



U.S. Department
of Transportation

Federal Highway
Administration

Federal Transit
Administration

Transportation Management Area Planning Certification Review

Lincoln, Nebraska Transportation Management Area

2021

Summary Report

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with 23 CFR part 450.336 (b), FHWA and FTA are required to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process for each urbanized area over 200,000 in population at least every four years to determine if the process meets the Federal planning requirements. On May 5th and 6th, 2021, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conducted the certification review of the transportation planning process for the Lincoln, NE urbanized area. The 2021 COVID-19 pandemic required the review team to conduct an on-site visit for the certification review virtually, rather than in person, for safety and social distancing reasons.

The City of Lincoln is the federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Lincoln Metropolitan Area serving Lincoln and Lancaster County to carry out transportation planning and decision-making. The Lincoln MPO works with the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) as well as Star Tran, the region's public transit operator to implement the federally required planning process.

The scope of the federal certification review was a comprehensive review of the Lincoln MPO transportation planning process. The federal review team's work consisted of reviewing the products of the planning process, interviewing agency officials and staff members involved in the transportation planning process, as well as the ongoing oversight activities conducted by the FHWA and the FTA. A separate virtual session was held on May 21, 2021, to discuss the travel demand model with the Lincoln MPO. In addition to assessing the MPO progress with addressing the recommendations from the last certification review in 2017, the on-site review team focused on the MPO compliance with current transportation law, planning regulations, current issues, best practices, and opportunities to enhance the planning process.

This final report summarizes the status of the Lincoln MPO planning process, provides an overview of review findings and highlights noteworthy practices executed by the MPO. Additionally, several recommendations have been made for the MPO to improve the current transportation planning process. There were no corrective actions identified for the 2021 Certification Review. A detailed summary of commendations and recommendations is covered in the Process Review Findings section of the report.

Based on this review, and ongoing oversight by FHWA and FTA, the transportation planning process, carried out in the Lincoln, Nebraska Transportation Management Area, is certified as meeting the requirements as described in 23 CFR Part 450 and 49 CFR Part 613 through September 30, 2025.

1.1 Disposition of Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Certification Review Recommendations

The 2017 Federal Certification Review Final Report, dated September 26, 2017, presented recommendations for the Lincoln MPO, NDOT, and Star Tran to improve their transportation planning processes. Appendix B outlines the implementation status of each recommendation in a disposition summary table. Based upon this review, all 2017 recommendations have been implemented by the MPO.

Key Definitions:

Corrective Actions: Those items are compliance issues that fail to meet one or more requirements of the federal planning statute and regulations.

Recommendations: Items that address technical improvements to processes or procedures, that are not regulatory, but are still significant enough that FHWA and FTA encourage taking some action. Typically, the recommendations involve the state of the practice instead of federal regulatory requirements.

Commendations - Noteworthy Practices: Elements that demonstrate well thought out procedures for implementing the planning requirements. Elements that address items that have been difficult nationwide could be cited as noteworthy practice. FHWA and FTA may wish to offer commendations for significant improvements and/or resolution of a past finding(s).

1.2 Summary of FY 2021 Findings

The FY 2021 certification review found that the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted in the Lincoln urbanized area meets the Federal planning requirements. FHWA and FTA are jointly certifying the transportation planning process conducted by Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Star Tran (public transit provider), and Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT). There were no corrective actions identified by the review team for the FY 2021 certification review.

List of 2021 Certification Review Recommendations:

Review Area	Finding	Recommendations
Unified Planning Work Program 23 CFR 450.308	Recommendation	NDOT should share a draft version of the NDOT Statewide Planning and Research (SPR) planning work program with the Lincoln MPO to allow the Lincoln MPO to more fully understand if there are any partnering opportunities and various planning activities conducted by both organizations.
Public Participation 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(6) 23 CFR 450.316 & 450.326(b)	Recommendation	1) The MPO should look at ways to improve its monitoring of the effectiveness of its public participation activities. In addition, the MPO should include their monitoring activities in the update to the Public Participation Plan. 2) The Lincoln MPO and StarTran should update their Title VI and ADA policies which were developed in 2010 to ensure they remain current with applicable requirements
Congestion Management Process / Management and Operations 23 U.S.C. 134(k)(3) 23 CFR 450.322	Recommendation	The MPO should utilize the recent Congestion Management Plan (CMP) update (May 2020) and integrate the CMP into the planning process particularly as it relates to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), by utilizing the annual systems performance report to check in on results of planning activities. The MPO should ensure the TIP is fully integrated into the CMP and that the established transportation performance measures are integrated fully into the CMP. In addition, the MPO should continue using the Systems Management and Operations committee that is established to help monitor the results of the MPO strategies deployed.
Transit Planning 49 U.S.C. 5303 and 23 U.S.C. 134	Recommendation	1) The StarTran transit system has prepared the Transportation Asset Management (TAM) plan and Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) as required by FTA. However, these documents are not on the MPO's web site to inform the public on the two transit performance measures. The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO place the TAM plan and PTASP on their website. 2) The MPO should collaborate with StarTran to continue to explore and plan for the use of autonomous vehicles in the metropolitan area.

Travel Demand Modeling 23 CFR 450.324(f)(1)	Recommendation	<p>1) Continuous updates to model documentation are encouraged as updates and refinements are made to the model. Additional analytic reporting and visualization of traveler system performance may be helpful for evaluating performance impacts of long-range transportation investment scenarios. Examples could include regional accessibility contour mapping to show relative changes in travel times for long range plan scenarios. Thematic mapping of origin and destination patterns and changes in mode shares between base and future years could be helpful for showing travel pattern changes. The Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) planning and preliminary guidebook includes procedures for estimating operational performance measures from model outputs, providing potential forecasting measures to incorporate in the CMP.</p> <p>2) The MPO is encouraged to prioritize local data collection (National Household Travel Survey (NHTS)) which would enable the replacement of non-local calibration targets with locally observed data.</p> <p>3) FHWA can provide technical guidance on truck forecasting methods if requested by the Lincoln MPO.</p>
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (Long Range Transportation Plan) 23 CFR 450.322	Recommendation	<p>1) The Lincoln MPO should continue to work towards implementing a Bicycle and Pedestrian Count Program. FHWA and FTA are available to provide technical assistance as requested by the Lincoln MPO to establish the count program.</p> <p>2) FHWA and FTA encourages the Lincoln MPO to engage the equity committee in development of the TIP and Public Participation Plan as was done with the Long-Range Transportation Plan.</p>

List of 2021 Certification Review Commendations:

Review Area	Commendation
Transit Planning 49 U.S.C. 5303 and 23 U.S.C. 134	The innovative approach to planning for access to essential services using micro transit. The micro transit program utilizes a software that determines where and when vehicles are utilized to match demand in relation to the existing paratransit service. Riders can also use an app to sign-up and pay for the service as well as rate the service.
Metropolitan Transportation Plan 23 CFR 450.322	The MPO has developed weighting criteria in the evaluation of project prioritization in the update to the 2050 LRTP to analyze the scope of projects within areas of the MPO boundary that have been identified as having vulnerable populations.
Public Participation 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(6) 23 CFR 450.316 & 450.326(b)	1) The MPO is commended for its use of visualization and graphic techniques including You Tube videos with embedded power point presentations to inform and enhance the public understanding of the planning process. 2) The MPO is commended for its pro-active efforts (i.e. attending and presenting at already scheduled meetings) to identify and build relationships with organizations and community leaders of those traditionally underserved and targeting public involvement activities at locations for these groups.

The remainder of the report will address recommendations that warrant consideration by the Lincoln MPO and NDOT, as well as commendations in areas that Lincoln MPO is carrying out that are noteworthy practices.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 134(k) and 49 U.S.C. 5303(k), FHWA and FTA must review and jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning process in Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) at least every four years. A TMA is special statutory designation for any MPO that has 200,000 or more population and subject to additional benefits (funding allocation) and Federal requirements. FHWA and FTA designate a TMA based upon the urbanized areas with a population of over 200,000, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. In general, the reviews consist of four primary activities: continuous involvement in the TMA major planning activities, an on-site visit, a review of planning products (in advance of and during the site visit), and preparation of a Certification Review Report that summarizes the review and provides findings. The 2021 COVID-19 pandemic required the review team to conduct the on-site visit for the certification review virtually rather than in person for safety and social distancing reasons. The reviews focus on compliance with Federal regulations, challenges, successes, and experiences of the cooperative relationship between the MPO's, the State DOT's, and public transportation operator(s) in the implementation of the metropolitan transportation planning process.

The Certification Review process is only one of several methods used to assess the quality of a regional metropolitan transportation planning process, compliance with applicable statutes and regulations, and type of technical assistance needed to enhance the effectiveness of the planning process.

While the Certification Review Report itself may not fully document the many intermediate and ongoing checkpoints throughout the planning process, the findings of Certification Review are based upon the ongoing Federal stewardship and oversight and other cumulative findings of the transportation planning process.

The content of this report and particularly the status narratives include information from on-site discussions, on-going involvement in the MPO activities, and Lincoln MPO staff responses to the certification review team's questions.

2.2 Purpose and Objective

Since the enactment of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, the FHWA and FTA are required to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process in all urbanized areas over 200,000 in population to determine if the process meets the Federal planning requirements in 23 U.S.C. 134, 40 U.S.C. 5303, and 23 CFR 450. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) extended the

minimum allowable frequency of certification reviews to once at least every four years. Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) and Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) continued the regulatory planning framework and the frequency of the certification reviews.

The purpose of the certification review is to determine if the planning process can be certified as satisfying the requirements in the metropolitan planning regulations (23 CFR 450). This review had the following objectives:

1. Determine how the metropolitan planning process will be certified as in compliance with current transportation planning law.
2. Determine if the metropolitan transportation planning activities are being carried out in accordance with the governing metropolitan planning regulations, policies, and procedures.
3. Determine if the metropolitan transportation planning process is a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive process that results in the support and development of transportation improvements for the overall Lincoln metropolitan area.
4. Determine if the metropolitan transportation planning process provides adequate representation and input from all levels of local government and individual interest groups in addressing the transportation needs of the metropolitan area.
5. Enhance the metropolitan planning process and improve the quality of transportation investment decisions.
6. Identify noteworthy practices, which can be shared with other states, metropolitan planning organizations, and transit operators.

The Lincoln MPO is the designated as the TMA for the Lincoln urbanized area. NDOT is the responsible State Department of Transportation and StarTran is the responsible public transportation operator. Current membership of the Lincoln MPO consists of elected officials from political jurisdictions in the Lincoln urbanized area and Lancaster County. The metropolitan planning area includes all of Lancaster County which includes all the Lincoln urbanized area with the City of Lincoln as the largest population center.

Certification of the planning process is a prerequisite to the approval of Federal funding for transportation projects. The certification review is also an opportunity for FHWA and FTA to provide technical assistance on new programs and to enhance the ability of the metropolitan transportation planning process by providing decision makers with the feedback they need to make well-informed capital and operating investment decisions.

Federal Review Team Members:

Justin Luther, Transportation Planner,
FHWA Nebraska

Gerri Doyle, Community Planner, FTA
Region VII

3.0 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Review Process

The previous certification review was conducted in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017. A summary of the status of findings from that review is provided in Appendix B. This report details the review cycle, that was held virtually, on May 5th and 6th 2021. On May 21, 2021, a virtual session was held with FHWA, FTA, and the Lincoln MPO subject matter experts to cover the travel demand modeling activities conducted by the Lincoln MPO. The public meeting was held on May 5, 2021 at 5:30pm to 7:00pm and occurred both virtually and in person at the Lincoln/Lancaster County office.

Participants in the review included representatives of FHWA-Nebraska, FHWA Resource Center, FTA- Region VII, FTA Headquarters NDOT, StarTran, and Lincoln MPO staff among others from the city and county. A full list of participants is included in Appendix A.

A desk audit of current documents and correspondence was completed prior to the virtual visit. In addition to the formal review, ongoing stewardship and oversight mechanisms provide a major source of information upon which to base the certification findings. The certification review covers the transportation planning process conducted cooperatively by the MPO, State, and public transportation operators. Background information, status, key findings, and recommendations are summarized in the body of the report.

3.2 Documents Reviewed

The following MPO documents were evaluated as part of this planning process review:

- The current Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the MPO and Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT)
- The Lincoln MPO Management Plan
- FY 2020 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for the Lincoln MPO
- Lincoln MPO FY-2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Self-Certification
- Lincoln MPO 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
- Lincoln MPO Public Participation Plan (PPP)
- Lincoln MPO Congestion Management Process (CMP)
- Lincoln MPO Title VI Policy
- Lincoln MPO Environmental Justice Action Strategy

3.3 Input from the Public, Officials, and Member Agencies Staffs

Providing opportunities for public participation is a cornerstone of the transportation planning process, defined in Title 23 and Title 49. State DOTs, MPO's, and transit operators are required to provide opportunities for public input and to consider their views when making decisions on the use of federal funding assistance. With the passage of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 1998, a public involvement component was statutorily mandated for the MPO certification review process.

As part of the Certification Review, a public meeting was conducted on the evening of May 5, 2021, from 5:30 – 7:00 PM. The review team had the Lincoln MPO follow their public meeting procedures for advertising the public meeting, which included sending emails to the Lincoln MPO stakeholders list and formal advertisement in the local paper. There were no members of the public present for the meeting, which was held both in-person and virtually.

The virtual visit consisted of discussions with staff from Lincoln MPO, NDOT, and StarTran.

4.0 PROGRAM REVIEW

4.1 Unified Planning Work Program

4.1.1 Regulatory Basis: 23 CFR 450.308 sets the requirement that planning activities performed under Titles 23 and 49 U.S.C. be documented in a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The MPO, in cooperation with the State and public transportation operators, shall develop a UPWP that includes a discussion of the planning priorities facing the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) and the work proposed for the next one- or two-year period by major activity and task in sufficient detail to indicate the agency that will perform the work, the schedule for completing the work, the resulting products, the proposed funding, and sources of funds.

4.1.2 Status: The Lincoln MPO UPWP currently operates on a one-year cycle (State Fiscal Year from July 1– June 30) and the document defines the major planning activities that will be undertaken in the Lincoln/Lancaster County region. The UPWP serves as a valuable guide for the MPO, planning partners and the public on how planning resources will be allocated during the performance period. The Lincoln MPO and NDOT both identified sharing of the statewide planning (SPR) work program as a potential area for improvement to further cooperate and collaborate on planning activities being undertaken by NDOT. The sharing of the SPR work

program offers possible partnering opportunities on planning activities conducted by both organizations.

In recent years, the Lincoln MPO has asked the NDOT if it would consider the possibility of going to a two-year UPWP performance period. NDOT informed the MPO that it did not want to pursue that change. Currently, the status is the same for NDOT and the MPO.

The Lincoln MPO is performing great work with advancing multimodal connectivity within the metropolitan area including equipping busses with bike racks that hold 2 bicycles per bus and providing their residents access to several miles of trails throughout the region. The MPO reports that their trails are well utilized, which is evident through the data collected from the five permanent counters on the trail systems showing a substantial number of users on the Lincoln trail network. For the creation of the bike plan, the community has had the opportunity to approve and comment on the plan via a hyperlink on the MPO webpage that provides viewers the option to offer commentary on the proposed bike plan and receive announcements via email on the plan as well. The collection of public feedback allows the MPO to stay connected to the public and gather a pulse on the public needs on Bike and Pedestrian access.

The MPO is incorporating innovative methods for identifying gaps in connectivity within the metropolitan area. Currently, they are utilizing an “Access to Essential Services” – an innovative approach to identify gaps in service, particularly with addressing the pandemic by including the use of micro-transit services that was started in April – which allowed for \$5 ride services coupled with paratransit services whenever there was downtime on paratransit service. Some of the highlights of the project include allowing for easy access via online signup and payment and 98% positivity rating on the service.

The MPO has established an equity committee that meets twice a year to support identifying gaps in services and expanded services. In addition, the committee was utilized to develop weighting criteria used as part of the project prioritization process for updating the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). FHWA and FTA encourage the Lincoln MPO to explore utilizing the committee to further the planning process and integrating the equity committee’s involvement into the TIP and Public Participation Plan development.

4.1.3 Finding: In accordance with the 3-C planning process, all the Nebraska planning partners (Lincoln MPO, NDOT, FHWA and FTA) are encouraged to explore the potential of sharing documentation to strengthen the performance-based planning process.

4.1.3 Recommendation: NDOT should share a draft version of the NDOT SPR planning work program with the Lincoln MPO to allow the Lincoln MPO to more fully understand if there are any partnering opportunities and various planning activities conducted by both organizations.

4.2 Congestion Management Process / Management and Operations

4.2.1 Regulatory Basis: 23 U.S.C. 134(k) (3) and 23 CFR 450.322 set forth requirements for the congestion management process (CMP) in TMAs. The CMP is a systematic approach for managing congestion through a process that provides for a safe and effective integrated management and operation of the multimodal transportation system. TMAs designated as non-attainment for ozone must also provide an analysis of the need for additional capacity for a proposed improvement over travel demand reduction, and operational management strategies. 23 CFR 450.324(f) (5) requires the LRTP include maintenance and operation of the transportation network as an integrated, multimodal approach to optimize the performance of the existing transportation infrastructure. Effective maintenance and operation strategies include measurable regional operations goals and objectives and specific performance measures to optimize system performance.

4.2.2 Status: The Lincoln MPO CMP was adopted in 2009 and updated in 2020. The System Management and Operations (SMO) Committee is one the various MPO Subcommittees and it is responsible for implementing the CMP. Generally, the SMO Committee meets quarterly and is charged with developing and updating the CMP, as needed. The MPO stated that the SMO committee members and components of the CMP were utilized in the planning process for the update of the MPO's 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). However, the MPO stated they decided to delay the update of the CMP to coincide with the timeline of the development of the 2050 LRTP which should occur by the end of the calendar year (2021). In addition, the SMO committee has not been meeting regularly as the committee members were tasked with updating the Long-Range Transportation Plan. It was noted by the review team that CMP document will need to be updated once the 2050 LRTP is formally adopted.

4.2.3 Findings: The Congestion Management Process (CMP) needs to be updated and implemented to ensure the CMP is utilized fully within all the current MPO planning activities.

4.2.4 Recommendation: The MPO should utilize the recent Congestion Management Plan (CMP) update (May 2020) and integrate the CMP into the planning process particularly as it relates to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), by utilizing the annual systems performance report to check in on results of planning activities. The MPO should ensure the TIP is fully integrated into the CMP and that the established transportation performance measures are integrated fully into the CMP. In addition, the MPO should continue using the Systems Management and Operations committee that is established to help monitor the results of the MPO strategies deployed.

4.3 Transit Planning

4.3.1 Regulatory Basis: 49 U.S.C. 5303 and 23 U.S.C. 134 require the transportation planning process in metropolitan areas to consider all modes of travel in the development of their plans and programs. Federal regulations cited in 23 CFR 450.314 state that the MPO in cooperation

with the State and operators of publicly owned transit services shall be responsible for carrying out the transportation planning process.

4.3.2 Status: The Lincoln metropolitan area is served by one transit provider, Star Tran, which is owned and operated by the city as a municipal service. The StarTran transit system also provides on-demand transportation service through VANLINK.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact to the operations of the transit system. The number of daily trips on the system dropped to 7,000 from a pre-COVID level of 11,000 trips. Furthermore, the lack of ridership and staffing also led to service reductions. Although ridership is slowly coming back, the system is still down about a 35-40% of pre-COVID levels. At the time of the Certification Review, the transit operator was anticipating a return to full service in May 2021 that ridership will be closer to normal in the year 2022 or 2023.

StarTran implemented micro transit service in April 2021 which provides on-demand shared ride service that is co-mingled with the paratransit service. A software program is used that provides information on when and where to use the vehicles to match demand for service. An app is used where the public can sign-up and pay for the service and rate the service that is provided.

StarTran works closely with other organizations to obtain feedback on improving accessibility and service within the metropolitan area. Prior to COVID-19, monthly paratransit work group meetings were held to discuss service operations and type of vehicles used to provide service. Within the year, StarTran will be working on updating the Transportation Development Plan in coordination with the MPO's update of their LRTP. StarTran is considering what service will look like in the future and the process for adjustments to the system.

The MPO works closely with the NDOT on projects funded with the section 5310 program – Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities. The state conducts the call for projects and coordinates with the MPO on including projects in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and Metropolitan TIP.

The Lincoln MPO and StarTran have a close working relationship in coordinating on transit planning throughout the metropolitan planning area. Both agencies coordinate on the development of the long-range plan, TIP and UPWP and StarTran indicated that their comments and needs are incorporated into the planning documents.

The Federal Review Team noted that the MPO programmed autonomous vehicles in their LRTP. The initial plan was to implement a route downtown using autonomous vehicles and to use local funding to leverage federal dollars for the project. However due to the pandemic, the MPO has shifted priorities and may need to amend the plan to take out the autonomous vehicles.

StarTran has met the FTA transit performance measures with the development of their transit asset management plan and public transportation agency safety plan. The safety plan was developed in collaboration with NDOT. Both documents were adopted by the MPO.

4.3.3 Finding: The Lincoln MPO satisfies the federal requirements related to transit planning. The Federal Review Team identified one commendation and two recommendations:

4.3.4 Commendation: The innovative approach to planning for access to essential services using micro transit. The micro transit program utilizes a software that determines where and when vehicles are utilized to match demand in relation to the existing paratransit service. Riders can also use an app to sign-up and pay for the service as well as rate the service.

4.3.5 Recommendation: The StarTran transit system has prepared the Transportation Asset Management (TAM) plan and Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) as required by FTA. However, these documents are not on the MPO's web site to inform the public on the two transit performance measures. The Federal Review Team recommends that the MPO place the TAM plan and PTASP on their website.

4.3.6 Recommendation: The MPO should collaborate with StarTran to continue to explore and plan for the use of autonomous vehicles in the metropolitan area.

4.4 Travel Demand Model

4.4.1 Regulatory Basis: 23 CFR 450.324(f)(1) requires that the Metropolitan Long-Range Transportation Plan include the projected transportation demand of persons and goods in the Metropolitan Planning Area over the period of the transportation plan. Travel demand forecasting models are used in the planning process to identify deficiencies in future year transportation systems and evaluate the impacts of alternative transportation investments. In air quality, non-attainment and maintenance areas, they are also used to estimate regional vehicle activity for use in mobile source emission models that support air quality conformity determinations.

4.4.2 Status: The Lincoln travel model base year was recently updated to reflect 2019 in November of 2020. Forecast years for the model include 2035 and 2050 conditions. The model update benefited from newly acquired "Location Based Services" data (from probes) to assist with the expansion of person trip tables. A mode choice component was added to the model that includes fixed-route transit and non-motorized modes. The mode choice update was informed by transit farebox data and results from an on-board travel survey which was used to developed base year targets. The Lincoln MPO acquired additional data from Fort Collins, Colorado to fill in gaps from the data. It is the review teams understanding Fort Collins data was utilized by the Lincoln MPO as the data was from a similar sized community.

The model does not currently have a truck forecasting capability. However, approximately 76% of truck travel are trips through the metropolitan area. The MPO suggested that technical guidance from FHWA on truck forecasting methods could be potentially helpful.

Collaboration on data procurement

NDOT provides location- based survey data for each MPO (for all traffic analysis zones) on a five-year cycle to assist with plan updates. With respect to local data resources, the Lincoln MPO has not had sufficient funding available to collect household travel data through traditional survey collection, such as home interviews via commercial survey firms or the National Household Travel Survey. The agency is exploring the use of National Performance Management Research Data Set (NPMRDS) data to assist with mode development and calibration activities. The MPO and the City of Lincoln completed a comprehensive traffic count collection program for the TDM update. Data was also used from the NDOT traffic counting program and from the NDOT INRIX third party data providers.

Application of the Travel Model

The MPO has applied the regional model to support TIP project prioritization, CMP, and project level studies. Congestion maps were developed to support the congestion management process. The Decision Lens, a multi-criteria analysis software product, has been applied in a demonstration to explore its use for rating and prioritizing investments.

The previous model version utilized adjustment factors for project level forecasting. It is unclear based on documentation from 2017 if these adjustments are standardized in the model application. The MPO is encouraged to use the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) based adjustments for project level applications exclusively, and not as a standard post processing step conducted at the system-wide level.

Intra-agency collaboration on model development

A Model Integration Team was established to collaborate on modeling needs, enhancements, and priorities for planning and programming. This team met throughout the model update process and was instrumental in the development and post-processing of model data to support the most recent model update.

4.4.3 Finding The most recent draft of the model documentation was not available at the time of the Certification Review. Continuous updates to model documentation are encouraged as updates and refinements are made to the model.

4.4.4 Recommendation: Continuous updates to model documentation are encouraged as updates and refinements are made to the model. Additional analytic reporting and visualization of traveler system performance may be helpful for evaluating performance impacts of long-range transportation investment scenarios. Examples could include regional accessibility

contour mapping to show relative changes in travel times for long range plan scenarios. Thematic mapping of origin and destination patterns and changes in mode shares between base and future years could be helpful for showing travel pattern changes. The Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) planning and preliminary guidebook includes procedures for estimating operational performance measures from model outputs, providing potential forecasting measures to incorporate in the CMP.

4.4.5 Recommendation: The MPO is encouraged to prioritize local data collection (National Household Travel Survey (NHTS)) which would enable the replacement of non-local calibration targets with locally observed data.

4.4.6 Recommendation: FHWA can provide technical guidance on truck forecasting methods if requested by the Lincoln MPO.

4.5 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (Long Range Transportation Plan)

4.5.1 Regulatory Basis: 23 CFR 450.322 states “The metropolitan transportation planning process shall include the development of a transportation plan addressing no less than a 20-year planning horizon... the transportation plan shall include both long-range and short-range strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand.” The Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Lincoln MPO is referred to as the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

4.5.2 Status: The Lincoln MPO is currently updating the 2040 LRTP to the 2050 planning horizon. The MPO established committees to provide oversight in the development of the 2050 LRTP. This committee is considered an Ad-hoc committee to the Technical Committee. In the current 2040 LRTP, the MPO only prioritizes capital roadway projects and trail projects within the urbanized area of Lincoln. The prioritization was performed by applying weights that are based on goals. The weighting and prioritization were performed by the sub-committee.

The 2050 LRTP update prioritization process is very similar. However, the MPO is now prioritizing both Lincoln and Lancaster county roadway and trail projects. In addition, the 2050 LRTP update is more objective by using data to rank the projects rather than having the sub-committee staff subjectively rank projects. The MPO is using the data analytics tool to display the projects. The data analytics tool focuses on roadway and trail, transit uses from the Transit Demand Plan and revenue projections that are from the Lincoln MPO and Star Trans. The data analytics tool utilizes the weights developed for each of the goals which received input from the community and committee to visualize and rank project prioritization for the Ad-hoc committee to make decisions on projects to be included in the fiscally constrained plan.

In addition, the Lincoln MPO has adopted a new transportation goal which focus on equity. The MPO has established an equity committee which meets twice a year to support identifying gaps in services and expanded services. In addition, the equity committee was utilized to develop weighting in the project prioritization process for updating the LRTP. FHWA and FTA encourage the Lincoln MPO to explore utilizing the committee to further the planning process.

The MPO goal for equity is a part of the weight criteria in the evaluation of project prioritization in the update to the 2050 LRTP. The equity goal takes into consideration the vulnerable populations within the planning area boundary. There is an index with census data for low-income, minority and elderly. This weighting index is applied for Lancaster County and City of Lincoln roadway projects. When looking at roadway projects, the MPO is looking at the scope of the project. The updated 2050 LRTP will include an equity policy, which outlines strategies for implementing transportation solutions within planning boundaries.

In addition, a project category, titled street improvements for bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, was included in the plan and focuses on striping sections of roadways and analyzing -- project by project -- bicycle and pedestrian considerations. The 2050 LRTP update will add a pool of funding specifically for bicycle and pedestrian improvements. During the on-site review, the Lincoln MPO discussed establishing a formal Bike-Ped count program.

4.5.4 Recommendation: The Lincoln MPO should continue to work towards implementing a Bicycle and Pedestrian Count Program. FHWA and FTA are available to provide technical assistance as requested by the Lincoln MPO to establish the count program.

4.5.5 Recommendation: FHWA and FTA encourages the Lincoln MPO to engage the equity committee in development of the TIP and Public Participation Plan as was done with the Long-Range Transportation Plan.

4.5.6 Commendation: The MPO has developed weighting criteria in the evaluation of project prioritization in the update to the 2050 LRTP to analyze the scope of projects within areas of the MPO boundary that have been identified as having vulnerable populations.

4.6 Public Participation

4.6.1 Regulatory Basis: Sections 134(i) (5), 134(j) (1) (B) of Title 23 and Section 5303(i) (5) and 5303(j) (1) (B) of Title 49, require an MPO to provide adequate opportunity for the public to participate in and comment on the products and planning processes of the MPO. The requirements for public involvement are detailed in 23 CFR 450.316(a) and (b), which require the development and use of a documented public participation plan that includes explicit procedures and strategies to include the public and other interested parties in the transportation planning process.

Specific requirements include giving adequate and timely notice of opportunities to participate in or comment on transportation issues and processes, employing visualization techniques to describe LRTP and TIPs, making public information readily available in electronically accessible formats and means such as the world wide web, holding public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times, demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input, and a periodically reviewing of the effectiveness of the participation plan.

4.6.2 Status: The Lincoln MPO Public Participation Plan (PPP) was amended in February 2014. The MPO is planning to update the PPP after the adoption of the LRTP anticipated in December 2021. The current PPP does a good job in describing the MPO functions and responsibilities as well as the opportunities for public engagement in the planning process.

The MPO utilizes several strategies and tools to engage the public in the transportation planning process. These strategies include visualization techniques with interactive maps, video and audio YouTube links, links to on-line surveys, workshops, outreach and education programs and a newsletter. Over the past several years, the MPO has had good public turn-out and success in conducting focus groups. The MPO is pro-active in seeking out and building relationships with community leaders and organizations who represent low-income, minority, seniors, and persons with disabilities to bring them into the planning process.

During COVID-19 the MPO utilized Zoom technology to reach the public and has conducted virtual open house in addition to live-streaming on Facebook. The MPO has seen an increase in the public participation process with the utilization of virtual technology.

The Federal review noted that the MPO's PPP has an "Action Plan" for the activities undertaken by the MPO which includes a list of the planning documents and a timeline for public participation and comment period. The MPO conducts an evaluation of the strengths and weakness of its public participation activities to identify any improvements opportunities. The PPP has a public involvement tools evaluation table with metrics, performance goals and improvement opportunities.

Additionally, during the Civil Rights session of the review, the Federal Review Team learned that the Title VI and ADA policies were last updated in 2010. The policies still appear to be in compliance; however, the MPO should review the policies to insure they are current with applicable requirements.

4.6.3 Finding: The Lincoln MPO satisfies the federal requirements related to public participation. The Federal Review Team identified two recommendations below.

4.6.4 Recommendation: The MPO should look at ways to improve its monitoring of the effectiveness of its public participation activities. In addition, the MPO should include their monitoring activities in the update to the Public Participation Plan.

4.6.5 Recommendation: The Lincoln MPO and StarTran should update their Title VI and ADA policies which were developed in 2010 to ensure they remain current with applicable requirements.

4.6.6 Commendation: The MPO is commended for its use of visualization and graphic techniques including You Tube videos with embedded power point presentations to inform and enhance the public understanding of the planning process.

4.6.7 Commendation: The MPO is commended for its pro-active efforts (i.e. attending and presenting at already scheduled meetings) to identify and build relationships with organizations and community leaders of those traditionally underserved and targeting public involvement activities at locations for these groups.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Certification Action:

The FHWA and FTA FY2021 certification review found that the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted in the Lincoln urbanized area meets the Federal planning requirements. The Lincoln MPO is found to conduct planning activities in a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive manner in coordination with its regional partners as well as fulfilling the federally required multi-modal and participatory metropolitan transportation planning process.

Based on this review and ongoing stewardship and oversight by the FHWA and FTA, the metropolitan transportation planning process carried out in the Lincoln, Nebraska Transportation Management Area for the period October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2025 is certified as meeting the requirements as described in 23 CFR Part 450 and 49 CFR Part 613.

APPENDIX A - PARTICIPANTS

The following individuals were involved in the Lincoln urbanized area on-site review:

• First Name	Last Name	Agency
Justin	Luther	FHWA-Nebraska Division
Zach	Kresl	FHWA-Nebraska Division
Gerry	Doyle	Federal Transit Administration-Region VII
Craig	Wacker	Nebraska Department of Transportation
Ryan	Huff	Nebraska Department of Transportation
Kaine	Mcclelland	Nebraska Department of Transportation
David	Cary	Lincoln MPO
Allan	Zafft	Lincoln MPO
Kelly	Van Bruggen	Lincoln MPO
Paul	Barnes	Lincoln MPO
Mike	Davis	StarTran
Brian	Praeuner	StarTran
Larry	Legg	LCED
Lin	Quenzer	Title VI/ADA Coordinator
Kimberly	Taylor-Riley	Title VI Co-Coordinator

APPENDIX B - STATUS OF FINDINGS FROM THE FY 2017 REVIEW

One of the priorities of each certification review is assessing how well the planning partners in the area have addressed corrective actions and recommendations from the previous certification review. This section identifies the corrective actions and recommendations from the previous certification and summarizes discussions of how they have been addressed.

Disposition:

Regulatory	2017 Recommendations	Status:
MPO Structure and Agreements 23 U.S.C. 134(d) 23 CFR 450.314(a)	Documentation of the Planning and Coordination between the MPO, StarTran, and NDOT needs to be established, including decisions NDOT is making that may affect the MPO Planning process and as such should be developed in coordination with the MPOs to insure their input and involvement: This includes the specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the development and continued on-going process for the LRTP, TIP, UPWP. Clearly define who the point of contact is for the MPO at NDOT. Since there are different people responsible for different topic areas the document needs to identify those individuals. Encourage NDOT to revise the MPO manual to more specifically identify the work flow processes.	Complete
Unified Planning Work Program 23 CFR 450.308	FHWA/FTA will deliver background and the benefits/costs of implementing a consolidated planning work program: NDOT should consider moving towards implementing a consolidated planning work program (UPWP). NDOT should also consider moving to a 2-year performance period for both the UPWP and potentially the STIP/TIP development.	Complete
Public Participation 23 U.S.C.	Determine how to best ensure individuals who might have a language barrier can effectively access key MPO planning	Complete

134(i)(6) 23 CFR 450.316 & 450.326(b)	documents on-line: Consider placing an "I-Speak" hotlink on the MPO website or having Google translate, if this is being used by the City, prominently displayed on the MPO website.	
Congestion Management Process / Management and Operations 23 U.S.C. 134(k)(3) 23 CFR 450.322	The Congestion Management Process needs to be updated with all the current activities that the City and MPO are undertaking. The MPO needs to update the CMP which would include revising the 2009 CMP document to capture the activities performed as part of the Long-Range Plan update. Also, the MPO needs to ensure the TIP is fully integrated into the CMP and that the newly established performance measures are integrated into the CMP. In addition, the MPO should continue using the committee that is established to help monitor the results of the MPO strategies deployed. Regarding the committee, the MPO should include NDOT as a member.	Complete

APPENDIX C – PUBLIC COMMENTS

- No public comments were received.

APPENDIX D - LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADA:	Americans with Disabilities Act
CFR:	Code of Federal Regulations
CMP:	Congestion Management Process
DOT:	Department of Transportation
FAST:	Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
FHWA:	Federal Highway Administration
FTA:	Federal Transit Administration
FY:	Fiscal Year
LRTP:	Long Range Transportation Plan
MAP-21:	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21 st Century
MPA:	Metropolitan Planning Area
MPO:	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MTP:	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
STIP:	State Transportation Improvement Program
TIP:	Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program
TMA:	Transportation Management Area
U.S.C.:	United States Code
UPWP:	Unified Planning Work Program