**Timeline and Guidance for MPO/RPA Population Adjustments**

**Background**

The following information has been compiled to provide guidance to MPOs and RPAs if they choose to make adjustments to populations used in calculating Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding targets. Historically, STP and Transportation Enhancement (TE) funding was distributed to MPOs based on population and to RPAs based on a combination of population and Farm to Market Factors. Baseline population information used in the target calculation process is based on Census Geography. Baseline MPO populations reflect population statistics for Urbanized Area boundaries (50,000 population and above) while RPA populations are based on both Urban Cluster (5,000-50,000) and County populations. In the past MPOs and RPAs have been allowed to work together to determine if a boundary other than the Census Urbanized Area would be more appropriate for the purpose of calculating STP and TE funding targets. Boundaries eligible to be used for population adjustments include DOT and FHWA approved Urban Area and Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) boundaries. In the past most population adjustments have been made based on MPA boundaries.

**Guidance**

To date, the Urban Area Boundary update process has nearly been completed. It is anticipated that all updated boundaries will be approved by FHWA by no later than October 31st. Once MPO Urban Area Boundaries have been updated MPOs and RPAs need to determine if a population adjustment will be completed. If a population adjustment is pursued the first determination to be made is what boundary will be the basis for adjustment. If the adjustment is to be based on the MPO’s Urban Area Boundary the MPO and RPA can immediately begin the process of adopting the formal resolution to approve the population adjustment. If the population adjustment is to be based on a MPA boundary the MPO may need to first complete the process of updating its MPA boundary.

General steps for updating MPA boundaries are as follows:

1. MPO establishes the new MPA boundary using Census geography
2. MPO creates a map showing the new and existing MPA boundary
3. MPO approves the new MPA boundary through formal resolution
4. MPO provides map and resolution to the DOT Office of Systems Planning for review
5. DOT will make formal recommendation on the requested Planning Area Boundary change to the FHWA in the form of a letter from the Iowa DOT Director.

Regardless of which boundary is selected the MPO will be required, if able, to calculate the population impacted as a result of the population adjustment. The population identified to be shifted between the RPA and MPO should then be sent to the Iowa DOT Office of Systems Planning for verification and approval. Once verified by the DOT the MPO and RPA must complete the required resolution approving the population adjustment.

Upon receipt of the MPO and RPA signed resolution population adjustments will be incorporated into the FFY 2014 STP and TAP target calculation process. In order to meet the typical target distribution deadline of February the DOT requests that all signed population adjustment resolutions be received by the end of January, 2013. Population adjustments received after this deadline will not be processed for the FFY 2014 targets but can be processed during the following year’s target calculation process. Since these adjustments impact the population distribution throughout the state midyear adjustments will not be allowed. In addition, any adjustments processed between census cycles should be made only as a result of a special census, an updated and approved MPA boundary, or a decision by the MPO and RPA to utilize a different boundary (Urban Area vs MPA). Any interim year population adjustment requests must be submitted to the DOT for approval.

**Timeline Information**

Urban Area Boundaries Update – Currently ongoing - completion expected by October 31, 2012.

Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary Update – MPOs should begin process of updating planning boundaries as soon as UAB boundary update is complete. FHWA approval of updated planning boundary due by December 31, 2012.

MPO and RPA Population Adjustment Discussions - Upon approval of the MPO Planning Area Boundary the MPOs and RPAs should begin discussions on population adjustments. These discussions should result in a mutually agreed upon population adjustment and executed resolutions are due to the Office of Program Management by January 31, 2013.

If a boundary adjustment is pursued using either the approved Urban Area or existing MPA boundary MPOs and RPAs can immediately start population adjustment discussion.

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