

STRENGTHS 2023

Southwest Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SORTPO)

A regional transportation planning organization (RTPO) is an organization that identifies regional transportation needs, conducts planning, assists local governments, and supports the statewide transportation planning process in non-metropolitan regions of a state.

In the past two decades, Congress has increased the level of coordination of how states will address the transportation needs of non-metropolitan areas. States are provided the opportunity to designate RTPOs as a method of formalizing engagement from non-metropolitan areas as they incorporate rural transportation needs in the statewide transportation planning process. The Federal transportation authorization, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), created an opportunity for States to formally designate Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) as a means of formalizing their process for including non-metropolitan areas in statewide transportation planning processes.

Funding for RTPOs is at the discretion of the State, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Statewide Planning and Research (SP&R) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) planning program funds may be used to support RTPOs. Federal funds require a match; in most cases it is 20%.

Road to Organizing

The SWODA Board of Trustees on October 13, 2009, adopted Resolution 09-04 creating the Southwest Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SORTPO); tasked with the development of eight (8) county long range transportation plans. In April 2012, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) entered an agreement with the Oklahoma Association of Regional Councils of Governments (OARC) to oversee development of the regional transportation planning process and the regional public participation process in the non-metropolitan areas of the state. Three councils of governments (COGs) were selected as regional transportation planning organization (RTPO) pilot projects: South Western Oklahoma Development Authority (SWODA), Northern Oklahoma Development Authority (NODA) and Central Oklahoma Economic Development District (COEDD). In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2016, through a collaborative effort involving SORTPO, the Association of South Central Oklahoma Governments (ASCOG) and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), a transportation planning pilot project comprising sixteen counties was established representing two Councils of Governments SWODA and ASCOG.

SORTPO Benefits

In the state of Oklahoma, the RTPO program has enhanced the level of public awareness in transportation planning across all regions, gaining input on transportation issues that at one time were not addressed. The exposure of the RTPO program through OARC has allowed for

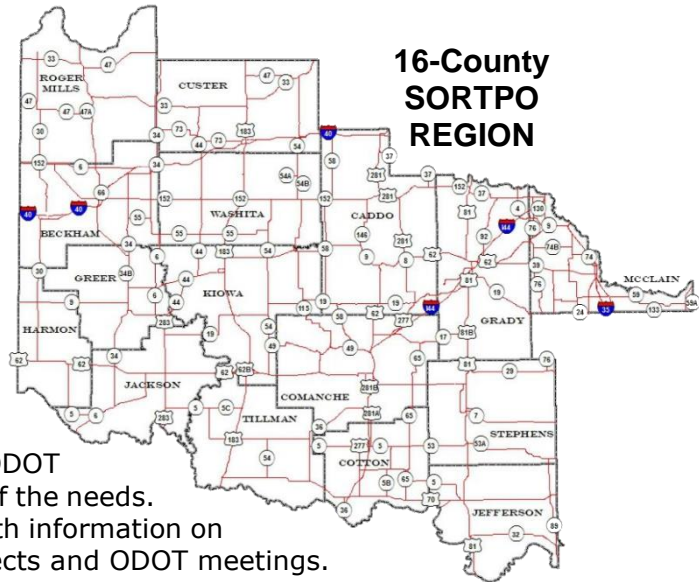
RTPO Designation by the state: 23 USC 135: Statewide and non- metropolitan transportation planning

M. (1) In general -To carry out the transportation planning process required by this section, a State may establish and designate regional transportation planning organizations to enhance the planning, coordination, and implementation of statewide strategic long-range transportation plans and transportation improvement programs, with an emphasis on addressing the needs of non-metropolitan areas of the State.

an interest in collaborative planning among county commissions, mayors, circuit engineering districts, ODOT Division Engineers, city officials, business owners, and local citizens. The success of the RTPPO program can be measured by the establishment of a regional transportation policy board, development of a Planning Work Program, development and implementation of a Public Participation Plan, coordination of data collection and the adoption of a county long-range transportation plan for each RTPPO.

Track Record of Accomplishments

- Collection and maintenance of regional data such as surveys, major employers, traffic analysis zones, and active living infrastructure/sites.
- Provide a forum for public participation in non-metropolitan areas.
 - Enhance public awareness through an established public involvement process aiding ODOTs public involvement efforts when new projects requiring public meetings or hearings occur.
 - Identifying key issues and trends for the region's transportation system providing ODOT Divisions a more accurate understanding of the needs.
 - Link southwest Oklahoma communities with information on transit surveys, census, ODOT plans/projects and ODOT meetings.
- Provide a process to coordinate local planning and economic development plans with transportation plans.
- Build relationships between local municipalities, transit agencies, stakeholders, Council of Governments (COGs), Circuit Engineering Districts (CEDs), County Commissioners and ODOT.
 - SORTPO has strengthened communication within its geographical footprint. Communities, economic development organizations, and businesses throughout the area are offering input and becoming actively involved with planning. In the past, transportation planning was a stove-piped decision-making process.
 - Strengthen communication among all the counties in the SORTPO boundaries.
- Established the SORTPO Transportation Policy Board & the Technical Committee.
- Host stakeholder meetings to solicit comments on key issues, strengths and challenges, current and projected socio-economic data.
- Assist rural municipalities to identify/submit transportation grants.
- Staff from the Oklahoma FHWA office and SORTPO were invited to speak at the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) conference in December 2014 about the RTPPO pilot project.
- Participated on committees to help with statewide plans such as Transit, Freight, Active Living, National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure & US Rt. 66 Bicycle Corridor nomination.



SORTPO Projects

- Prepared and adopted 16 individual county transportation plans.
- Prepared and adopted Regional Transportation Plan: Moving People and Goods.
- Hosted Southwest Oklahoma Walkability Summit.
- Established a traffic count equipment loan program for local & county governments.
- Prepared and adopted the SORTPO Public Participation Plan.
- Developed interactive Active Living Map (www.sortpo.org).
- Awarded \$1.5 million FFY 2022 RAISE grant to develop a regional transportation plan.
- Submitted nominations for designation of US 81 and US 62 as electric vehicle corridors.