

Policy: 3150-2- Metro Planning Funding Process

Section: Planning and Programming

Office/Department: Office of Planning

Reports To: Division of Planning

Contact: [Department Phone Number]

This policy serves to update the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) PL Formula and PL Discretionary funds process to better reflect usage of funds, align with needs, and continue to ensure public trust.

PL Funding Formula and Distribution Process

1. When the Department is provided the available amount of PL funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), via FHWA's "Apportionment and Obligation Limitation Notice", the Department will utilize the amount identified for "Metropolitan Planning" (aka PL Funds) to calculate each MPO's PL Funding amount. This step typically takes place after Congress passes and the President signs an act appropriating funding.
2. The Department will allocate each MPO with a "Base Amount" of MPO Funding of \$60,000.
3. The Department will allocate \$20,000 to each MPO designated as non-attainment or maintenance by the US Environmental Protection Agency for violation of any of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
4. The Department will allocate \$10,000 to each MPO that has an urbanized area located within their Metro Planning Area (MPA) Boundary. This currently includes the current Transportation Management Areas (TMA): Atlanta, Chattanooga, Columbus, Augusta and Savannah; and includes the Gainesville and Cartersville MPOs, since portions of the Atlanta TMA extend into the Gainesville and Cartersville MPAs.
5. Funds which remain after distributing through steps 1 through 4 above, will be distributed to each MPO based on the MPO's percentage of the urbanized area population, located within each MPO's MPA boundary. This includes allocating urbanized area population that crosses between MPA boundaries. For example, the portion of the Gainesville urbanized area that is located in Forsyth County would be allocated to the Atlanta MPO; however, the portion of the Atlanta urbanized area population that crosses into Hall and Jackson Counties, would be allocated to the Gainesville MPO.
6. The Department will set-aside 2.5% of the PL Formula funds allocated to each MPO in step 5 to carry out eligible activities for Increasing Safe and Accessible Transportation Options otherwise called "Y410"; this set-aside for each MPO is the remaining amount multiplied by its population percentage after subtracting the set-aside and is 100% federal.
7. The distribution process noted in items 1 - 6, apply to all MPOs within the State of Georgia, including the Georgia portions of bi-state MPOs.

PL Formula and PL Discretionary Funds Oversight

1. The GDOT Office of Planning will establish an externally accessible website, which will include:
 - a) Annual amounts of available PL and Y410 funds for each MPO, as provided by the PL Distribution Formula
 - b) Amount of PL funds contracted for between the Department and the MPO in each FY
2. Any unspent, prior year PL Formula funds are released following the final invoice of the PL Contract being paid out to the MPO.
3. The unspent, prior year funds (apportionment) are then returned to the state's available apportionment for PL funds and can be made available to MPOs as PL Discretionary funds to develop Metropolitan Transportation Plans (MTPS) and other federally required documents and conduct transportation studies to support the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process.
4. Once the unspent, prior year PL funds are reflected in FMIS. Those funds will then be available for any MPO (excluding the Atlanta MPO) to access for planning purposes as PL Discretionary Funding. Planning will confirm with GDOT's Office of Financial Management (OFM) the unspent amount, as such depends on Federal availability in FMIS, and inform the GAMPO Chair and members if funds are sufficient to fund all the proposed applications.
5. In order to adequately consider and plan for future funding needs, MPOs should have an unfunded section in the UPWP. The unfunded section of the UPWP should detail any anticipated, upcoming discretionary funding requests. Funding requests submitted for PL Discretionary Funding should be drawn from this unfunded section of the UPWP.

PL Discretionary Funding Selection Process

The following process establishes a review committee and process for MPOs, to access prior years funding. The process does not allow for the 'automatic' accessing of prior year funding for MPOs, except for the Atlanta MPO, staffed by the Atlanta Regional Commission. The Atlanta MPO is allowed to develop their UPWP and PL Contract each year and include the amount of funding from the second most recently closed-out PL Contract.

Except for the Atlanta MPO, any prior year funds will be available, via the proposed "PL Discretionary Funds Review Committee" process, as identified below:

1. The PL Discretionary Funds Review Committee will be comprised of the following members:
 - a. One MPO staff member (who shall have one vote, representing their respective MPO) from each of the MPOs within the State of Georgia, excluding the Atlanta MPO (as staffed by the Atlanta Regional Commission).
 - b. Three non-voting staff members from the GDOT Office of Planning. In recognition of GDOT's oversight role for the use of PL funds, GDOT is provided a 'line-item veto' over which activities the committee elects

to fund. The veto is to ensure that the committee decisions are made in the best interest of the use of PL funds and are in keeping with any federal requirements for the use of PL funds. The veto is not to be used to fund activities which the committee elected not to fund.

c. One non-voting staff member from FHWA

2. GDOT Planning and the Georgia Division of FHWA will meet prior to the PL Discretionary Funds Review Committee meeting to review applications and confirm eligibility, scope, schedule and budget. During this review, an application may be deemed ineligible due to missing required elements of the application or lack of applicability to the funding priorities. GDOT and FHWA may also suggest revisions or clarifications to an MPO's application to be made prior to sending out GAMPO for review.
3. The "PL Discretionary Funds Review Committee" will receive requests for funding from MPOs and recommend which MPOs will receive available PL Discretionary funds. Final selection authority is maintained by GDOT in recognition of GDOT'S oversight role. The PL Discretionary Funding Review Committee will be hosted jointly by the GDOT Office of Planning and the Georgia Association of MPOs (GAMPO). The President of GAMPO or his or her designee will serve as meeting Chairman. Meetings will be held at the GDOT Headquarters or hosted by any MPO member agreed upon at a prior meeting and meeting minutes will be kept by an MPO representative, selected by the MPOs. The meeting minutes will be submitted to GDOT for approval.
4. The PL Discretionary Funds Review Committee will meet twice a year, around spring and fall.
5. The President of GAMPO shall survey the non-Atlanta MPO members to determine dates for each upcoming meeting and shall provide the proposed PL Discretionary Funds Review Committee meeting dates to the Department in January of each year. Meeting dates selected by the GAMPO President shall exclude any scheduled board or committee meetings of the State Transportation Board and any scheduled MPO committee meetings (including the Atlanta MPO).
6. A quorum of majority plus one (non-Atlanta) MPOs shall be physically present at the meeting to take action. A teleconference line will not be available for individuals who are unable to join a meeting to vote or take action. A virtual conference link and phone numbers will be provided for presenters and virtual MPO staff attendees. The quorum requirements shall be met with a staff member of the MPO. A staff member of the MPO is defined as an actual employee of the agency which services the MPO (decision-making body, such as Policy Committee/TAQC/TPC/etc.). Ineligible individuals to represent the MPO include transportation planning and engineering consultants, private contractors, or other temporary MPO employees. The quorum requirements will increase commensurate with the designation of any new MPOs, at any point in the future.
7. The determination of which activities are to receive unspent, prior year PL Discretionary funds will be made at the scheduled meeting. Any unresolved matters will be addressed at the next scheduled meeting.
8. The PL Discretionary Funds Review Committee shall exclusively consider an agenda of requests submitted to the committee for the use of unspent, prior year PL funds; in addition to the MPOs report of each previously awarded PL Discretionary Funds effort. Please see the requirement on item number 3 below.

9. Any entity seeking unspent, prior year PL funds shall submit via e-mail, their requested use of the funds and amount of requested funding to a single GDOT Point of Contact, (plfunds@dot.ga.gov), no later than 4 weeks prior to each of the meetings. The submitted requests shall include a resolution from the MPO Policy Board supporting the specific proposed activity and requested funding level, with stated recognition of match requirement and confirmation of match availability for activities within the UPWP unfunded section (Page 2, Item number 5). The Office of Planning will distribute requests to PL Discretionary Funds Review Committee members for review and consideration. If there are no complete requests received within 4 weeks of the scheduled meeting, the President of GAMPO will determine if the meeting should be cancelled and inform Committee members.
10. The PL Discretionary Funds Review Committee will consider requests from MPOs based on the following priority order:
 - a. First priority are activities focused to aid on the development of the core MPO documents of Metropolitan Transportation Plans (MTPs), Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPS), and Congestion Management Process (CMP).
 - b. Second and subsequent, priority will be given to MPO special studies (such as, but not limited to, corridor, Freight Plan, or sub-area studies; even if these studies are intended to inform a future Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, or Congestion Management Process) and other, similar items.

Administering PL Discretionary Funding

1. If the PL Discretionary Funds Committee assigns additional PL funds to an MPO, the PL Discretionary funds will be administratively modified into the funded portion of the approved UPWP, and be assigned a new, specific PI number. A separate PL Contract will be developed specifically for the work identified and funding allocated to the prior year's funding.
2. The activities funded through the PL Discretionary Funds Review Committee should as soon as possible after the committee agrees to fund the activity, the approved UPWP is administratively modified (following point 1 above), PI number is created, and the PL Contract is executed. Any delays over 6 months, deemed unreasonable by the GDOT Office of Planning, may result in the funds being returned to the unspent, prior year funding category, available for the next PL Discretionary Funds Review Committee to assign to new projects.
3. An MPO that receives funds through the PL Discretionary Funds Review Committee must provide a written status update on the progress of each activity funded not less than two weeks before each PL Discretionary Review Committee meeting. The written update must be provided via e-mail to plfunds@dot.ga.gov.

4. The Department is free to establish working procedures, so long as they do not differ from the core principles detailed in this policy, in order to implement this process. Also, the ability to provide prior funding (as is also the case with current year funding) is dependent on the availability of both federal apportionment and obligation authority being provided.

This process was implemented beginning with each MPO's FY 2017 UPWP and PL Contract. For further information, contact the Office of Planning at plfunds@dot.ga.gov.

References:

[Click here to enter Policy references, if any.](#)

History:

corrected typo, Date Last Reviewed will not change: 02/10/25;

revised: 02/05/25;

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