Avenue is just now nearing completion and the second section is still in Phase I engineering. This speaks

directly to the inadequacy of the allocation formula in Illinois as discussed in question #15 above, but also to the inflexibility of the NEPA process for reconstruction of existing segments of a transportation network. Without a change in the NEPA process or the allocation formula it is highly probable that the second section of Harrison Avenue will not be completed by the end of SAFETEA-LU. That disturbing fact highlights that two 1-mile sections of 4-lane urban arterial can not be reconstructed during the reauthorization lifespan of three congressional acts. It can be said with surety that the MPO process at RATS does not have to consider new highway projects that wish to use federal funds for the next several years. It is also highly probable that these facts will not have changed by the next federal certification review in 2011.

18. Has RATS attempted to define the term “administrative modification” in any way to differentiate between minor revisions to the TIP and those major revisions that require an amendment?

Yes, RATS has the “administrative modification” ability to make minor revisions to projects listed in our TIP. In the FY 2008 RATS TIP, on page 5 under Section L – PROJECT PRIORITIES & ADVANCEMENTS, the circumstances to move projects in the TIP without seeking an amendment is described. This “administrative modification” has been included in the RATS TIP process for approximately the past 10 to 12 years.

19. USDOT has a requirement that by December 11, 2007, revenue and cost estimates for the TIP must use an inflation rate(s) to reflect ‘year of expenditure dollars,’ based on reasonable financial principles and information. Discuss RATS strategy for meeting this requirement.

RATS will follow this requirement for (1) any amendment to the currently adopted FY 2008 TIP and (2) will implement this condition in the FY 2009 TIP document for the 4-fiscal years [2009 to 2012].

20. Discuss the RATS congestion management process (CMP) and how it has been fully integrated into the overall metropolitan planning process. Has the CMS/CMP been effective? How is this process and its effectiveness documented? What monitoring systems are being developed to provide a framework for additional effectiveness evaluation?

The MPO is in the initial stages of determining the appropriate planning factors related to a CMS/CMP process. IDOT recently provided a template for the MPOs to use to meet the CMS/CMP requirements. But this topic is a low priority item on the RATS agenda, mainly because recurrent congestion on the existing transportation network is extremely limited to signalized intersections during a very short PM peak period of 30-45 minutes. It is also very difficult for the member agencies of RATS to incorporate a distinct, documented CM process to deal with such a minor, almost non-existent problem.

On the other hand there are CM issues with the interstate system in the Rockford region, especially on the portions of the Illinois Tollway. Much of the MPO work has been in the area of non-recurrent congestion, as discussed in item #22 below, resulting in the creation of incident management plans. Monitoring and effectiveness is measured by consensus at a bi-annual meeting of the ITS working group members, although there is no formal document created. ITS working plans are tweaked or adjusted to fine tune them based on this consensus.

Recurrent congestion on the Illinois Tollway, which has been most problematic at the Wisconsin-Illinois stateline, has been reduced significantly since the introduction of open road tolling. While it is too early to tell, the RATS staff suspect that air quality readings in Rock County, Wisconsin will benefit greatly from ORT. RATS will continue to monitor air quality readings and report changes.

RATS will also benefit greatly from the merging of the RATS and CMAP transportation models that will be completed with the NICTI AA project in late 2007 or early 2008. This tool will allow the MPO to model mode split so that RATS staff and other professionals can analyze the impact of making regional transit investments, most notably the impact to congestion on the tollway sections of I-90 in the region.

It should also be noted that congestion in central business districts of small to medium sized cities is often desirable. Many planning and design studies for member agencies attempt to create “a congested feel” to local streets and downtown areas to signify activity, thus luring developers and other investors to inject dollars. This may be in direct conflict with tenets of CMS/CMP. Also, as many central areas rebound from years of decay and lack of investment, the infill development is geared towards transit-oriented development (TOD). TOD design looks to higher urban density, more transit trips, walkable community design and a substantial increase in activity. It is very difficult to differentiate between wanted activity and unwanted congestion.

RATS staff will prepare a one-page CMP brief prior to the certification review.

21. What performance measures have RATS established to monitor the transportation system in the region? What are the existing and future data needs for these performance measures?

There are very differing performance measures for highway and transit. For highways there are two main measures. First is level of service, which combines capacity, delay and operational speed. Second are safety measures that are expressed in several different ways. On the transit side there are measures of on-time performance, ridership performance and various safety measures, as discussed below.

Level of service is documented in section 10.2.1.1 of the LRTP, and is rooted in the HCM concept of travel speed. Tables are provided which detail the objective for LOS performance for various roadway functional classifications. Tables are provided for the existing network (2005) and the long-range network (2025). The transportation model is used to monitor LOS performance. Every 5 years the MPO and IDOT compile comprehensive traffic counts that are used to keep the model calibrated. The Transportation Planning Study (TPS) expanded the model to encompass all of Winnebago County, Boone County and the SLATS portion of Rock County, WI. There are also spot checks of both volume and speed collected throughout the intervening 5-year period. The MPO does not have a formal document of this planning measure at the present time. It is also envisioned that any regional transit improvements, such as commuter service to Chicagoland, could be measured for their impact on roadway LOS. The initial findings of the NICTI study point to the high benefit to cost ratio for regional transit improvements and these findings will be confirmed by CMAP and the consultant team by early 2008.

Safety performance is different from LOS in that safety goals and policies are set on a statewide basis, and the MPOs rely on IDOT to calculate and report on safety performance. The Illinois State Transportation Plan has a chapter devoted to safety goals and performance, and the MPO member agencies assist IDOT by executing safety programs at the local level where appropriate. Many of these programs consist of law enforcement and education programs that do not directly involve the MPO. RATS staff continue to provide guidance to the member agencies on the HSIP and HRRRP programs. Within the last 30 days the MPO has entered into a contract with IDOT to geocode all traffic crashes in Winnebago County for previous calendar years, starting with 2002. This will allow safety analyses to be enhanced with the aid of GIS technology and better track safety performance. Also, as discussed in question #35, full deployment of MCR is necessary before crash data can be integrated with GIS, thus allowing the MPO to efficiently analyze highway crash data on a regional level.

The planning work in ITS, TSM-style improvements in traffic signal timing and regional broadband development are laying the foundation for a communication network that can provide automated data to the MPO staff to analyze and monitor these performance indicators. The NTOC document is being used to guide the data collection. The MPO has submitted grants that can assist in the planning and deployment of this communication infrastructure, but funding has not been available to date.

22. Discuss how RATS works to promote communication and coordination among member agencies and other organizations involved in the design, funding, implementation, and operation of Intelligent Transportation Systems in the region? Provide examples. Please provide a copy of the region's most recent regional ITS architecture.

The prime example of how RATS provides coordination and communication for ITS activities is through the regional ITS committee, more commonly known as the Beloit-Janesville-Rockford Arterial Management Workgroup, for which WisDOT is the lead. The BJR group meets every 6 months as a regularly scheduled meeting and also meets on an ad-hoc basis as necessary. The BJR group reviews and de-briefs all major incidents in the I-39/I-90 corridor and makes any necessary adjustment to operation plans. Over the last six years the BJR group has crafted a working ITS plan, which is available in both electronic format and hard copy. The plan defines roles and responsibilities for law enforcement, emergency response, highway agencies and public transit, and follows a "systems approach" to handle any major incident in the region. RATS then provides updates to the plan to all local agencies, usually on CD, and then provides explanatory updates at all MPO meetings. WisDOT is exploring hosting the BJR documents on their website, but to date that is still a work in progress. RATS will provide a link to the WisDOT site once it is available.

Additionally, RATS participates in the Northern Illinois Technology Triangle (NITT) meetings. The stakeholders in this group are working on deployment of fiber optic rings. Much of this work is being driven by broadband development and the economic development potential that updated infrastructure can bring. The City of Rockford staff is currently working with the staff at Northern Illinois University's Broadband Development Group to initiate deployment at the local level, most notably connecting the East State Street fiber corridor to the much larger NITT ring. This ultimately will help to build and energize some key gaps in the current fiber corridors. It is with these connections that regional ITS initiatives will get deployed. RATS did submit an Illinois Tomorrow application in 2005 to complete a fiber deployment plan. This application can help to answer many issues related to question #22. Unfortunately this planning initiative has not been funded to date by IDOT.

The NITT also provides the opportunity to interface with stakeholders involved in regional security issues, such as homeland security. The NITT group members include the Boone County Administrator who chairs Prairie Shield. This group is responsible for a regional approach to security, including transportation security. All of the interagency agreements mentioned on this topic can be found in the Illinois Tomorrow application mentioned above, and which is attached as a pdf document.

The current regional architecture is quite large, especially in printed form. The Turbo Architecture files are available on CD.

Of concern to the MPO is the lack of a statewide ITS deployment program. The Illinois ITS Program Office was very involved in the creation of a statewide architecture, concept of operations, and program of projects. Moreover they helped to fund and provide technical oversight on the development of regional ITS architectures, all of which came from TEA-21. Since the passage of SAFETEA-LU the movement of ITS in the state has been on hold. It appears that all of the ITS projects outside of NE Illinois have lost potential funding streams, probably due in part to the budget problems at the state level and the lack of federal funding for ITS at the national level. The District offices of IDOT have also not advanced any ITS projects into the TIP or UWP for the last 2-3 years.

At the local level the member agencies of RATS have continued to move forward on ITS initiatives, albeit at a much smaller level. On the transit side RMTD has begun the integration of AVL technology into their fixed route and paratransit buses, and have invested in scheduling and dispatching software to take advantage of the AVL deployment. The City of Rockford Public Works Department has also equipped all public works fleet vehicles with AVL. On the highway side IDOT, Winnebago County Highway and City of Rockford have included fiber optic cable in their highway construction plans. But many of these installations stand alone, providing benefits to traffic signal operations, but yet have not been connected to a network which could eventually lead to a central traffic management center or other broad based ITS applications. The regional ITS partners in RATS are looking at the ITS system in Lake County (PASSAGE) as the model for arterial traffic management, positioning themselves to take advantage of any ITS funds that come available. The staff of RATS continue to work with the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, IDOT and other local partners for opportunities to develop ITS projects that complement the architecture, streamline operations and leverage private, state and federal funds.

23. What opportunities are provided for public participation at key decision points in the planning, programming, and project development phases of transportation decision making? How is the process managed and updated to meet the changing needs of communicating with the public and their expectations for active involvement?

There are several opportunities for the public to participate during the various phases of putting a planning project idea into reality. First, every Spring, RATS publishes a legal notice in a weekly local newspaper that is distributed for free throughout the community. This legal notice describes (1) the expected planning projects that will be developed during the forthcoming year (such as the UWP, TIP and this year, the Federal Certification Review of RATS); (2) the time frame and tentative date for adoption by the RATS Policy Committee for the UWP, TIP and any

other expected planning document that would necessitate a vote by the Policy Committee; (3) an announcement that comments on all the above-mentioned planning documents are welcome at all times and at all RATS Technical Committee and Policy Committee meetings; (4) the web address for RATS where all the planning documents are placed and the meeting dates, time, location and meeting agendas and minutes are listed; and (5) contact information of RATS staff if anyone has questions.

Second, for all RATS meeting that are held, the public can make comments on all the agenda items. For example, all the highway, transit and enhancement projects that each of the local agencies has provided to RATS staff is shown in the TIP, the public has the opportunity to communicate their views. Also, at each RATS Technical Committee meeting, each of the voting and non-voting members gives an oral presentation of on-going construction and planning projects. Again, the public has the opportunity to ask the representative of that particular agency about the status of any project that they are currently working on.

Third, during the programming and early development stages of a project, public meetings are held by the lead-agency to allow the public an opportunity to see the conceptual plan, ask questions and submit comments on the project.

Fourth, in addition to the steps outlined above, press releases and public announcements of all hearings and meetings locations and times for all projects are given to the media.

The internet continues to supercede all other forms of communication with the public in response to the changing environment in communication with the public on the 3-C transportation planning process. Also, RATS continues to update its mailing list for notices of all regular meetings and public open houses.

24. How does the public participation process demonstrate explicit consideration and responsiveness to public input received during the planning and program development process? Specifically, in what instances have comments raised through public participation resulted in changes to policy, plans, programs or projects?

As just explained in question #23, the public has a direct and a continual opportunity to provide input at all times during the planning and program development process. At all public meetings and open houses, staff is present at these events to explain the project and/or plan, to answer questions and have comment sheets available for the public to submit their comments at that time or to mail/e-mail/fax them within a few weeks after that public event. Once the comment time-period has been reached, all comments received and the staff reply are included in the final document. For examples, refer to the RATS LRTP, TIP or UWP documents found on the web site at: <http://www.rockfordil.gov/government/works/index.cfm?section=planning&id=977>.

With regards to the second part of this question, one of the few times that comments received from the public resulted in changes was the development of the LRTP. As mentioned in a reply to a previous question, the bicycle community wanted a more updated plan for the bicycle and pedestrian element of the LRTP and ultimately for the communities in the RATS MPA. Accordingly, RATS did program planning funds into the UWP for this plan to be done.

To further explain how the RATS planning process is open to receive input, one of the best techniques is to be involved during the development stages of projects, to learn from those experiences, to apply or adjust plans to reflect changes in the community views/inputs and to be involved in community-based organizations to explain the planning approach and vision during the preparation of that specific corridor study, bicycle plan or long range plan. If the planning process (staff) is involved in THE COMMUNITY, the finished product is generally accepted as the way to move the project forward.

Also, the City of Rockford's Traffic Commission is informed and consulted on a regular basis when changes occur or progress is made to the development of the LRTP, TIP, UWP and other special studies.

25. How has RATS updated its public participation process to include the expanded list of "interested parties" identified in SAFETEA-LU?

RATS is in the midst of including and expanding the list of "interested parties" in the public planning process. For example, one of the new attempts to reach out to more community-based groups and individuals is the creation of the RATS Mobility Subcommittee. The history of the subcommittee starts with a community-based outreach to explore ideas to use the FTA 5317 – New Freedoms and FTA 5316 – Job Access Reserve Commute funds. After two years of meeting as a group, it was decided to make a request to RATS to formally become an official subcommittee of the MPO. On July 26th, 2007 this subcommittee was established by action of the RATS Policy Committee.

Another attempt is the continual attendance of RATS staff at meetings of the bicycle – running clubs so that their input can be provided at critical times during the planned development phases. It is envisioned that when implementation of the Bicycle – Pedestrian Plan begins, exchanges of information and public inputs will occur at these meetings.

Finally, the RATS Public Involvement Process document does need to be updated to reflect changes identified in SAFETEA-LU, as well as on-going changes occurring at the local and regional levels. While the PIP is still being used and followed, the nature of continual public input and exchanges of information warrants an updated plan be prepared.

26. Discuss efforts to make RATS information and documents available in electronically accessible formats.

RATS staff have converted all documents to pdf format for posting on the RATS website. Legacy documents have been scanned into pdf and staff are systematically adding the executed signature pages to the pdf versions of the documents. All agendas, minutes and meeting materials are posted on the website and are sent to the RATS mailing list via e-mail. Minimal amounts of paper copies of meeting materials are prepared, mostly for members of the public that may not have access to electronic documents. The Technical and Policy Committee members are now very comfortable with the electronic document approach and have accepted it as the standard operating practice.

The challenge has been to keep the website organized. MPOs generate a significant volume of material, and often the documents are large. The RATS website has traditionally ordered documents by date. This type of ordering works well for persons who have knowledge of the MPO process and are somewhat familiar with the document nomenclature. It would be more practical to have the documents grouped by function so that the casual or novice person could discern the value and purpose of the vast list of documents. For instance, all documents related to transit (i.e. transit TIP, EJ & Title VI, route maps, etc) could be grouped into a distinct area on the website. The recent staff addition of Jon Paul Diipla will allow RATS to dedicate staff time to getting the website organized in FY08.

RATS would also benefit from a section on the website to receive comments, possibly a survey such as a “voice of the customer survey”. The City of Rockford website, which hosts the MPOs internet needs, has a very generic and simplistic area for customer feedback and customer requests. RATS staff will explore the possibility of using a web-based survey vendor similar to what AMPO uses in the coming months. This effort may also be enhanced by the possible creation of an Illinois chapter of AMPO. Creation of web-based surveys is not a skill of the RATS staff at the present time.

All consultant contracts now require electronic versions of all deliverables, both in their original software form as well as pdf. All documents that are large are provided on CD. Documents, such as the LRTP, still require printed versions to assist those persons and member agencies that do not have advanced printing capabilities. As most maps are now GIS-based an 11” x 17” footprint is a minimal printing size. RATS has advanced printing capabilities in-house, so certain documents are still prepared and made available in that format.

27. What visualization techniques have been used to aid the public in understanding the LRTP, TIP, and supporting studies? Are there other techniques being considered to implement or enhance the planning process?

The RATS TIP, LRTP and supporting studies have implemented visualization techniques to help the public better understand various planning processes. Among some of the visualization techniques have been tables, charts and maps, mostly GIS generated maps. These have been used to display data in a fashion that is understandable to those who have a planning background as well as for those who may not necessarily possess the same background. Also, the RATS website makes the plans and visual materials available to the public for access at any time.

For example, the 2035 Long Range Plan includes maps that display where transit routes are located, how close those routes are to persons who rely on transportation, information on greenways that are in the region, information regarding existing public facilities and maps that display proposed road improvements. Charts within the document help to better organize and illustrate data that is referred to in the text as well as provide information regarding projects in a “stand alone” fashion which can be understood without in-depth reading of the text.

The RATS TIP utilizes visualizations in a similar fashion. Among many examples are charts displaying what types of funding exist as well as where the funds come from and what they can be used for.

Supporting plans have also included visualizations. Examples would be the NICTI study as well as the Boone and Winnebago Regional Greenways Plan. The NICTI study has presented various visualizations that range from brochures explaining the process and necessary steps in the plan, maps displaying the tentative route types and locations, an interactive web page that contains maps and useful data regarding the study as well as multimedia elements and DVD video presentations that can run in a loop at public open houses. Visualization in the form of poster board maps and diagrams have also been used for public information sessions where information regarding the study was presented to the public for feedback. These efforts have been made to help the public better understand the importance of regional connectivity and present the information in an understandable manner.

The Boone and Winnebago Regional Greenways Plan is another example of visualization used to convey to the public the overall goal of a planning document. The Regional Greenways Plan map includes such information as the location of greenways, explanations of land and natural resource designations, lists trails in both Boone and Winnebago Counties, displays photos of the various trails to show viewers what the plan is referring to and displays a concept map of the Grand Illinois Trail Concept. The visualizations help to show what resources are available as well as display to the public what the plan is attempting to achieve.

Further visualization techniques that could be implemented in the future would be to create slideshows summarizing key points of plans linked to their electronic counterparts on the RATS website and incorporate diagrams which explain the public participation process on the RATS website. Customer surveys could also be used to determine what types of visualization techniques might be useful to the public, but staff time has not been available.

28. What is considered effective public participation? What review and evaluation processes do you use for the public participation process? What is its cycle or period of review? Who internally and externally, including the public, is involved with this review and evaluation?

Effective public participation includes a range of activities from press announcements to the local news media organizations and working with them to “tell the story” so that the general public can have a better understanding of issues prior to individual meetings with community organizations and leaders. As mentioned in previous responses on this subject, RATS attempts to reach out to the public and interested organizations early in the planning process to explain and solicit views from them. Over the past twenty-five to thirty years, RATS staff has developed many connections in the RATS MPA with these organizations, community leaders and individuals.

A first step is to have the staff discuss immediately after the event what were the comments heard and discussed with the citizens who came out to that public event. For example, several years ago the time of the event was from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. One of the comments RATS received was that the time period should be extended longer into the evening. Accordingly, all of public events that are scheduled during the evening hours are now publicized to be over by 7:00 p.m. or later. Regarding the review period, this is an on-going process. If circumstances arise that warrant changes, corrections will be made before the next event is scheduled to ensure a smooth process for the next meeting so that the public can participate at a more effective level.

29. What Title VI protected populations are found in the metropolitan area? Where are they located? Please discuss in detail how disparate impact or unintended consequences of transportation projects are determined.

In the RATS LRTP, Chapter 2 – Plan Definition does provide demographic information of the MPA that is included in Title VI. From the 2000 Census, Table 2-4 provides an area population profile for that year. Table 2-5 lists the population, household and employment projections for the forecast years of 2010, 2025 and 2035. However, the population information does not provide a profile for these three future time-periods.

30. How are persons traditionally underserved by transportation systems such as low-income, minorities, or limited English proficiency persons actively sought out for involvement in the planning process?

In general it is extremely difficult to involve any members of the general public in the planning process. The MPO has developed an expanded mailing list (both electronic and regular) for all MPO documents. Public notices are placed in a weekly newspaper announcing all MPO meetings and asking for public input. The agenda of all RATS Technical Committee meetings start with a session devoted to public comment. If members of the general public come to the meeting, but they have no special questions, the chair of the meeting will take extra time to explain the technical discussions, which tend to be filled with jargon and can be quite technical. In some cases the MPO staff will meet after the formal meeting is completed to answer specific questions or to document comments from the attendees.

When projects advance through the planning process the general public gets very interested, and the MPO staff, consultants, and member agency staff make themselves available for open houses, presentations, steering committee meetings and any other gathering that involves members of the general public. Although a formal designation as a Context Sensitive Solution (CSS) project has not happened in the MPO area (most were started prior to the establishment of CSS in Illinois), projects such as the West State Street project could be considered as “poster-child” projects for CSS. The interest from the general public was very high, and the majority of the impacted folks in the project area are low income and minority persons. Folks in the transportation corridor and from the adjacent neighborhood were given flyers door-to-door. The meetings were announced to residents via reverse-911. Media releases were faxed to all regional media outlets. While the MPO is not the lead agent when projects of this type get into Phase I design, the MPO assists the lead agency with fulfilling any federal requirements and helps to document its efforts. Provisions are made to assist limited English persons, person with ADA related needs or any other special need that can be identified. The Rockford Mass Transit District, whose ridership is primarily transportation disadvantaged persons, actively involves these members of the public in the route and schedule changes, the priority setting of the TIP projects, and fare and fee structure. The new Mobility Subcommittee (formerly Work, Welfare and Families), as detailed in question #33, involves most of the regional social service and resource agencies that serve low income and minority populations. This committee is the steering force behind the new HSTP and are experts at reaching and involving their constituent populations.

The MPO web site is equipped with a multi-lingual translator (Babel Fish). The MPO web site meets the accessibility standards for individuals with disabilities promulgated by the Illinois Web Accessibility Standards.

31. Does RATS have an Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan? Has RATS drafted a Limited English Proficiency Plan?

RATS has not drafted a Limited English Proficiency Plan. The City of Rockford provides coordination and training for a Rockford City Hall team of multi-lingual staff members to assist City Hall visitors, customers and patrons with limited English speaking skills. RATS being housed in Rockford City Hall affords the opportunity to utilize this team. The RMTD has converted all of their published route and schedule documents into Spanish. They have also worked with a local Spanish resource agency (Espejo) to advertise and convert all written graphics on the bus that serves the heavy Spanish-speaking population. The drivers for RMTD have also been trained to converse in Spanish for any fixed routes or paratransit routes that serve Limited English populations.

RATS does not have an ADA Transition Plan. The lead agency for RATS (City of Rockford) provides all ADA related programs, documents and products. Rockford City Hall is fully ADA-compliant and meets the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, including a Transition Plan.

32. Does RATS, in coordination with the State and transit operators, annually publish a list of projects (including investments in pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities) for which federal funds were obligated in the preceding program year? When, where, and in what format is this information published? Please provide a copy of the most recent edition of this document.

Yes, in the annual RATS TIP, there are tables which list completed projects that carryover from the previous year's TIP. This table is Table 26 in the FY 2008 TIP document for the highway, pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The transit projects are shown in the transit section of the TIP by the type of FTA/state/local funds that were used. If a project were completed, it would be denoted in the "Justification & Status" column for each of the projects listed in Tables 5, 6, 8 and 9. These tables list all projects including any federal, state and local funds that have been programmed.

This information is included in the annual TIP document prepared by RATS and can be found at:

<http://www.rockfordil.gov/government/works/index.cfm?section=planning&id=977>.

33. Has RATS prepared, or is in the process of preparing, a coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan? Please describe how this effort is being coordinated with the region's transit providers as well as other providers of transportation, including private entities.

RATS is currently in the process of developing a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. Coordination is being done through contacting various Human Service

organizations in the city as well as transportation providers. Organizations that have been contacted thus far regarding the HSTP are the Rockford Mass Transit District, Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging, City of Rockford Human Services Department, City of Rockford Human Services Department Head Start Program, City of Rockford Housing Authority, Boone County Council on Aging, Careavan, Septran, The United Way, Rockford Public School District #205 and the Crusader Clinic.

The initial steps have been to contact organizations to make them aware of the plan as well as to ask for their participation in developing the plan.

In order to better help the coordination process as well as facilitate public participation in the development of the HSTP, the Rockford Area Transportation Study has created a Mobility Subcommittee. This subcommittee consists of human service and transit providers (for a complete listing, please refer to RATS Resolution 2007-8) and was approved by the RATS Policy Committee on July 26th, 2007. The Mobility Subcommittee is a continuation of the work started by Work, Welfare and Families. This grass roots effort has been active for several years, and is now a formal part of the MPO process. Among many of the Mobility Subcommittee's duties are to:

- ◆ Identify resource agencies and work with those agencies to develop strategies to address transportation issues among public transportation dependent populations.*
- ◆ Facilitate public participation to address transportation issues. This facilitation will assist in the identification of regional transportation issues as well as assist in updating the Public Involvement Plan which will serve as a basis for the Public Participatory Plan.*
- ◆ Advocate for enhancements, expansion and new services that improve the wellbeing of public transportation dependent populations in the region.*
- ◆ Develop and furnish recommendations to the Technical Committee of RATS in conformance with its existing Cooperative Agreement (July 24, 2003) while advancing the provisions of federal and state laws that address mobility needs of the public transportation dependent population.*
- ◆ Assist RATS, the Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD), Boone County and City of Belvidere to maintain the current interim public transit services agreement and to provide recommendations for other options pertaining to long term public transportation service to Boone County.*

The Mobility Subcommittee will have their first meeting on September 11th, 2007 to solidify internal matters as well as to discuss the next steps to involve the public in the process (i.e. determine when public information and meeting sessions will be, etc).

It is envisioned that after this session takes place, organizations that are involved will have a better understanding of what the plan entails and how each can contribute and reinforce one another. Given the fact that members of the subcommittee have worked with each other in the past, some of this already exists. However, this subcommittee will further those bonds.

Discussion with RMTD has taken place regarding services that they provide. Information regarding RMTD fixed route service is well documented by RATS and there has recently been inquiry into more detailed specifics of their demand/response paratransit service. Data such as recent ridership numbers, listing of organizations that they serve on a regular basis and the type of trip that the service is used for will be compiled and incorporated into the plan. This information will help to determine the demand for the service as well as where and what the service is used for in the area.

RATS is still awaiting response from such organizations as the Crusader Clinic, Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging and the City of Rockford Housing Authority. Efforts to contact and discuss this plan with these organizations will continue. Thus far, there have been responses from RMTD, The United Way, Careavan, Septran, Boone County Council on Aging, Rockford Public School District #205 and members of the Mobility Subcommittee.

34. Please discuss why the RMTD fare box recovery rate has declined from an estimated 17% in 2000 to 11% in 2006 (according to the National Transit Database). What activities are being conducted as part of the planning process to identify causes for the decrease and possible improvements?

RMTD has provided a detailed breakdown of revenues and expenses for the period of FY00 – FY07, which is attached. Combining both fixed route and demand response data, the actual fare box recovery ratio has declined from 15.7% in FY00 to 10.9% in FY07. The data from FY05 – FY07 indicate that the fare box recovery ration has leveled off at approximately 11%. During these last three fiscal years both revenues and expenses have increased between 6% - 7%. It should be noted that ridership has continued to increase in this time period.

The planning activities have identified several causes for this trend. First, the fares for RMTD service have not increased since 1996. Second, RMTD took over the operations of the Loves Park Transit System in 2000. Third, the national downturn in the economy that started in 2000 hit the transit-dependent populations particularly hard, and these populations represent the overwhelming majority of RMTD transit riders. In 2003 the routes and schedules for RMTD were completely redesigned. This had very beneficial effects and was the main factor that provided the increase in revenues to balance the increase in expenses. The data for the last three fiscal years support the budget balancing effect of the new routes.

RMTD and the MPO will continue to analyze and make recommendations that will continue the positive effects of the new routes. Most of the planning work has concentrated on the siting and construction of an eastside transfer facility near the interchange of I-90/39 with East State Street. It is anticipated that this new facility will support new ridership within the existing RMTD route structure, but will also support expansion of service into Boone County and the City of Belvidere as well as support the future intermodal connections from commuter service to Chicagoland (which is being studied by NICTI).

It would be appropriate to schedule a specific session during the certification review so that staff from the MPO and RMTD could answer questions related to transit funding. The triennial review of RMTD that is scheduled 3-4 weeks prior to the certification review may also provide valuable insight that can be discussed.

35. How does RATS identify and analyze safety issues on the regional transportation system?

RATS has utilized PL funds directed to the individual highway agencies to compile traffic crash data. This effort, especially in the central city, has resulted in a very robust database. The City of Rockford has captured a significant portion of the HES (now HSIP) funds that have been available to local agencies over the last 10-15 years. But this locally derived data should not be necessary as it requires large amounts of staff time and is a drain on PL funds. The MPO awaits full implementation of the Mobile Capture and Reporting (MCR) system that IDOT is deploying. But this implementation has sorely lagged behind the schedule that was offered many years ago. In Illinois it is still a shame that a printed traffic crash report will be entered into a computer database as many as five times by various state and local agencies, none of which match each other.

Each of the member agencies of RATS have the responsibility to collect and analyze safety data on their own. The MPO does not provide any assistance in this regard except to allow PL funding to be allocated to the safety work tasks. While this situation has been effective at mitigating spot safety issues it has not created a regional perspective on safety. The ability for the MPO to provide guidance on setting safety priorities has been lacking, although the RATS members agencies have been satisfied with the arrangement to date. The MPO is also not staffed sufficiently to add safety-related analyses to the work program, which would include coordination with law enforcement agencies and IDOT. The new safety plan (CHSP) that was prepared by IDOT has established statewide priorities, the highest priority being a reduction in fatalities and incapacitating injuries. Many of the other statewide priorities such as education and enforcement are beyond the structure of the MPO, so it is difficult to have a comprehensive safety planning process. The creation of the Bureau of Safety Engineering within IDOT may be helpful to bridge the coordination gap, but it is too early to tell.

It is also noteworthy to mention that the implementation of the Safe Routes to School program in Illinois did not require any MPO involvement or coordination. It may be the only transportation-related federal program where MPO involvement is not required. Rather IDOT decided to create statewide coordinators to handle the application process, and this was probably necessary to allow a web-based application process. It is too early to tell how effective this model will be for the various stakeholders in school safety, but early results appear to be very positive.

The MPO has also contracted with IDOT to geocode traffic crashes countywide starting in 2003. This will be the first step to create tools that could assist a regional safety initiative at the MPO level. Once completed and combined with full implementation of MCR these GIS tools could allow MPOs to look at a regional safety program.

36. How does RATS use information on identified safety issues on the regional transportation system to guide or prioritize transportation investments in the LRTP and the TIP? What specific safety studies or activities have been conducted in the region?

On a regional level the MPO uses identified safety issues on the interstate system to guide the implementation of ITS projects. Safety issues on these facilities is coordinated by the Beloit-Janesville-Rockford arterial management workgroup. The group provides a comprehensive debriefing of all incidents and ITS operational plans are tweaked based on the review. All ITS-related

TIP projects are prioritized by the workgroup and a lead agency is designated to seek funding and guide implementation. The WisDOT also funded a comprehensive Phase I design study for the I-39/90 corridor from the state line to Madison, WI. This study combined all of the traditional transportation planning and design inputs, including crash data, to develop modern interchange designs and a 4-lane to 6-lane widening plan. This complements the work of the Illinois Tollway that has already completed Phase I and II work for the section of I-90/39 from the state line to the Kishwaukee River. The Tollway is also in Phase II design for a modernization of the I-39/90 and US 20 interchange, scheduled for construction starting in 2009.

The MPO also provides guidance to its member agencies on applications for HSIP and HRRRP, but does not provide actual data or assist in the analysis. The member agencies are responsible for the application process. And as discussed in other questions the full implementation of MCR, and the subsequent integration of GIS, are required prior to regional crash analyses by MPO staff. It should be noted that the member agencies of RATS have successfully captured a significant portion of the dollars available to local agencies through these safety programs without the assistance of the MPO. In fact the City of Rockford captured roughly 17% of all local agency funds for the state in the HES program prior to SAFETEA-LU.

Based on the discussion in question #17 it is noteworthy that the allocation of federal dollars that are discretionary to the MPO do not provide the ability to fund and construct/implement regional projects that could be identified by a structured regional safety analysis. The small to medium sized MPOs in Illinois are forced to rely on the HSIP/HRRRP programs that are designed to be “spot safety” in nature, usually resulting in modifications to intersection geometrics or traffic signal modernizations. And because the funding pool is split between local agencies and IDOT based on a pre-determined percentage, there is no opportunity to have safety projects from all agencies compete based on their merits.

The MPO staff also provides guidance to its members concerning rail/highway grade crossing protection opportunities. But because the region does not have passenger rail service, and freight volumes are relatively low within the urban core, the need for improvements is also low. Both IDOT and the railroad operators, through the ICC, have modernized the vast majority of rail highway crossings in the region where rail freight activity is present. The freight study mentioned in question #9 will also analyze and identify safety improvements that will benefit current and projected freight movement. The IDOT funded study (Illinois Tomorrow) by the City of Rockford that detailed rail consolidation opportunities also provides guidance on priorities for rail freight safety projects.

37. Discuss any relevant coordination between RATS and IDOT in regards to the Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP). Does RATS coordinate any efforts concerning local agency applications to the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)?

The MPO provided input to IDOT on the CHSP document by attending workshops held in various locales around the state. These workshops brought together law enforcement, education, planning, operations and design personnel as well as grass roots organizations from across the state that have interest in transportation safety. But most of the CHSP relationships between IDOT and these interested parties lie outside the MPO process, which is appropriate. The MPO staff view their role in the CHSP as one of support not as one of champion.

The MPO does not provide coordination per se on HSIP applications rather provides guidance when requested by the member agencies. The MPO ensures that the TIP properly documents all HSIP projects.

38. What is the appropriate role for RATS in regional infrastructure security planning? Is RATS engaged in emergency relief and disaster preparedness planning?

Because the MPO in the Rockford area is rather small in comparison to the Chicago area, the various member agencies and their staff have coordinated issues of security planning. This is an appropriate role for the MPO and its members. The creation of Prairie Shield, and the coordinating role of Boone County, has nicely filled the security planning and coordinating need. While the MPO staff does not have a direct role, the RATS Technical Committee members discuss and provide a forum for the exchange of ideas related to security. The MPO did support, and provide funding for, an NHI course titled "Managing Traffic Incidents and Roadway Emergencies" which brought together law enforcement, highway, fire, towing and other agencies.

RATS has not been involved in emergency relief or disaster preparedness planning. The MPO Study Director, through the affiliation with the City of Rockford Public Works Department, has completed federal training and certification in disaster response. The course was titled "Public Works: Preparing for and Responding to a Terrorism/CBRNE Incident" and was provided by the Office of Domestic Preparedness and the Texas Engineering Extension Office. Successful completion of this course and others has led to FEMA certification for the National Incident Command System.

39. Does RATS collect and analyze regional goods movement flow data?

At the present time the MPO does not collect or analyze goods movement flow data. The FY 08 UWP contains dollars to fund a consultant-led study in this regard, most likely a 2-year study. It is anticipated that the MPO will develop a steering committee of regional freight personnel who collect and analyze freight data as part of their regular work tasks to lead the effort and review the deliverables of the consultant.

The MPO staff also provided input to the Upper Midwest Freight initiative by meeting with study personnel at the UIC. And the MPO is included in the freight planning listserv through an arrangement with IDOT.

40. Has RATS identified key goods movement facilities in the region, and sought to identify the transportation infrastructure, investment, and policy needs of the goods movement community?

These tasks will be part of the consultant-led study mentioned in question #39. The LRTP provides some basic identification of significant regional freight facilities.

41. Discuss the development of the RATS Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan. How is this plan going to be implemented?

The development of the RATS Bicycle – Pedestrian Plan actually began during the preparation of the LRTP during 2004 and 2005. During the early stages of the LRTP preparation it became apparent that a more detailed analysis of bicycle and pedestrian issues was required. To start

this planning process, three public involvement sessions were held for a cross section of bicycle stakeholders from throughout the RATS MPA. For these meetings, members of the consulting team and RATS were present to (1) explain and review the existing plan and the overall transportation planning process, (2) lead a planning session for the stakeholders to propose new bikeway facilities and to recommend changes to the bikeway policy, and (3) review the results of this planning process held in the second session, and this is shown in Table 5-1 in the LRTP.

In January 2006, the League of Illinois Bicyclists held a planning and mapping session in Rockford City Hall for the purpose of developing a system of existing streets to encourage bicycling as a healthy, energy-efficient, economical and non-polluting form of transportation. Approximately 45 local bicyclists attended this planning session. City of Rockford Mayor Larry Morrissey spoke at this meeting and detailed his priority for improving the bicycle and pedestrian system for the City.

During the development of the FY 2006 and FY 2007 UWP, FHWA-PL and FTA-5303 funds were programmed to allow additional analysis of this transportation element from the RATS LRTP. The goals of this analysis were (1) to develop a planning process to identify an on-street system of bicycle routes and lanes to connect with the existing shared-use path facilities throughout the RATS area (within a 2 to 5 year time period); (2) to promote and encourage a bicycle-to-bus connection by installing bike racks on all Rockford Mass Transit District's buses (this has been completed); (3) to develop a planning process using GIS to identify and prioritize gaps in the area's sidewalk system; and (4) to review the development regulations for the local agencies in the RATS MPA and provide information to update related ordinances and other regulations to promote bicycle and pedestrian friendly development.

During the preparation of the Bicycle – Pedestrian Plan, on September 16, 2006, a bicycle ride and public workshop was held at Loves Park City Hall. The purpose of this ride and workshop combination was to give participants an opportunity to view first-hand and comment on some of the existing bicycle facilities in the RATS MPA and to provide an open forum for suggestions on future improvements.

Additionally surveys were conducted by representatives from T. L. Lin International who were the consultants on this component of the plan. Eighteen key interviews with community leaders were completed. Also, surveys were mailed out county and municipal staff, township highway commissioners and other stakeholders. Chapter 11 of this study explains this process and the results of these surveys and interviews.

The implementation of this plan will start as the cost and availability of funds filters into the programming process of the local jurisdictions. Final copies of the report (on CDs or on the RATS web site at:

<http://www.rockfordil.gov/government/works/index.cfm?section=planning&id=977>)

RATS staff is scheduled to present information on this study to the Rockford Park District Board of Trustees at their October 9, 2007 meeting. Once the project deliverable is made available by the consultant RATS staff will make time available to any implementing agency to coordinate programming discussions or to provide technical expertise.

42. How has RATS documented actions and processes to address new planning requirements authorized under SAFETEA-LU and made effective under the Planning Rule issued February 14, 2007?

During the preparation of the LRTP, the consultant and RATS staff had several discussions on what to include in the 2005 document. Obviously at that time, SAFETEA-LU had not been signed into law or the February 14th Final Rule had not been published yet. However, by monitoring the events that were occurring during 2004 and 2005 at the federal level and having discussions with IDOT and regional FHWA/FTA representatives, we were able to identify several issues that would be new initiatives under the new planning guidelines from SAFETEA-LU. Accordingly, several of the new planning requirements were included in the LRTP, TIP, UWP and other required MPO planning documents.

On the other hand, new requirements that were included in the Final Rule notice would require an action plan to identify those differences between our existing planning documents and the new requirements in SAFETEA-LU. Between the time that SAFETEA-LU was signed in August 2005 and February 14th, IDOT and the MPOs in Illinois have had several meetings to discuss an action plan to develop a strategy to address these differences. Accordingly, IDOT retained a national consulting firm and a previous staff person at IDOT to assist each MPO in Illinois to review and identify steps to comply with the current requirements. Referring to the public comments RATS received during the Year 2035 LRTP process, discussions RATS staff had with the consultants of our existing planning process and documents, deliberations that we had with our local agencies over the past two-years on the RATS continuing, comprehensive and cooperative planning process, and consultations with our state and federal representatives, the consultants worked with RATS to develop a course to follow to ensure RATS compliance with SAFETEA-LU.

On June 28, 2007, the RATS Policy Committee passed RATS Resolution (#2007-7) to outline the framework, foundation, approach and process to address three planning efforts that we believe need to be completed to comply with current planning requirements. These three are:

- ◆ RATS Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP)*
- ◆ RATS Transportation System Management and Operations Plan*
- ◆ RATS Planning, Coordination and Consulting Plan (PCCP)*

The first step in this process was to seek public comment on the planning approach that was included in RATS Resolution 2007-7. A public open house event was held on August 13, 2007 to invite the public to offer their views on the steps to include in these three planning products.

Another step in this planning effort is the creation of the Mobility Subcommittee, which was discussed in question # 33.

One of the approaches that RATS will use during the development of the HSTP and PCCP over the next several months will be scheduling status meetings with the agencies that offer services and have resources in these unique areas that can ensure that the planning products and

information in those plans are of high quality, accurate and complete. By working with the other resources and community organizations, this planning method allows a wider group to assist the MPO during the preparation of the plans, thus creating the opportunities for greater involvement and participation from the other public institutions.

43. How was RATS engaged in the development of the Illinois State Transportation Plan?

RATS participated in stakeholder sessions with IDOT and the consultant team that prepared the plan. The first meeting was held in Springfield and involved all of the MPO Executive Directors. Subsequent meetings that were held around the state afforded the MPO the opportunity to give testimony and provide comments to the draft plan. The new document is a major upgrade from previous documents and provides each of the MPOs with a template for planning work on the various planning subjects. Because the plan does not have an implementation strategy it is more of a resource document to aid the MPOs in the development of analogous documents at the MPO level. The major importance of the document is the transportation policy of the state and the objectives to meet the policies.

44. Discuss the content of the RATS self-certification. How do you track these requirements and your agency's ability to meet them?

These requirements are tracked in many ways:

- ◆ *The Federal Register*
- ◆ *E-mail alerts from AMPO, FHWA, FTA, IDOT*
- ◆ *The Triennial Certification of the transit operators*
- ◆ *The MPO certification process (now every 4 years)*
- ◆ *Internet research*
- ◆ *Conferences and training sessions*
- ◆ *MPO Executive Director meetings*
- ◆ *MPO peer exchanges*
- ◆ *Bulletins and other published federal guidance outside of the Federal Register*
- ◆ *Consultation with MPO liaisons (Metro Managers) from IDOT*

The analysis of the MPO's ability to meet federal requirements starts with the UWP. The highest priority for funding is a set-aside for MPO staff to complete these requirements. Requests for funding for other planning projects are only considered after the federal requirement's set-aside is agreed to by the MPO member agencies. The MPO considers acceptance by FHWA, FTA and IDOT of our MPO required documents and products as documentation that the MPO has fulfilled the self-certification requirements.

Additionally, the MPO has not received any complaints or been sued in a court of law for violation of any of the federal laws or statutes that are listed in the self-certification page of the UWP.

45. What has been implemented from the recommendations made in the 2003 FHWA-FTA Certification Review report?

- ◆ *Involvement with IDOT District 2 with the 5-Year program – This recommendation manifested itself in a broader movement by all MPOs in Illinois to take a leadership role in the TIP process with IDOT. Unfortunately the State of Illinois has not had a capital program for the last 4 years. The IDOT Districts therefore have not had the ability to establish priorities beyond routine maintenance. No new projects have been placed in the TIP since the last certification review. The MPO will continue to work and support the development of a capital program for the State, and insist that the MPOs take the lead in formulating the priorities, both for highways and transit.*
- ◆ *The MPO in the Rockford area was instrumental in working with IDOT on the new Statewide Transportation Plan, and the completely revised Safety section of the document. The creation of the bureau of Safety Engineering was also a good first step to foster a direct relationship with regional safety partners, correcting the splintered safety process in Illinois that existed during the last certification review. The top priority of reducing fatalities and Type A injury accidents is going through the first round of submittals during 2007. But as mentioned in question #35 the full implementation of MCR in Illinois is a prerequisite to a true proactive safety conscious planning process.*
- ◆ *As part of the new federal guidance for SAFETEA-LU the MPO has determined that the April 2003 Public Involvement Process document requires updating. The planning work for this task has been built into the 2008 UWP now that the RATS planning staff is back at full capacity.*
- ◆ *The RATS web site is operational and continues to be a strong component of the delivery of information to the RATS members and the general public. The web site has been reworked 2 or 3 times since the first implementation and legacy documents have been converted to digital form.*
- ◆ *Citizen oriented guides have been created for several projects of the MPO, most notably transit projects. Both RMTD and NICTI have published citizen oriented guides and FAQ style publications. The recent addition of Jon Paul Diipla to the staff will enable RATS to add to the growing list of citizen oriented guides in the next couple of years.*
- ◆ *The LRTP update completed in 2004/2005 utilized expertise outside of the MPO staff for the first time since the 1970s. The added expertise allowed the LRTP to concentrate on the federal recommendation of safety, environment and congestion. The LRTP has been recognized as SAFETEA-LU compliant and also has received a planning excellence award from CECI.*
- ◆ *The EJ/Title VI document was submitted to the Policy Committee in March 2006 and was approved by RATS Resolution 2006-3.*