



Engaging Citizens to Expand Accountability

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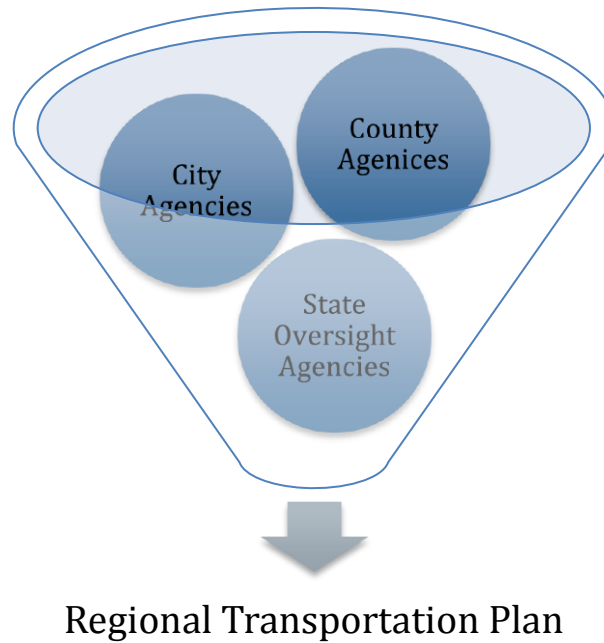
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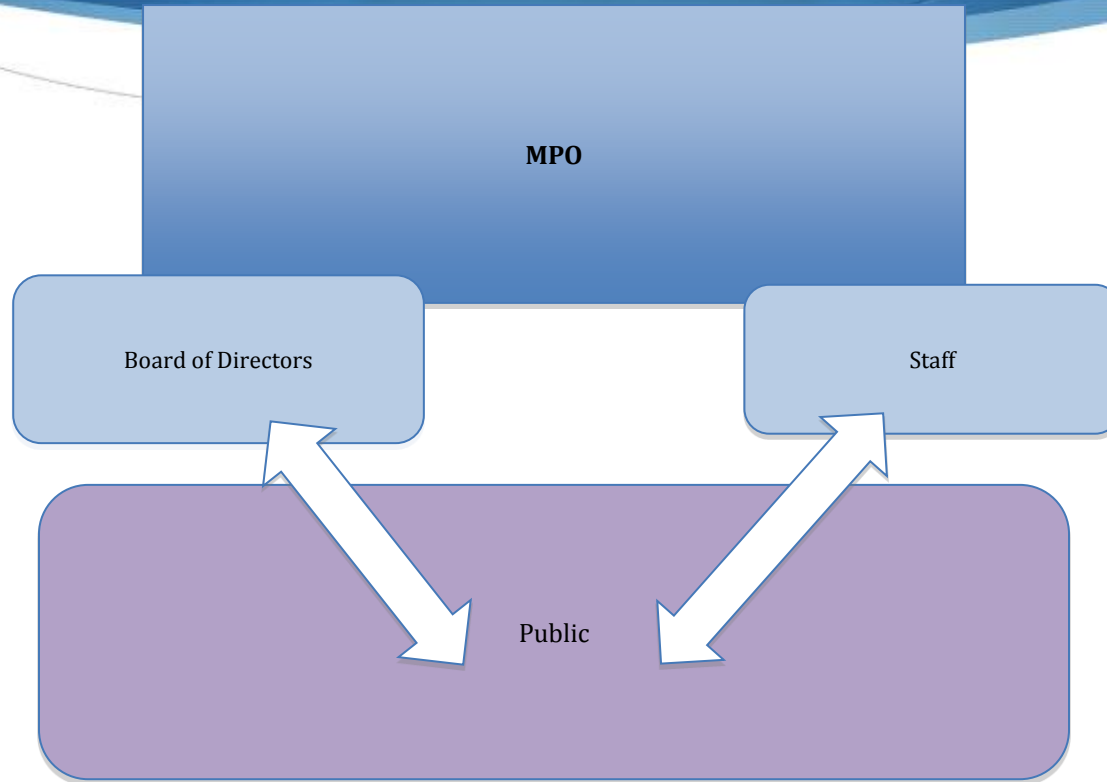
Metropolitan Planning Organizations

- ◆ Required by US Federal Government
 - ◆ Federal government provides resources and local MPOs decide how to allocate.
 - ◆ Federal government requires citizen participation, but Local MPOs decide how to do this.
- ◆ Board of Directors—Local governments (cities, counties) + state transportation department
- ◆ Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS):
Founded in 2003
 - ◆ Currently: 500,000 residents; Expected to double by 2035

Regional Transportation Plan



Organizational Structure



Accountability

- ◆ Vertical: Control citizens exercise over elected officials, primarily through elections
- ◆ Horizontal: Distribution of power and authority among different departments, agencies, or branches of government.
- ◆ Societal: Non-electoral forms of ongoing pressure placed on public officials. This could be public deliberations, demonstrations or participatory engagement

Types of participation

- ◆ **Voice:** The ability of citizens to express ideas, preferences, and opinions within and parallel to formal state-sanctioned bodies. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) can also represent citizens' voice
- ◆ **Vet:** The ability of citizens and CSOs to review documents and information provided by government officials. Better quality vetting produces more informed voice
- ◆ **Vote:** Citizens vote on policy proposals that emerge from civil society or from the government. A “binding” vote would be the strongest form of vote; it entails a public vote being translated into direct action. A “consultative” vote might be on general policy lines.
- ◆ **Veto:** Citizens and citizens have the authority to reject policy proposals, year-end reports, and audits.

Opportunities to Participate

| EVENT | 2003 | 2004 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|-------|----------------------|---------------|-------|---------------|----------------------|
| “Community Café” | Voice | | | | | |
| Open House(s) on Planning Documents* | | Voice and Vet | | | | |
| Submit comments on Planning Documents* without attending a meeting | | Voice and Vet | | | | |
| Growth/Land Use Scenario Workshops | | Voice, Vet, and Vote | | | | |
| Attend “Meeting in a Bag” | | | Voice and Vet | | | |
| “Communities in Motion” Workshop | | | | Voice | | |
| “Making Connections” Conference | | | | | Voice and Vet | |
| Transportation Funding/ Priority Focus Group | | | | | | Voice, Vet, and Vote |

Advances in Participation

- ◆ Multi-channel participation
 - ◆ Different venues
 - ◆ Wide range of issues
 - ◆ Attempt to reach out to new constituencies
- ◆ Staff of government actively sought out participation
- ◆ Grew more sophisticated over time; Citizens were given more to do over time

Constraints on Participation

- ◆ Weak Feedback Loop
- ◆ MPO—Divided elite (board leadership);
 - ◆ Accountability is more difficult to advance
- ◆ Elite capture by vested interests
- ◆ Long-term planning is difficult to sustain participation
- ◆ Technical planning

Concluding Remarks

- ◆ **MPOs: Divided Leadership**
 - ◆ Elected officials represent different jurisdictions and constituencies
- ◆ **MPO Staff—Actively engaging citizens; limited due to divided leadership.**
- ◆ **Multi-channel approach: Experimentation with different forms of delivering information and collecting input**
- ◆ **Participation is largely limited to Voice and Vet; limited vote**
- ◆ **Weak feedback loops (What was done? Why did I bother to participate?)**